

Bridgeway Community Church
 Senior & Founding Pastor Dr. David Anderson
 Series: Living a MAKE IT BETTER Life
 October 9, 2022

**Living a MAKE IT BETTER Life:
 “9 Spiritual Fruits to Make You Better” (Part II)**

Last week we all experienced a group confession and group repentance as we saw the sins of the flesh on the screen, versus the fruit of the Spirit.

We learned that the **“Fruit of the Spirit”** from our key passage, **Galatians 5:22**, is the fruit of **LOVE**.

I proposed for your consideration that the nine fruits of the Spirit could possibly all be flowing out of just *one source*, **the fruit of LOVE**, because the text says singularly:

- *“The **FRUIT**(singular) of the Spirit **IS**(singular) love” (Galatians 5:22 NIV84)*

NOT “The fruits (plural) of the Spirit are (plural) love”

Additionally, the punctuations aren’t Holy-Spirit-inspired or authoritative in scripture which means that it is possible to put a colon (:) after the word “love” instead of a comma (,). Therefore, if the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, then the other 8 pieces of fruit flow out of that love.

Do you remember this teaching?

This means we can read the verse like this:

- *“The fruit of the Spirit is Love: (colon)...joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.”*

We also learned that the “Fruit that Lasts” from **John 15:16** is also talking about LOVE.

- Jesus said: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. (John 15:16 NIV84)*

So then, The fruit of love is eternal and **producing such fruit is completely dependent** on our connection to Jesus Christ, who describes himself as the vine and describes us believers as the branches.

Jesus says:

- *“I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains (abides) in me and I in him, he will bear **much fruit**; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5 NIV84)*

Finally, in our review, we said there were 4 levels of fruit from **John 15**:

- *“No fruit” (v.2)*
- *“Bears [some] fruit” (v.2b)*
- *“More fruit” (v2c)*
- *“Much fruit” (v5, 8)*

Jesus says that in order to get you to produce fruit in your life, the Gardener (God) may have to PRUNE certain things out of your life so that you will **bear more fruit**.

He may prune even more in order for you to **bear much fruit!**

Question:

Does anybody know what it feels like to have God PRUNE, or cut things out of your life?

Later on you realize that it was better for you anyway!

Later on you realize that you didn't need all of the extra weight and clutter in your life anyway!

Later on you realize that the very thing God pruned was the very thing that was holding you back from being the person God wanted you to be!

You may be mad that God pruned you from a job, only to realize that it was that job that was making you more fleshly and less holy.

You may have been upset that God pruned you from a relationship, but later you realize that it was that relationship that had become an idol in your life, causing you to lose your faith in the one true God.

We must trust that the Great Gardener knows what He is doing in order *to bring out the best fruit in us to make us better.*

Working off of this premise that the Fruit of the Spirit is LOVE and all the other fruit flows from them...

And working off of the premise that *the “Fruit that lasts” is LOVE...*

And working off of the premise that *the only way we can bear fruit is by being connected to the vine, Jesus Christ...*

I ask myself this Question:

What is the relationship of the other fruits to the fruit of love?

We call these *9 fruits that will make you better*, but we can also say that: **It is just ONE fruit that will make you better, *expressing itself in multiple ways.***

That ONE fruit is LOVE...expressing itself in *joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

LOVE (agape) is - *God’s affection and unconditional commitment to us.*

What does this agape love produce?

- **JOY**

- *“An inner happiness of the soul & confidence that God has everything under control regardless of the circumstances”*
- Happiness depends on “happenings”
- Joy is your inner soul’s happiness and confidence on God, even in the midst of bad happenings

- **PEACE**

- *“A settled spirit of calm in your inner being that quiets anxiety and worry”*

- Prayer can lead you into peace
- Pauls says in **Philippians 4:6-7**:
 - *“Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything through prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the PEACE of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
(Philippians 4:6-7 NIV84)
- **PATIENCE**
 - *“Perseverance in waiting and endurance over time with a spirit of discipline to hold on until your change comes”*
 - James 1 says that patience is often developed through trials.
 - Be careful when praying for patience because you may be inviting trials in your life.
- **KINDNESS**
 - *“Being considerate and thoughtful in one’s actions and words”*
- **GOODNESS**
 - *“Being upright, noble, and virtuous”*
 - Good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5)
 - Good confession (1 Timothy 6:12)
 - Good deeds (1 Timothy 6:18)
 - Good soldier (2 Timothy 2:3)
 - Good fight (2 Timothy 4:7)
 - Good hope (2 Thessalonians 2:16)
 - Good health (3 John 2)
 - Cling to what is “good” (Romans 12:9)
- **FAITHFULNESS**
 - *“Keeping faith, fidelity, and trustworthiness while holding on to what you believe and have vowed”*

