



WHOSE JOB IS IT?

"But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (Gal.5:22-23)

About this time every year I start thinking about driving to Hood River and seeing the beauty of mile after mile of orchards: apples, peaches, cherries, pears. We like to make applesauce for the freezer so we will sometimes buy a box or two of apples. The house smells wonderful with the scents of cooking apples, cinnamon, and sugar. Yum!

In order for us to buy those apples someone has to take care of them all year long before we get there: the farmer, his family, and those he hires are caring for the trees to make sure they produce. They can't just decide they're going to Arizona for the winter and expect to have luscious fruit the next fall. The trees need ongoing attention and care: attention to disease, bugs, weather, and weeds. There are times when they need pruning to allow the rest of the tree to continue to be healthy. The farmer must be vigilant and know his trees in order to have the best results.

The Apostle Paul talks a lot about how we should live as believers and in Galatians 5:16-17 talks about the "fruit" of the Holy Spirit, one of which is "self-control". Earlier in the chapter, he says, *"I advise you to live according to your new life in the Spirit.... The old sinful nature loves to do evil....and the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict."* Just as the farmer has to choose to take care of his trees, so we must choose to take care of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we are given as believers. The two forces (evil and the Spirit) are constantly fighting within us and as the scripture says, *"your choices are never free from this conflict."* The farmer knows that it is his responsibility to care for his orchard and it is our responsibility to make the choices that will enable the Holy Spirit to "produce" (an ongoing process) fruit in our lives that grows toward maturity.

In the Life Recovery Bible under "Self-Control" it says, "Self-control is not willpower. It is not something we get by gritting our teeth and forcing ourselves to 'just say no'. Self-control is called a fruit. Fruit doesn't instantly pop out on the tree. As the tree grows and seasons pass, the fruit naturally develops." The farmer knows that it is only through his choices that he will eventually have full-grown, healthy fruit. It is his responsibility: not that of the workers taking care of the farm, not that of the drivers hauling the fruit to market; and, not that of the people who buy

the apples. It is his responsibility to make the right choices to get the job done. God will not do that work for us.

We are given the gifts of the Spirit and it is our responsibility to care for them. Not in the way the man did who buried the "talent" his master had given him, but by making the choice every minute of every day to allow the Holy Spirit to win the conflict inside us, not the evil desires. That is the only way they will become what God intended: full grown, healthy, strong, yummy fruit.

Have a "fruitful" week!

Georgia