

# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

A Life Changed by Jesus

WEEK ONE: John 15:1-8

## The Fruit of the Spirit: A Brief Introduction

This term we will be focusing on what a life changed by Jesus looks like using the metaphor of the fruit of the Spirit. This common biblical metaphor describes the outcomes of a life lived with God; the virtues and characteristics that ought to be the harvest of our lives.

Our central text will be Galatians 5:16-23 but we'll also incorporate other texts that reflect on fruitfulness.

## Sermon Outline:

### A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

**Key Text(s):** John 15:1-8

Fruitfulness is a common biblical metaphor. Paul uses it. Jesus uses it. The prophets used it. It is found in the wisdom literature. It is found in the Law. It is found in creation. In fact, its use in the opening chapters of Genesis, both literally and figuratively, is foundational for its use in the rest of Scripture. In creation, fruitfulness is associated with the Lord's provision. This connection is particularly important in the Law where God's faithful provision for his people is described in terms of fruitfulness.

Fruitfulness is also associated with the Lord's presence. In the middle of the Garden – where the Lord would come to walk in the cool of the evening – were the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of these trees conveyed “god-like” attributes; those attributes most closely associated with the divine. This connection of fruitfulness and God's presence can be seen in the fruit imagery found in the tabernacle and temple. It is also reflected in Jesus' declaration that we must remain in him to bear fruit.

Finally, fruitfulness is connected with the Lord's purposes in creation. The fruitfulness of humanity is central to the realisation of God's plans in the world. It is through the fruitfulness of his people that God's plans will be brought to fruition! Whether this be Abraham, the people of Israel, or the Church this is true. Jesus affirms this when he states that our fruitfulness is to his Father's glory!

The fruit of our lives is to be a public demonstration of God's character in the world – and should serve his purposes.

The image of fruit-bearing – especially the way Jesus speaks of it in John 15 – emphasises the need to remain in him. Just as a branch must remain attached to the tree to bear fruit, we must remain in Jesus (or walk with God or keep in step with the Spirit). This reminds us that fruitfulness is not merely a matter of trying harder, or doing better, but of resting in God.

What, however, is our role in this process? For surely there must be something we are to do?

Our role is connected to the fruit we are seeking to demonstrate – God’s. The first role we have is to remain in Christ!

A second role is to imitate the character of the one we are remaining in so that people recognise him in us.

A number of years ago, for my wife’s birthday, I cooked a special dinner for her and a few friends. One of the courses was a fish soup by UK chef and restaurateur, Rick Stein. As I served the soup, one of the guests, having tasted it, asked if it was Rick Stein’s recipe! I was pleased to know that I had followed the recipe to such a degree that it was still recognisable as Rick Stein’s soup and more than a little impressed that she was so familiar with the original that she could recognise it at all. The thing is that Rick Stein didn’t cook the soup that night. I did. I bought the ingredients. I followed the recipe. I served the soup. It was, however, recognised for what it was – Rick Stein’s soup!

This ought to be our aim with the fruit that we seek to imitate in our lives. It ought to be recognisable as the Lord’s – his love, his joy, his peace – and point people to him.

## Questions to Ask

1. How would you describe/explain what it means to be “fruitful” (in any area of life)?
2. Fruitfulness is found in rest and imitation. How do we maintain this tension in our lives?
3. We are seeking fruit that is recognisable as God’s, not just being nice or good people. Consider the differences between a human “love” and God’s. What are the key differences and how might we foster them in our lives? (NOTE: Feel free to start with a different “fruit of the Spirit” and/or to repeat this exercise with a few of them.)
4. What are the implications of fruitfulness being associated with the Lord’s provision, presence, and purpose?

## A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other and for our community of faith that the fruit of the Spirit might become more and more evident in our lives.

## A Practice to Try

Our “work” in producing fruit begins with remaining in Jesus or, as Paul puts it, keeping in step with the Spirit. One way we might remember to remain is through what is known as a breath prayer; a prayer that can be said in one breath. Consider a simple prayer such as, “Lord Jesus, remain in me, that I might bear much fruit.” Or, “Holy Spirit, keep me in step with you, that I might bear much fruit.” Or something similar. Seek to pray this breath prayer whenever you remember.

## Readings to Read This Week

The following readings focus on the theme of fruitfulness.

- Psalm 1
- Isaiah 5:1-7
- Mark 4:1-20
- Matthew 7:15-20
- Ephesians 5:1-20

## A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our vision as a community of faith is to see lives changed by Jesus. In this series we want to consider what that really means – what does a life changed by Jesus look like?

## A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. Last Sunday we celebrated baptisms with six people from our community of faith being baptised as an expression of their belief in Jesus and commitment to his plans and purposes. Take a few moments to pray that God would continue to work in their lives and that more people would take the step of baptism in the months to come!