

Measuring the Fruit of the Spirit: Are Christians Really Different from Others?

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ABSTRACT

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, maintains that the Holy Spirit can produce 'fruit' such as love, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control in those who are led by the Spirit. However, a survey has shown that most Australians believe that religion causes more harm than good. Can the 'fruit of the Holy Spirit' be measured in Christians, for example, in providing informal care and voluntary assistance to people apart from family members? A large national survey of a random sample of adult Australians in 2016 sought to measure the variety of ways and the number of hours per month that people spent in caring for and informally assisting people outside the family, as an example of 'the fruit of the Spirit'. The survey found that church attenders more frequently affirmed helping in different ways, but that there was little difference in the hours church attenders claimed they spent in the care of and assistance to others compared with Australians who were not church attenders. The fact that many people who have no Christian involvement may offer similar levels of care and assistance to others as Christian attenders raises theological questions about whether the care offered by those with no Christian commitment can be considered 'the fruit of the Spirit'.

Introduction

There is a widespread feeling in the Australian population at this time that religion causes more harm than good. A recent Ipsos Poll asked exactly that question in a multitude of countries. It found that, among Australians, 63 per cent agreed with the statement 'religion causes more harm than good' (Wade 2017). Presumably, 37 per cent disagreed, as it appears that the poll did not give people the opportunity to say they did not know

(Boyon and Clark 2017, p. 3).

For many people who have been raised in a Christian environment, these opinions may be surprising, even shocking. Christians have been taught that they are different from those who do not follow Jesus, that the Holy Spirit works within them and creates positive attitudes and behaviour.

In Galatians 5.22 Paul talks of the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

He contrasts these characteristics with 'the acts of the flesh':

Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. (Galatians 5:19-21).

It sounds as if Paul is describing two types of people, those who live by the Spirit and those who live by the flesh, and these are totally different people. There are certainly some people who fulfil one of these descriptions and not the other. Some individuals are loving and joyful, people of peace and forbearance, people who are kind and good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. On the other hand, other individuals are full of selfish ambition, jealousy, and hatred, who may commonly be drunken and live immoral lives.

Commentators from a Reformed tradition make sense of the 'acts of the flesh' rather easily from their perspective of the fallenness of human nature. Ryken, in his commentary on Galatians in the Reformed Expository series says:

There is a reason why the flesh produces such bad behaviour. It is simply "doing what comes naturally." (Ryken 2005, p. 232).

Another commentator suggests that Paul is describing two communities: the typical Pagan group which met in the temple to eat, drink, engage in idolatry and sexual dalliance and which often fell into disputing and quarrelling, with the way he believes the Christian community should act when it gathered (Witherington 1998, p. 391). It has been suggested that Paul is particularly concerned for the unity of the Galatian church (Oakes 2015, p. 176) and the focus of his descriptions of the fruits of the Spirit is the harmony of the community.

But the pictures of both communities and individuals are often more complicated than Paul's archetypes. Some people are gentle most of the time, but lose their tempers occasionally. People may be self-controlled in many things, but occasionally seem to lose all inhibitions.

The 'fruit of the Spirit' are not produced in all Christians all of the time. Indeed, Paul assumes that is the case. He urges the Christians of Galatia not to use their freedom 'to indulge the flesh' (Galatians 5:13). A couple of verses later he urges the Christians of Galatia to 'walk by the Spirit'. Then in verse 25, he says 'Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit'. In these three verses, Paul is implying that the fruit of the Spirit are not produced in the lives of Christians automatically. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit are produced as people make the decision to 'walk by the Spirit' and allow the Spirit to produce those fruit in their lives.

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that the archetypes of the way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit are not always evident. So often, people who have a Christian commitment show some characteristics of the Spirit, but also, from time to time, fall into the ways of the flesh. And sometimes, people of the flesh can actually demonstrate those characteristics Paul describes as the fruit of the Spirit. It has been noted by some commentators that Paul's lists of vices and virtues overlaps considerably with lists in the writings of the Greek Stoic philosophers as well as the Jewish Torah (Matera & Harrington 1992, p. 209). They are not uniquely Christian vices and virtues and Paul implicitly recognises this in relation to the virtues by his comment 'against such things there is no law' (Galatians 5.23).

