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THE FRUIT OF LOVE
Fruit-Full | Part 1
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This Sunday, we begin exploring the Fruit of the Spirit. These nine-character qualities are a reflection of Christ Himself. The more yielded we are to the Spirit, the more others see the fruit or evidence of His presence in us. In a sense, the first virtue, love, is more than just another dimension to the fruit of the Spirit. It represents the virtue that binds all the others together. Each of them is somehow an expression of love. Come and join us this weekend as Pastor Keith teaches us not just the importance of the fruit of the Spirit but how to begin manifesting them in your life.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5.22-23

...repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and

lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community... Galatians 5.19-21
(The Message)

1. THE ACTS OF THE FLESH VERSUS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

...live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5.16-17

It's His "I will" overcoming our "I can't."

We turn descriptions into commands

Love is not rude. 1 Corinthians 13.5

Jump off the treadmill of self-improvement

cycle of self-improvement

"The contrast between works and fruit is important. A machine in a factory works and turns out a product, but it could never manufacture fruit. Fruit must grow out of life, and, in the case of the believer, it is the life of the Spirit."

- Warren Wiersbe

How do we overcome the flesh?

Aerodynamics of a wing

...walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5.16

The Greek word for “desire” in that verse is epithumia and it means “inordinate craving.”

□ The filling of the Spirit is a daily reality

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit... Ephesians 5.18

Be being filled

60% of their body is water

Be constantly controlled by the Spirit. Ephesians 5.18
(Kenneth Wuest)

...but ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5.18 (Amplified Bible)

Live by the Spirit.	Galatians 5.16
Be filled with the Spirit.	Ephesians 5.18
Do not grieve the Spirit.	Ephesians 4.30
Do not quench the Spirit.	1 Thessalonians 5.19

“The closer you get to believers who are truly walking in the Spirit, the better they look. There is nothing plastic about them. You don’t get the impression that they’re hiding something. They radiate integrity. You get the impression that you could trust them with your most intimate secret. You may even find yourself opening up to them in a way that is uncharacteristic for you. Intimidation is not their game.

They don't rely on personality and trumped-up enthusiasm to win you over. They seem to be at peace with who they are. They are the people you find yourself wanting to be like..." – Dr. Charles Stanley

2. *WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?*

- It's the character of Jesus that God grows in you

"The mere recital of these Christian graces should be enough to make the mouth water and the heartbeat faster. For this is a portrait of Jesus Christ." - John R. W. Stott

When we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, it means that God's own character is bearing fruit in our character. — Christopher Wright

...[w]e] are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3.18

- It is singular not plural

You are only as mature as your most immature fruit.

"Love is the key. Joy is love singing. Peace is love resting. Long-suffering is love enduring. Kindness is love's touch. Goodness is love's character. Faithfulness is love's habit. Gentleness is love's self-forgetfulness. Self-control is love holding the reigns." - Donald Barnhouse

3. LOVE AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE LIFE OF GOD

"[The act of] making the health, happiness, and growth of another person as important to you as your own." - Josh McDowell and Norm Geisler, Love Is Always Right: A Defense of The One Moral Absolute

The Love Chapter versus the Fruit of the Spirit

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13.4-7

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3.12,14

Love ties all the expressions of the gifts together just like it does everything else in the spiritual life.

Which is more important, the fruit or the gifts of the Spirit?

Nowhere in the Bible are spiritual gifts depicted as a measuring tool

Character has to be more important than talent or gifting.

His love is on full display in us

...freely you received, freely give... Matthew 10.8

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon...
Judges 6.34

"Lord, here I am. I want to be Your suit of clothes today. I want You to take me and use me. Lord, just walk around in me today." – Howard Hendricks

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We have two natures within us – what the Bible calls "the flesh" or our baser nature and a new nature made alive by the Spirit. The key to defeating the flesh is by living by the Spirit. Sadly, many people try to live the spiritual life in reverse. They try to defeat the flesh so they can live by the spirit. But that doesn't work. Why? What stood out to you in today's message that maybe you hadn't considered before or illustrated for you how walking in the Spirit helps to defeat the flesh?
2. Spend some time talking about the cycle of self-improvement (the chart that Pastor Keith shared). The four stages are: Try Harder, Fatigue, Quit, Guilt. Have you ever experienced this before? What was the area where you struggled? Have you broken free of this pattern? What helped you to break free?
3. In this message, we were reminded that we are only as mature as our most immature fruit. So, in reading Galatians 5.22-23, of these nine virtues that reflect the character of Christ, where are you strongest and where are you weakest (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control)? It's important to remember

that wherever we discover immature fruit, it reflects a failure to trust Christ in that area. As you apply that thought to your weakest virtue, how might God be trying to grow you? What wounding might exist in that area that still needs healing? Or what cultural way of thinking gets in the way of fully submitting to Christ in this way?

4. Scripture clearly teaches that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event but a daily event. Ephesians 5.18 in the original language doesn't say "be filled" (past tense) with the Spirit, but "be being filled" (present, linear tense). The process of yielded to the Spirit's filling and control is a decision we make every day. And the best way is related to the four commands regarding the Holy Spirit.

Live by the Spirit (Galatians 5.16), Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5.18), Do not grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4.30), Do not quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5.19)

To live by and be filled with the Spirit, we must never grieve or quench Him. Which means being obedient to His leadership and promptings. Have you ever felt led by the Spirit to do or say something? What was it? What happened? How did it work out?

5. Why do we elevate gifting over fruitfulness?

6. Love is the one virtue that bonds all the other fruit together. How and in what ways have you seen God's love put on display through your life?

