

## ***More Than “Religious Nuts”***

Someone wisely observed, “God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.”

Galatians 5 describes the traits that God desires to see in the lives of His children. These include such things as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These fruits (life-styles) come from the Spirit of God living within us. However, people at times in the name of Christianity engage in some odd and even hurtful practices. These usually arise because a couple of things are missing in their lives.

First, just like tires, lives that have lost proper balance can careen dangerously along the highway of life. Zealous work for the church is fine, but it ought not result in the neglect of one’s family—spouse or children. Preachers often develop a passion for a particular issue (hobby) that results in imbalanced preaching. Working hard to strain the gnats, they ignore the weightier issues—the Word of God. Being our brother’s keeper must be balanced by consistently looking into the mirror of the Word to align our own lives.

Secondly, a loss of love for others will open the door for ungodly behaviors in the name of God. People shoot abortion doctors, because their hatred of sin has been divorced from a love for people. Love roots out selfishness, opens the door to forgiveness, and allows for both the acceptance and administration of grace. Love recognizes that even blatant sinners have feelings and that reaching them requires the fruits of the spirit. Jesus’ holiness was bathed in genuine compassion for such people as the Samaritan woman and a lady taken in the act of adultery.

The Gospel transforms us and empowers us to make a difference in our world. Yet, this is accomplished less by our volume or our aggressive protest than by our Christ-like attitudes. Jesus called on us to let our lights shine in such a way that men will see our good works and glorify the Father (Mt. 5:16). Paul added that we ought to appear as lights in the darkness of the world (Phil. 2:15). Sometimes it is easier to “throw a holy fit” than it is to turn the other cheek and die to our selfish feelings and agendas. Yet, in all honesty, which of those actions will make the greater impact for God’s cause?

—**Don Loftis**