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse in Australia has certainly raised real questions in the minds of many Australians about whether the behaviour of Christians is different from others. At first it appeared there were a few bad apples in the barrel, but as the Royal Commission extended its work, it became apparent that the abuse of children was evident in some sectors of the church and its associated institutions over long periods of time, but was often covered up, rather than reported and dealt with effectively. The Commission has certainly put the Australian churches on notice. They have effectively said to the Christians of Australia what Paul said to the Christians of Galatia long ago: if you are to live by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit and do not let your freedom become an excuse for indulging the flesh.

Despite the widespread abuse of children and other vulnerable people in some Christian institutions, we might still hope that, overall, the Christian community demonstrates more love than hate, is more caring of others than abusive, more self-controlled than given to fits of rage.

As people evaluate how they live, and consider religious faith in terms of what it offers their lives, it would be good to have some careful measurement which was not influenced by any concern about image. It would be helpful to have some measurement that was free from biases one way or another to indicate what is the impact of religious faith, and, in particular, the Christian faith on the attitudes, values and behaviour of people.

There is a large body of literature in the sociological and psychological arena about the impact of religion on people's lives and on society. Most of that literature has taken up some specific issues and looked at how religion makes a difference, for example, whether it be in the extent to which people volunteer for the good of the society (Hughes & Black 2002; Lyons & Nivison-Smith 2006; Kaldor, Hughes and Black 2010) or the extent to which religion provides support in times of crisis (Pargament 1997). Few scholars are sufficiently brash to try to make an overall assessment of how religion in general, or Christianity in particular, contributes to 'causing more good than harm'. One scholar who has looked at a wide variety of areas and made a general statement is Rodney Stark (2012) in his book *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone Including Atheists*. However, many of the claims he makes in the book are contentious and his evidence is sometimes weak. When one checks out some of the claims for Christians in countries other than the United States, such as Australia, the differences he points to between religious people and non-religious in the United States do not hold (see, for example, Hughes 2014). Religious faith interacts with culture in complex ways, producing quite different results. In some circumstances, particularly religions have a minority status in

society and encourage people to behave in ways which are counter to the dominant culture. In other societies, religions are seen as part of the dominant culture and are drawn into justifications for that culture. This was quite evident, for example, in a study which examined the relationship between males attending religious services and the extent to which they considered the beating of wives acceptable. In 14 countries, including several where the dominant religion was Christian, analysis of a World Values survey found that male religious attenders were more likely than non-attenders to state that wife-beating was acceptable (Hughes 2015).

For Christians, it is important to examine how the Christian faith actually operates in people's lives in society. Such examinations can bring to light unexpected ways in which faith is interacting with other cultural influences and can lead to more targeted Christian teaching that takes us back to Paul's injunction to 'walk by the Spirit'. At the same time, such examinations are important as Christians negotiate their place in the wider society.

Dimensions of the Impact of Religion on Society

In 2013, an organisation was formed in Australia with the aim of studying the behaviour of religious people and measuring the contribution of religion to society. A major reason for the establishment of this organisation was to provide some response to the widespread criticism of Christians and people of other religions. The organisation is known as SEIROS, which stands for the Study of the Economic Impact of Religion on Society.

SEIROS recognised that there were three levels at which religions were making a contribution (<http://seiros.study/our-services.html>): denominational organisations, activities associated with local religious groups, and the impact of religious faith through the lives of individuals. The first project that SEIROS has undertaken is an examination of the impact of religion through the behaviour of religious attenders. Drawing on the data gathered, this paper will examine some results from this study, focussing particularly on Christians. Thus, the focus of this paper is whether the evidence indicates that church-attending Christians in Australia show more kindness towards others as shown in practical care and assistance for people outside their families, as one of the fruits of the Spirit. The word Paul uses for 'kindness' (χρηστότης) contains the idea of acting graciously towards one's neighbours (Weiss 1974, p. 491).