- Unfaithfulness means you know longer believe in something and are no longer holding on to what you once vowed to
- God is always faithful and always keeps his promises, even when others don't, won't, or can't
- **GENTLENESS**
 - "Humility and meekness tenderly applied when relating to others"
 - **1 Peter 3:15** says -
 - *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **GENTLENESS and respect.**" (NIV84)*
- **SELF-CONTROL**
 - The power of self-restraint over one's passions and indulgences
 - Jesus said:
 - *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* (**Matthew 16:24 NIV84**)

(with the exception of Love) Please stand up when I mention the fruit that you are most drawn to right now...

- JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS, & SELF-CONTROL

Question:

Did you stand up for that fruit mentioned because it is the *Fruit you WANT* the most, or *NEED to work on* the most?

- Raise your hand if it is because it is the fruit you WANT THE MOST.
- Raise your hand if it is because it is the fruit you NEED TO WORK ON THE MOST.

Here's the point: **YOU CAN'T WORK ON THE FRUIT!**

YOU CAN'T WORK ON THE FRUIT, BUT THE FRUIT CAN WORK IN YOU!

- God is the one who produces the fruit. NOT YOU
- What you can do is - ABIDE in him.
- He is the vine that produces the good fruit.
- Don't focus on the fruit.
- Focus on the vine. HE IS THE VINE
- Let the vine produce the fruit.
- The fruit comes from the root.

“Stay rooted and you will stay fruited!”

All throughout scripture we can see this relationship between love and the other fruit

- For example, **1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NIV84)** says:
 - *“Love is **PATIENT**, love is **KIND**. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude (the opposite of **GENTLENESS**)*
- Another example: **2 Peter 1:5-7 (NIV84)** says:
 - *“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith **GOODNESS**; and to goodness, knowledge, 6 and to knowledge, **SELF-CONTROL**, and the self-control, **PERSEVERANCE (PATIENCE)**, and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly **KINDNESS**; and to brotherly kindness, **LOVE**.”*
 - Love is the ultimate expression of these qualities...
 - ***Verse 8** gives us this idea that these qualities (or fruits) must “grow” or “increase” as we stay connected to the Lord.*

- Peter says: “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:8)
- The language Peter uses is different from Paul, but the concept of growth, of producing or being productive, and increasing is the same. Peter calls them “qualities.” Paul calls them “fruit”

Such “qualities” or “fruit” can only grow and increase when we are connected to the vine. *Jesus* is the vine; *we* are the branches. In fact, I like to say it like this...

- “NO VINE, NO WINE!”

Question:

How do we stay connected to the vine?

6 Ways to Stay Connected to the Vine:

1. REFUSE TO CONNECT WITH ANYTHING OR ANYONE WHO PULLS YOU AWAY FROM THE VINE

- “You can pick my fruit, but you can’t have my branch!”
- Some people are no longer productive for Christ because they’ve been separated from him

2. RENEW YOUR CONNECTION WITH THE VINE EVERYDAY, ALL DAY THROUGH PRAYER

- The bible says, “Pray without ceasing”. (1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIV84)
- Pray in the morning when you wake up
- Pray at night before you go to bed
- Pray before you eat a meal

- Pray before you drive off
- Pray before you walk into meetings
- Pray in moments of temptation or struggle
- When you pray you are renewing your connection with the vine, just like reconnecting your phone to a charger!
- HERE'S A GOOD IDEA - In fact, *everytime you put your phone on a charger*, let that be a sign to renew your connection with the Lord.

3. **READ GOD'S LOVE LETTER TO YOU EVERYDAY**

- Proverbs & Psalms on the date of the calendar (e.g. Proverbs 1 on October 1)

4. **REPENT WHEN YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DISCONNECTED FROM THE VINE**

- **1 John 1:9 (NIV84)** says, "*Confess your sins and he is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.*"

5. **RAISE A HALLELUJAH THROUGH PRAISE TO GOD**

- Get Christian music in your spirit
 - Bright FM with Tracey Tiernan Coiro in the mornings (95.1fm)
 - Praise 104.1 gospel music
 - Develop your own Christian music playlist

6. **REPEAT WAYS 1-5!**

Transition:

As I move to the last part of this message, I need to take you back to the book of Galatians so that you can get the bigger and better picture of what was going on to bring about this entire matter about the flesh and the Spirit in the first place.

