

The Nine-Fold Fruit of the Spirit  
Pastor Mitchell Gregory  
July 31, 2022

---

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. Galatians 5:22,23*

---

## The Nine-Fold Fruit of the Spirit

Occasionally, when at a funeral, I might say over the life that we are celebrating, “The Fruit of the Spirit was sweet in his life.” And we need to ask ourselves as well, “Is the Fruit of the Spirit sweet in my life?”

Over the next few weeks, I would like for us to think through and pray through the Fruit, of God the Holy Spirit, both in our church and in our lives. As believing people, we need to significantly engage in the cultivation of the Spirit's Fruit.

When I look at my own life it is easy for me to see how I need to have the Fruit of the Spirit more active and alive in my life. I think all of us will agree that our marriages and our family life could use the cultivation of the Spirit's fruit.

Several years ago, a pastor named Stuart Briscoe preached a series of sermons on the Fruit of the Spirit. A woman came up to him and very respectfully asked if he would consider preaching a series on a godly marriage. It was an honest request and frankly, a very good one.

But Pastor Briscoe decided to show her something of the importance of the Fruit of the Spirit. And he said, “I take it that you're not currently in a loving marriage?” And she replied, “No, not really.”

“And you are struggling to have joy and peace in your relationship with your spouse? And you are impatient and unkind with each other?”

And she understood what he was saying. He *had* been preaching about marriage and family life. None of us will deny that in our relationship with the person we promised to love and cherish, we could really use the Fruit of the Spirit. And we can also use the Fruit of the Spirit in how we love, teach, and discipline our children.

It is equally true to say that every Christian church, and certainly this church, needs to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit in our ministry and life together. We are a people who desperately need to grow in the Fruit that God the Holy Spirit, promises to work in the lives of all those in whom He dwells.

## The Fruit of the Spirit is Singular

It is crucial that we note the verse does not read the “*Fruits of the Spirit are*” but rather, the “*Fruit of the Spirit is*” love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and so on. There are nine virtues, but these nine virtues make up a single piece of the Spirit's fruit: like nine facets of the same jewel—a brilliant cluster. God the Holy Spirit is at work in every believer and in every believing church. He is working all nine of these virtues in us.

It is certainly appropriate to consider each virtue and think and talk about each one. But we can never pick and choose the ones we like and turn a deaf ear or a blind eye toward the others. We are not free to pick and choose—there is only *one* piece of fruit! The Holy Spirit desires to create lives that look like and taste like that single piece of fruit.

Contrast this with the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. You find these in the New Testament Epistles and can easily create a somewhat lengthy list. We're taught that every believer has at least one gift and likely several gifts, but no believer possesses *all* the spiritual gifts.

But when it comes to the Fruit of the Holy Spirit—all nine virtues of this brilliant cluster—this single piece of spiritual fruit are to be on display in our lives. This is no small matter. The Fruit of the Spirit is how the Holy Spirit wants your life to look and sound. It is how the Holy Spirit wants your character to taste. God the Holy Spirit, dwells in every believer. His purpose is to make our lives taste like his sweet fruit. It's singular. The Fruit of the Spirit.

## The Fruit of the Spirit is Christlikeness

When one looks seriously at the life of Jesus and considers the Fruit of the Spirit, what you get is a beautiful picture of Jesus. Consider some examples.

*Love.* We read in John 13:1 “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” He loved his own people to the end. He loved his own to the uttermost. He loved to the full extent of his love. The love of Christ for us is all-consuming.

*Joy.* Jesus tells us in John 15 “Abide in Me and in my Word”—cling to Him, stay close to him—draw your very life from him. And in 15:11, he says, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” Jesus is a joyous sovereign. He is a joyous savior. And He gives us his very joy so we will have, as Peter says in his epistle, “a joy, unspeakable and full of glory” (I Peter 1:8.) The joy of Jesus.

*Peace.* In John 14:27, we read “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Christ promises us his own peace. In the life of Jesus, it is undeniable that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is on display in how He speaks and how he lives.

*Self-Control.* You will never read in the Gospels or epistles of a moment where Jesus was sinfully impatient. Never once did He commit an act of “badness.” He is the Lord who is always good and filled with self-control.

*Gentleness.* He even claimed the virtue of gentleness. In Matthew's Gospel we read, ““Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am *gentle* and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30.)

*Faithfulness.* In John's Revelation, Jesus is called a “faithful and true witness” (Revelation 19:11.) When you read the life of Jesus in the Gospels and see it explained in the Epistles, his life *is* the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

To cultivate the fruit of the Spirit is to pursue a lifestyle of Christlikeness. Galatians 4:19 reads, “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.” He is longing that Christ be formed in them. Your life takes shape to look like the image of Christ. The Fruit of the Spirit is Christlikeness.