In this particular study, practical care and assistance to family members and work done through voluntary organisations will not be examined. Other studies have focussed on these aspects of contribution to family and society.

Theories of Voluntary Activity

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) developed a theory of what leads Americans to engage in voluntary political activities, known as the Civic Volunteerism Model. It has been applied by others as a theory of what leads people to engage in voluntary activities in a great variety of contexts (Hughes, Black, Kaldor, Bellamy, & Castle 2007). The theory suggests that there are three elements which must come together for people to become active in voluntary activities of all kinds. In essence, the elements are:

1. Motivation – people need the values and desire to be engaged in voluntary activities;

2. Skills and time capacity – people need to feel that they have the capacity to engage in voluntary activities, including having relevant skills, the time capacity, and the physical and health capacity, to engage in the specific activities;
3. Engagement – people need to be invited into specific activities or confronted with specific needs.

It has been suggested that churches may assist in all three ways to engage people in assisting others. Through the services and general teaching of the churches, the values of helping others are constantly being reinforced. Churches also provide opportunities for the development of skills through collaborative activities which often begin with special activities for children and youth. Thirdly, churches often organise specific activities, or are a venue in which people with similar values can seek to engage each other, in collaborative activities for assisting people. From a theological perspective, one might well argue that these elements of motivation, capacity and engagement are ways in which the Spirit works.

Motivation to assist others is a key part of this theory and the study examined this through the values people indicated as influencing their motivations. Values may be influenced by the communities in which people participate and in the specific encouragement they receive. However, psychological research has also suggested that personality variables may affect people's capacity and desire to care for and assist others and that these same personality variables may also have an impact on people's involvement in churches (Kaldor, Francis, & Hughes 2002). Some people are more 'tender-minded' than others, and are more open than others to offering care. These people are both more likely to attend a church and more likely to offer care to others. However, it was not possible to measure personality factors in this study.

Some scholars, such as Stefan Klein (2014), have argued that altruism has been bred into human beings over the millennia, contrary to the Reformed commentators who argue that the works of the flesh are those which 'come naturally'. Those people who were 'nice' to others survived the forces of selection better leading to genetic predispositions to altruistic behaviour. Most human beings are 'nice' to others, although the group to whom they are 'nice' varies somewhat, from family, to clan, to people of the same faith and ethnic background. The 'globalisation' of care of others that crosses the boundaries of race and religion, of gender, sexual orientation and age, is still under development, and also under pressure. From a theological perspective, there has been considerable discussion throughout the history of Christian faith, but particularly in this post-colonial period, about the extent to which all human beings are 'fallen' or continue in some way to reflect the image of God.

This discussion about evil and good in human beings extends to consideration of how inclusive is the work of the Spirit. A number of theologians, including Paul Tillich and Amos Yong, to take examples of people from different theological traditions, have suggested that God's Spirit operates outside of the Christian sphere, in people of other religions, and perhaps of no specific religion. Paul Tillich, for example, argued:

The mark of the Spiritual Presence is not lacking at any place or time. The divine Spirit or God, present to man's spirit, breaks into all history in revelatory experiences which have both a saving and

transforming character ... and we can assert: Mankind is never left alone (Tillich 1968, p. 149).

On the other hand, Tillich maintained that the human experience of the Spirit is always 'fragmentary in its manifestation in time and space' (Tillich, 1968, p. 149). Amos Yong also suggests that the Spirit is present wherever the transformation of the world is occurring (Yong 2000, p. 313).

Many people engage in care and generally show the characteristics that are designated by Paul as 'fruit of the Spirit' such as love, joy, peace, forbearance and kindness. The question is, then, do those who identify themselves as Christian and are active in the churches demonstrate those characteristics to a greater extent than those who do not identify themselves that way?

On the other hand, other thinkers suggest a narrow understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, limiting that work to what occurs in the lives of people of Christian believers who have been baptised in the Spirit. For example, the prominent Evangelical theologians, Stibbs and Packer, argue:

This 'fruit of the Spirit' (cf. Galatians 5:22f) is both God's permanent requirement of all His children and His own distinctive product in them (Stibbs and Packer 1967, p. 62).