In understanding the broader context this will help us understand our own church and our own lives.

So, here is what was happening among the Galatian church...

- They were *fighting* with each other.
- This fighting caused *factions*.
- These factions led to the *fruits of the flesh* to be expressed as people's sinful natures were on fleek.
- This is why all of the sins that are listed in **Galatians 5:19-21** have so *many sins that were related to social division* listed like:
 - *hatred,*
 - *discord,*
 - *jealousy,*
 - *fits of rage,*
 - *selfish ambition,*
 - *dissensions,*
 - *factions,*
 - *envy*

Wow!

- Out of the 15 listed, 8 of them, the majority were *dealing with social division*.

Question:

What do you think caused this fighting to begin? Any guesses?

Answer:
FALSE TEACHING!!

- False teaching led to Fighting
- Fighting led to Factions
- Factions gave way to Fruits of the Flesh being manifest all over the church

Unfortunately, it sounds like a lot of churches today, doesn't it?

Question:

What was the False Teaching that caused so much raucous in the Galatian churches?

- ***"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law. 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith'. 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things will live by them. (Galatians 3:10-12 NIV84)***
- ***13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." (Galatians 3:13-14 NIV84)***
- ***"Formerly, when you did not know God you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."***
(Galatians 4:8-11 NIV84)

Paul is telling the Galatians not to get caught up in the old Jewish law because we are people of the Holy Spirit now.

Jesus was the one who fulfilled the law.

Faith in him brings you fully into a right relationship with God.

- The false teaching was even making gentile Christians feel less because they weren't circumcised.
- They were basically saying that *"If you are going to be a real Christian, then you Gentiles need to be circumcised."*
- Paul even confronted *Peter* in chapter 2 because he was acting two-faced when he was with the Gentiles and would show a different face when he was with the Jews.
- This was such a problem that it even caused Barnabas, the son of encouragement, to be affected.
- You can read about this on your own in **Galatians 2:11-16**

This theological division over legalistic teaching became so bad that Paul not only confronted Peter, *but he confronted the entire church!*

- ***"You foolish Galatians! Who bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?** 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" (Galatians 3:1-5 NIV84)***

Finally, he drops the hammer in chapter 5 by saying:

- ***"It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."** (Galatians 5:1)*

In other words, STOP IT!

- STOP all this legalism
- STOP all this fighting over religious tradition

- STOP all this arguing over who is more spiritual

And then Paul gives them the bottom line answer to it all in Galatians 5:6. In fact I believe that 5:6 is the key to the whole book. I believe that **Galatians 5:6** is the *central message* of Paul's letter to the Galatians and the ALL BELIEVERS!

Read it with me aloud please...

Galatians 5:6

**“THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS IS FAITH EXPRESSING ITSELF
THROUGH LOVE!”**

- *Let's say it again please...*

**“THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS IS FAITH EXPRESSING ITSELF
THROUGH LOVE!”**

Through what? LOVE!

Through money? NO

Dietary restrictions? NO

Observing special holy days? NO

Wearing certain clothes? NO

Denominational preferences? NO

Worship preferences? NO

Love for your Race? NO

Love for your Culture? NO

Love for your Country? NO

Men only? NO

Women only? NO

Republican political platforms? NO

Democrats' political platforms? NO

ONE THING!

LOVE!!

Recite **Galatians 5:6** one more time so that I know you got the message!

**“THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS IS FAITH EXPRESSING ITSELF
THROUGH LOVE!”**

Review:

THE PROBLEM – False Teaching (which led to fighting, to factions, to fruit of the flesh - social divisions)

THE SOLUTION (For them and for us!) –

1. TURN TO FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE, AND NOTHING ELSE!

- Or for the Galatians, *turn back to faith in Christ alone!*

True Christianity is about our faith in JESUS CHRIST alone. Period!

- Nothing more.
- Nothing less.
- Nothing else!

Question:

Have you responded to Jesus Christ by faith in him alone for your salvation?

You can do that today by simply praying to invite Jesus into your life and asking him for salvation and receiving his love for you by faith.

**2. EXPRESS YOUR FAITH THROUGH LOVE, EVIDENCED BY THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT!** (Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control)

The POSSESSION of the fruit of the Spirit will be demonstrated by the EXPRESSION of the fruit of the Spirit in you.

- If you are not expressing the fruit of the spirit in your life, don't work on it.
- Return to the vine and ask the Lord to *work in you as you stay connected to him!*

Remember:

NO VINE, NO WINE!