Christopher Wright writes, “What the spirit of God does, above all, is to make those who put their faith in Jesus to become more and more like the Jesus they love, trust, and follow. So, the more we are filled with God's Spirit, and the more the Spirit ripens his Fruit within us, the more we become like Christ.” The Fruit of the Spirit, this single piece of fruit, this beautiful cluster of virtues, is essentially Christ's likeness. The fruit of the Spirit is singular. The fruit of the spirit is Christlikeness.

## The Fruit of the Spirit is Our Ultimate Purpose

Often in the Christian faith, we ask, “What is our chief end as a believing people? What is to be our highest priority?” We want to know, “What is absolute?”

The question is answered in four different ways: Jesus said, the first and greatest commandment is to love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength (Mark 12:30); to love God supremely above all else—with the totality of our personhood.

Another answer frequently given, is to quote Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33.) That word “first” means to seek as a matter of priority, above all else, to live loyal to the King, (for we are in his kingdom) and to pursue a lifestyle of righteousness.

Then, of course, there are the answers that the catechisms give. “What is the Chief end of Man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” But the one most often given is that our ultimate purpose is to “walk like Jesus walked” (I John 2:6,) to live like Jesus lived. Our ultimate purpose is Christlikeness, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27.)

These four different answers are four ways of stating the same reality. We prove our love for God by living a Christlike life and pursuing a lifestyle of righteousness; to live right is to live like Christ. When we study the Fruit of the Spirit and its ninefold beauty, we are taking care of the main thing we are called to pursue as a believing people.

This is such a crucial truth that I want us to hear from two trusted witnesses who are now in heaven. A.W. Tozer writes “God's highest purpose in the redemption of humanity was based in His hope that we would allow him to reproduce the likeness of Jesus in our once sinful nature.”

Warren Wiersbe writes, “God wants us to become like Jesus because there is no higher purpose or goal for us to realize...[Christlikeness] is something that should claim our devotion day after day for the rest of our lives.”

It's a singular piece of fruit, and the Holy Spirit is working all nine of those virtues at the same time. These realities are on display in the life of your Lord. This is what matters supremely.

## Two Actions are Required of Us

*Depend on the Holy Spirit.* In the 19th century, a small group of ministers living in Chicago got together to plan an evangelistic campaign for their city. One of their jobs was to decide who they would invite to be the speaker. Obviously, the very first name that was mentioned was D.L. Moody, a famous worldwide evangelist at that time who also pastored in the city of Chicago. One minister who did not want Moody to speak said, “Why Moody? Does Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?”

You can imagine there was some uncomfortable silence. Finally, one minister decided to break the silence in an attempt at humor. He said, “Moody, Moody, Moody. Does Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?”

Another short pause and one minister quietly said, “No. But it does seem that the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on D.L. Moody.” This is exactly what needs to happen in our church and in your life and mine—the Holy Spirit. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to fully control us. We should be yielded to his guidance. In Luke 11:13 Jesus promises, “Ask the Father and He will give you the Holy Spirit.” Ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit, to empower you, to use you, to guide you and to create the Fruit of the Spirit in your life.

*Pray regularly, humbly, and aggressively* for God to work the Fruit of the Spirit in your life. There's a prayer that I've been praying for my own life each day for just a few years. It was written by John Stott, who prayed this prayer every morning as he was getting out of bed for 50 years. “Good morning, Heavenly Father. Good morning, Lord Jesus. Good morning, Holy Spirit. Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, I ask you that this day I may live in your presence and please you more and more. Lord Jesus, I ask that this day I may take up my cross and follow you. *Holy Spirit, I ask that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your sweet fruit to*

*ripen in my life. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. O glorious God in three persons. Have mercy on me today. Amen.”*

Did you hear it? Praying for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Praying for the sweet fruit of the Spirit into the fabric of His personality and daily life.

Over the weeks as we work through the Spirit's Fruit, take the passages we will use. Take them into your day and into your week. Pray the sweet Fruit of the Spirit for your marriage, yourself, and our church. Oh, how desperate is our need for God the Holy Spirit to produce in us that which makes our lives taste like the sweet fruit of the spirit!

*Heavenly Father, these words in this verse are so encouraging that we can live a life of love and joy and peace. And that the sweet Fruit of the Spirit can enrich us spiritually and enable us to be the kind of husbands and wives and children and church friends and Christians that we ought to be.*

*There will always be those episodes when the fruit is shriveled and the taste “not good.” Make those kinds of experiences less and less. And may we so abide with Christ and so depend on the Fruit of the Spirit, that we taste more and more like what brings you glory. Make us more like Jesus. We pray in your name, Amen.*

Mitchell Gregory  
edited by ckg