They go on to suggest that those who are not Christians can show similar behaviour, but, in Christians, it is given a 'spiritual content' (Stibbs and Packer 1967, p. 63).

Following motivation, the second factor in the theory of civic volunteerism derived from Verba, Schlossmann and Brady, is having relevant skills and capacity to help. This factor may not be so relevant to this study of informal volunteering as in studies of participation in volunteer groups because most informal volunteering does not involve highly skilled or the use of specialised skills. Hence it is unlikely that the levels of formal education will be as significant in the levels of informal volunteering as they have been shown to be in formal voluntary work (Hughes and Black 2002). However, the time and physical capacity to be involved is probably quite important. Thus, in examining the levels of informal volunteering, it is important to control for the extent to which people are involved full-time in work, in home duties or are retired. It is also appropriate to include a measure of people's health as one factor which may influence people's capacity for care.

The third factor is engagement. This was measured in the SEIROS study in relation to formal voluntary work, but is less relevant, and was not measured in relation to informal helping. It is likely, however, that one of the factors in the extent to which people are engaged with informally helping others, apart from being involved in a helping organisation, is the extent to which they are personally faced with the need for help. For example, a person who is a neighbour or a close friend of a person who needs assistance is more likely to be involved in care than someone who is not faced with such needs.

Methodology

In 2016, SEIROS commissioned the Christian Research Association to measure whether Christians were actually more involved than those who did not attend religious services in the informal care for others, in the practical demonstration of kindness and goodness, as well as in formal volunteering.

The best way to look at these measures is to look at people's practical behaviour. In the end, it is not the attitudes that people have, but what they do. The priest and Levite in Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan may have been very nice people who exuded peace and kindness. They were certainly not the brigands who would cause injury to others, but they did not stop when they came across the man attacked by robbers on the side of the road.

'Kindness' is not just the behaviour itself, but the attitudes which accompany the behaviour. The best way of measuring this dimension is through obtaining some information from the people receiving care about the ways that care was offered to them. That qualitative dimension was beyond the scope of this study.

One of the problems in measurement via surveys is that one is dependent on people's self-reports. It is likely that some people are more honest in their reporting than others. Sociologists often refer to the 'social desirability' factor which comes into responses: people often respond to questions in those terms of how they want others to see them. They sometimes respond in terms of their intentions rather than in terms of what they actually do. Thus, socially desirable behaviours such as the amount of exercise people do is over-reported and undesirable behaviours and attitudes, such as alcohol consumption, are under-reported (De Vaus 2014, p. 107).

The particular behaviours which are the focus of this survey are all 'socially desirable', because they are about care and assistance to others. Even the independent variable, the report of church attendance, is often answered in a way which is influenced by social desirability. One of the methods of reducing social desirability is to ask about specific behaviours within a recent time-frame (Sellers 2012).

It is possible that the teaching of the church enhances the social desirability of care, and thus the differences in levels of care and assistance recorded in people's responses may actually be differences in the perceived social desirability of such care and assistance. It has been found that the social desirability factor is a little less significant in self-administered, web-based surveys than in interviews or printed surveys which might be seen by others (De Vaus 2014, p. 107).

A simple question to get some sense of people's altruism which the CRA has used in a variety of surveys has been:

- Is the following statement true for you or not? (optional responses from definitely true to definitely not true)

"It is more important to act on my individual rights than to look to the needs of others."

A rejection of that statement is taken as meaning that the person sees it more important to look to the needs of others than to act on their individual rights.

Another way of measuring attitudes towards others is a series of questions about what is important to people in giving them a sense that life is worthwhile. Responses were measured on a ten point scale from not important to very important. Among the items of what makes life worthwhile were the following:

- Your voluntary work

- Doing this for other people
- Participation in community.

There were many other items used in the survey which were not relevant to the measure of motivation to care for others such as the importance of your family, friends, paid work, music, spending time in nature, sport, travel, cooking and craftwork.

In order to get as close as possible to a random sample of the Australian adult population, a survey was conducted using as large a 'random' sample base as could be achieved. Because of changes in privacy legislation in 2004, it has not been permissible to use electoral rolls for drawing random samples of the Australian population for social research as has been done in the past (Australian Electoral Commission n.d.). Basing a sample on fixed line telephones no longer works well in an age when many people, especially younger people, have only a mobile phone and there are no listings of mobiles.

The best that could be done was to use a company which indicated that it had a database of the email addresses of more than 900,000 Australians who had indicated their willingness to receive surveys. This company sent out the invitation to do the survey to a random selection of Australians, state by state, progressively until a total of more than 8,000 returns had been achieved. It had been calculated that a random sample of 7,500 people should produce a sample of about 1,000 people who attended a church monthly or more often. It was found that when people who had only answered the first page of questions or who had responded to the survey in a very random way had been deleted, there was a sample of 7,754 people.

The sample had a reasonable spread of ages, apart from people over 80 years of age, presumably because there are fewer people in this age group who used a computer or wanted to complete surveys. The proportion of people born in Australia was just slightly higher than the proportion in the population, reflecting the fact that the survey was only made available in English. Also, the education levels were slightly higher than the levels revealed in the Australian census. However, with some weighting of the data, it was felt that the survey could provide adequate representation of the differences between Christians and others in the population in their levels of formal and informal volunteering.

The Results

In order to examine informal care, two sets of questions were asked. The first set was whether the respondent had offered care to people other than members of their family in the past twelve months. Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they had been involved in offering each of these sorts of care. The second set of questions asked about the hours of care offered averaged over the past 12 months for people other than members of the family.

The key question for analysis was whether Christian church attenders were more frequently offering the various kinds of care that were identified, and whether they were spending more time in offering care. Christian attenders were identified as those people who indicated that they were attending services in a Christian denomination at least once a month. In the sample, there were 822 people who were in this category and responded to the questions about care. They were compared to all other respondents. Monthly attendance was used because it can be assumed that most people attending that frequently will be sufficiently engaged in the church to be known by others in the church.

community and be influenced by the teaching of the church. Examination of the hours of care provided by people who attended a church once a week or more and those who attended once or twice a month showed little difference in the hours of care provided.

Table 1 shows the percentage of people in these two categories, Christian attenders and others, who indicated that they had offered the specific type of care in the past twelve months.

Table 1. Percentage of Christian Attenders and Others Indicating that They Had Offered Help to People Apart from their Families in the Past 12 Months

Types of Care and Assistance	Christian attenders	Others
Care for sick or person with disability	16.1%	14.5%
Care for babies or children (apart from own child)	19.8%	18.3%
Care for an elderly person	18.1%	15.7%
Provision of financial support for children not living with you	17.4%	15.5%*
Domestic, home maintenance or gardening	15.3%	11.6%**
Providing transport or running errands	25.6%	18.7%**
Teaching, coaching or practical advice	22.0%	16.4%**
Providing emotional support	36.0%	26.9%**
Use of specialised or professional skills to help	26.4%	18.5%**

** differences between religious and non-religious significant at 99% not likely to be the result of chance; * significant at between 95% and 99% not likely to be the result of chance.

Table 1 shows that in every category a higher proportion of religious people compared with the non-religious reported offering care and assistance to non-family

members. In the frequency with which people indicated they had provided care for people outside the family, the differences between Christians and others were not significant, but in providing help such as providing practical assistance, the differences were significant.

Apart from the variety of ways in which care is offered, participants in the survey were asked about the total hours they offered in care and assistance beyond the family. After cleaning the data, the mean number of hours per month offered by these two groups is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Mean Number of Hours Per Month Offered by Christian Attenders and Other People in the Australian Population in Various Types of Care and Assistance

	Christian Attenders	Others
Care beyond family	5.1	4.8
Assistance beyond family	10.4	8.6
Total Informal Care/Assistance Outside the Family	15	13.3

Note: Differences in means between the Christian attenders and others were not significant at the 95% level of confidence that the differences were not a result of chance.

Table 2 shows that, in each category of care and assistance, Christian attenders claimed to offer a great number of hours in care and assistance than others. However, the differences were relatively small and not statistically significant.

It should be noted, however, that it is likely that these hours were exaggerated. In total, the respondents to this survey claimed that they spent, on average, about 14 hours per month in the care of and in assistance to people beyond the family. The ABS Time Use Survey (2006) found that Australian adults spent an average of 7 hours 30 minutes per month in the 'voluntary support of adults' not including the care of children. The time-use surveys undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in which all time use is noted and coded is a much more accurate way of obtaining the data than post-hoc self-reporting of time use. The issue then is whether Christian attenders were more or less likely to exaggerate the hours given in care. That cannot be determined from this survey.

Table 2 compares all people who identified with a Christian denomination and attended church services monthly or more often with the rest of the population. The survey allows us to look at people in different denominational groups. Because of the small numbers in some denominations, the sample was divided into four groups. The mean number of hours of care and assistance given by attenders in these four groups was:

- 16.9 hours among Pentecostal attenders

- 16.7 hours among Catholic / Orthodox attenders;
- 14.7 hours among Evangelical attenders; and
- 13.2 hours among Anglican / Uniting Church attenders.

These differences were not significantly different from each other. Thus, they do not provide evidence that the theological or practical orientation of the church attended makes a difference to the extent to which people provide care and assistance outside the family.

The potential influence of other factors also needs to be considered in its own right and because of its possible interaction with Christian faith. Is it possible that more women are Christian attenders, and more women offer these sorts of informal care. In other words, is the factor which determines the level of informal care being a woman or having Christian faith? A check of the data, however, found no significant difference in this sample in the proportions of males and females who were Christian attenders.

Were church attenders more likely to be involved in home duties or retired? Did these people have more time and opportunity to offer personal care than people in full-time work? Thus, was the additional extent of care a result of people's opportunity rather than driven by their values and beliefs? Examination of the data showed that Christian attenders were no more likely to be involved in home duties than other members of the population. However, it did show a greater likelihood to be retired, as Christian attenders were generally older in years than other members of the population.

Past studies have shown that levels of formal education have been significantly related to the extent of formal volunteering (Black and Hughes 2002). It was found that Christian attenders were generally more highly educated than other members of the population: 38 per cent of Christian attenders had a university degree compared with 29 per cent of the remaining population. Could education be a significant factor in the level of informal care in this study?

Regression analysis allows us to examine the range of variables which we have suggested may have an influence on the extent to which people offer care and assistance to people outside the family. Table 3 looks at the impact of being a Christian attending a church monthly or more often, along with a variety of measures of an altruistic spirit, and thirdly demographic variables. This last group includes age, education, gender, and health.

Table 3 shows the most positive factor is the attitude that what makes life worthwhile is volunteering and participating in community. It is interesting to note that other attitudes, for example, that doing things for others makes life worthwhile, did not have much effect and were not statistically significant having controlled for the importance of volunteering and participating in community. The belief that one should put the needs of others before one's own rights had some impact.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Factors Impacting the Total Number of Hours of Care and Assistance Offered by Australian Adults to People Outside the Family

Factors	Standardised Beta Coefficient	Significance
Christian attender	-0.004	0.839
Volunteering makes life worthwhile	0.125	0.000
Participation in community makes life worthwhile	0.066	0.017
Doing things for others makes life worthwhile	-0.004	0.869
Believe one should definitely not put one's rights before the needs of others	0.048	0.010
Age in years	-0.052	0.013
Being female	0.018	0.345
Education level	-0.034	0.070
Health makes daily tasks difficult	-0.039	0.035
Being retired or in home duties	-0.031	0.155
Working full-time	-0.021	0.035

Adjusted $r^2 = .039$. Sig. = .000.

Further analysis showed that there was a strong relationship between these attitudes to life and Christian church attendance as shown in Table 4. However, many Australians had these attitudes and values but were not church attenders, and there were attenders who did not have these attitudes and values. It must be concluded that the major impact on care and assistance was from these values and attitudes, rather than from the Christian faith, although it remains possible that the Christian faith reinforced those

values among attenders. Hence, Table 3 shows that once values and demographic factors are taken into account, being an attender of a Christian church makes no significant difference to the number of hours one is engaged in informal care and assistance beyond the family.

Table 4. Percentage of Christian Attenders and Others Who Score High (8 or more out of 10) on Scores on Attitudes to Life among Christian Attenders and Others

What Makes Life Worthwhile	Christian Attenders	Others
Volunteering makes life worthwhile	7.4	6.4
Participation in community makes life worthwhile	7.0	5.9
Doing things for others makes life worthwhile	7.9	6.9

In all items, the differences between Christian attenders and others were significant at 99% level.

Among Christian attenders, 23% strongly rejected the idea that one should put one's own rights before the needs of others, compared with 10% of those who were not Christian attenders.

The year of birth was the most significant factor with younger people providing more hours of care and assistance. The highest number of hours of informal help was provided by the youngest group in the survey. The hours decreased through to the 50s, and then increased a little among people in their 60s.

Table 5. Hours Per Month of Informal Helping Outside the Family

Age Group	Hours Per Month of Informal Helping
16 to 29 years	17.2
30 to 39 years	14.5
40 to 49 years	13.3
50 to 59 years	8.98
60 to 69 years	10.58
70 years and older	9.47
Total	13.02

Differences significant at 99% chance level.

Gender was also significant with females offering more hours of care and assistance than males, but when the values and attitudes to life were taken into account, being a female did not make a significant difference. Whoever held altruistic values and valued volunteering and participating in community, whether male or female, offered more hours in informal care and assistance. Education made no significant difference when the attitudes to life and values were taken into account. Health problems which made daily tasks difficult and being involved in full-time work were both small impediments to providing care and assistance to others.

It should be noted that all the factors included in the regression model in Table 3 together explained only 4 per cent of the variance in the number of hours of informal helping. This suggests that there are other important factors which have not been included in this model.

Discussion

While a number of limitations of this study have been noted, including its reliance on the self-reports of those offering care and assistance, there is some evidence in this survey that Christian attenders care for and offer assistance beyond the family in a greater variety of ways than do those who rarely if ever attend a church. While Table 2 suggests that Christian attenders may spend slightly more hours in such care and assistance, the differences between Christian attenders and others were not statistically significant.

There is evidence from the SEIROS survey that motivation to give care is important and people who believe that life is more worthwhile when one is volunteering and participating in community offer more informal care than others. There is also evidence that church attenders may be encouraged in such values. But those values are not confined to the churches and are also found among many other people who are not Christian attenders.

Indeed, whether people are Christian attenders or not, and even what values they hold, have little power in explaining the variation in the number of types of care offered and the hours spent in care. This suggests that other factors which have not been measured are far more important in the types and hours of care and assistance.

The data in Table 5 of the hours of assistance by age suggests some further explanations. Young people (16 to 29 years of age) offered the most informal assistance to others outside their families. Census data indicates that just 16% of Australians in their 20s were married. They are more likely than older people to be involved with friends outside of their families. Among Australians in their 30s, 56% were married (data provided by 2016 Census Table Builder). As families become an increasing preoccupation, so their engagement with and even their capacity to offer assistance to others reduces. For many people in their 50s, work is a major preoccupation too. As people retire, they may find themselves able to offer assistance to a wider range of people again, but their capacity to help others diminishes again as they age.

It seems likely that a major factor in the care and assistance outside the family might be the extent to which people are confronted by the need for care and assistance. The types of care offered and the hours spent probably have much more to do with the situation, that is, the needs presenting to people, than whether people are young or old, female or male, with more or less education or whether they are Christian attenders or

not. People who spend much of their time outside their families are more frequently aware of such needs.

Another way of explaining the lack of distinction between Christian attenders and non-attenders is to argue that the Christian values and heritage have permeated the whole culture. Over the centuries, the Christian values, and particularly the Christian story of the Good Samaritan, have encouraged people to care and assist the stranger. It could be argued, then, that these values continue to be affirmed by many people in Australian society, with the result that the differences between Christian attenders and others are not very evident.

On the other hand, one could take the opposite position and argue that the results of the SEIROS survey were weak because the measures included all people who attend churches, including those who did so because their spouses or parents insisted that they attend, as well as those who were fully committed. Denominations vary in the strength of expectation that they place on their members. Pentecostals, for example, might argue that other Christians have not really opened themselves to the work of the Spirit. If one was able to develop stronger measures of Christian commitment, one might obtain clearer results. Surveys are always blunt instruments which are limited in their ability to measure a person's openness to the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, if there were at least a reasonable number of such people in the sample of 'Christian attenders', and they were significantly different from non-attenders, it should have made a greater difference to some of the mean scores. However, there is little evidence for such a position from the results of this survey. While Pentecostals had the highest hours of assistance of all denominational groups, the differences between them and Catholics and the Orthodox, for example, were not statistically significant.

Conclusion

The 'fruit of the Spirit' are difficult to measure. Paul lists general virtues which have complex relationships with behaviour. While we may easily recognise the 'bad behaviour' which Paul associates with 'the flesh', most people display a range of behaviours from time to time. Most people lose their tempers occasionally and display selfishness from time to time. Most people also show love, joy, kindness and other good behaviour from time to time.

Surveys are blunt instruments in measuring behaviour. They can do no more than contain what people choose to report, and those reports are influenced by the ways people want to present themselves, by their memories, and even by their capacity to make complex calculations of how they spend their time. People usually play down their lapses in behaviour and present their better selves. This paper has taken just one small element of a larger study: to look at informal voluntary assistance to people beyond the family. There are many other behaviours which may reflect the fruit of the Spirit which Paul identified.

Despite these issues of identifying and measuring behaviour which might reflect 'fruits of the Spirit', the SEIROS survey suggests that most Christian church attenders do show care and provide help for other people, and tend to do so in more ways than many of those who do not attend a church or identify as Christians.

Nevertheless, many people outside the churches also care for others. They show love, kindness, gentleness, self-control, and other fruits of the Spirit. It is likely that the hours of care that are given depends more on the situation than on the characteristics of the carer. People respond to the needs of friends and neighbours when they are aware of those needs. This survey has not provided evidence that the hours spent in care and assistance by Christian attenders and others are significantly different.

This raises the theological question as to whether the behaviour of people who do not identify as Christian may be the 'fruit of the Spirit'. Can the Spirit work in those who do not formally acknowledge the Spirit? Or do we say that these 'fruits' are simply naturally produced? The purpose of this paper is not to come to a theological position on where and how the Spirit works. Indeed, one is reminded of Jesus' comments that the Spirit is like the wind. One cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going (John 3:8).

Paul's distinction between the fruit of the Spirit and the activities of the flesh certainly exist in every part of the world and every sector of society. What the empirical data has shown is that the distinction Paul makes between the Spirit and the flesh does not align precisely with those who are active in churches and those who are not. Churches may encourage 'the fruit of the Spirit', but from a Christian perspective, it must be concluded that, if love, joy, peace, kindness and other qualities demonstrate the activity of God's Spirit, than that Spirit is active in the lives of many people both within and outside of the churches. If Paul was intentionally drawing on the teaching of Greek philosophers here, or upon the Jewish Talmud, he may well have been aware that such virtues are universal. Indeed, he suggests as much when he says 'against [these fruits] there are no laws' (Galatians 5:23).

Just as Paul appeared to be concerned that the 'activities of the flesh', of dissension and conflict, in the church of Galatia, so there has always been evidence from time to time of such activities in the churches. Such 'activities of the flesh' are quickly identified by those who would criticise the churches, and, in the process, the 'fruit of the Spirit' can be hidden.

The fact that the Spirit works within and outside of the churches is, in no way a contradiction of Paul's encouragement to 'live by the Spirit' and allow the Spirit to produce its fruit in us. Paul's encouragement is, then, applicable universally: to live in step with the Spirit, and allow the Spirit to produce those fruit that contribute to peace and wellbeing in every part of society.

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