

Fruit of the Spirit - Love

As a follower of Jesus, I know there is one thing that our world needs more than anything else....Jesus! Right?

If you look around and see all of the evil and destruction in the world, all of the hate, all of the division and warring, it's clear that our world needs Jesus.

Do you know that even the world will admit it needs Jesus? "All you need is love". It's a popular mindset for the world's problems except we have a wrong idea of what love is. Love is not acceptance of every single person's standards on morality, love is not being ok with sinful lifestyles, love is not turning a blind eye.

When the world says we need love, they are right, because God is Love.

1 John 4:8 (NKJV)

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

It doesn't say God has love but He IS LOVE. It's not just a quality that He has, it's the essence of Who God is, who God has been, and who God always will be. If He IS love, then there is no evil in Him.

This world needs love because it needs Jesus! The church needs love because it needs Jesus!

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Today we are diving into the first of the fruit of the Spirit....love.

Last week we looked at the setup for the fruit of the Spirit. Paul talked about how we naturally desire the works of the flesh and they oppose the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh are things that we produce in our life but the fruit of the Spirit are the things that the Holy Spirit produces in our life.

The flesh may imitate, or counterfeit, certain of the virtues, but it can never produce them. The Spirit alone can do that.

The Spirit produces love in the lives of believers. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. So when connected to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will produce love in your life.

Does anyone here love perfectly?
Anyone even understand love perfectly or completely?

Notice that the verb "is" is in the present tense, indicating that this process of fruit bearing is continuous. As Paul explained to the Philippians...
He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NKJV)

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

We are called to walk in love because as children of God, being changed into the image of Christ, should actually look like Jesus....love!

In the fruit of the Spirit, love is listed first. I've shared this a few times but when you see a list in the bible, if you study the text, there is almost always a reason for the order. I've yet to find a list where that isn't the case. It was inspired by the Holy Spirit when written and I think we should think about things like the order of lists....

Love is first because love is the basis for all of the rest of the fruit. See unlike the gifts of the Spirit where you may receive one, two, or more. The fruit is an all or nothing kind of deal. It's a package deal. If the Spirit is in you, it's producing the fruit....

But it begins with love. Love is the first thing produced because without it, you can't produce the rest of the fruit.

Love is the foundation for the rest of the fruit....

Joy is love exulting. Peace is love resting. Patience is love enduring. Kindness is love with bowed head. Goodness is love in action. Faithfulness is love confiding. Gentleness is love in refinement. Self-Control is love obeying.

Speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul said:

1 Corinthians 13:2 (NKJV)

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If the Spirit is not producing love in your life.....it doesn't matter what else you can do. With every action we take, God looks at the heart. When He looks at the heart, He looks to see if it's being done with love as the motivation or something else.

That's how God knows if the action is pure. It's how He knows if what we are doing is a worldly action or godly action.

If you are not connected to the vine (Jesus) you can't produce love. THIS is why I say without reservation that you can't really love someone if you don't know Jesus. I'm not saying you can't have strong feelings about someone or something, but it isn't love.

God is love. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. So the inverse of that is also true. He who does not know God does not love. Because He can't.....

We're talking about a love that is an unconditional, sacrificial love which is ultimately reflects the very essence of God Himself!

Agape love is the unconditional sacrificial love that God not only **is** , but that God **shows** and that God **commands** of believers as seen in the scriptures:

1 John 3:16-17 (NKJV)

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

John 15:12-13 (NKJV)

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And so God commands agape love in believers, and what He commands, He always enables Paul explained that in:

Romans 5:5 (NKJV)

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Church, does your life reflect this fruit? Do you love unconditionally?

True love is not conditional. Salvation is conditional....you have to believe that Jesus is Lord and accept Him as such. Then you may be saved.

But He died for every single person, no matter if they make the choice to follow Him or not.

WOW....that is unconditional love.....and THAT is what the Holy Spirit produces in our lives....

So why don't we walk in it? Is the Holy Spirit not very good at His job?

1. THE WEED

What is a weed?

- a valueless plant growing wild, especially one that grows on cultivated ground to the exclusion or injury of the desired crop.
- any undesirable or troublesome plant, especially one that grows profusely where it is not wanted

The weed that tries to choke out love is....**hate**.

Our perception of hatred is tainted by sin nature. We either think we hate nothing (when we have a strong view of hate) or we think hate is not that bad (when we have a light view of hate)

It's whatever is best for us. That's what we usually believe.

Hatred does not always have to be intense, bitter, and ugly. It can be in a careless remark, or a passive-aggressive jab, or even an entire attitude received from those around us or from our culture.

Intensity is no the essence of the act of hating. We hate what we "don't like". Hate is to dislike intensely or passionately. But hate is also to be unwilling. For most of us that unwillingness is being unwilling to love unconditionally.

Where does the weed of hate spring up in your life?

1 John 3:15 (NKJV)

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Matthew 5:21-24 (NKJV)

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his

brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

It should be our prayer every day to see people the way Jesus does because it will be with love. Because when we see them the way we do it will be with hate.

This is so important and so vital to your life that it even affects your worship. When you have hate toward another, you are operating out of the flesh, sin nature, and it separates you from God.

See when you worship Jesus, a big part of what you are doing is saying "Jesus, I honor you. I have great respect for you. I am in awe of you. You are amazing."

But when we have hate in our heart we are unwilling to operate in the love that His Spirit is trying to produce in our lives. We are letting weeds choke it out. And He is wanting us to go yank the weeds out by the roots and let the love flourish because it's out of that position that we can truly come before Him in unhindered worship!

I know not everyone in this room is having huge relationship issues, but some are. If you are....deal with them. If you are not willing, I'm telling you that your worship to God is in vain....that mean unsuccessful....

Romans 12:9 (NKJV)

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

You can hate what God hates....sin....evil....but don't let the weed of hate choke out the fruit of love.

2. THE IMITATOR

You ever see some kind of plant growing up near some others and you aren't sure if it's a weed or not? Sometimes it's even kind of pretty on the surface, maybe it has little purple booms on it. Then come to find out....it's a an imitator? It looks like a flowering plant but in actuality it's a weed.

We have something like that in our lives. The love imitator....it's what we produce by the flesh that looks like the fruit of love but it's not real. It's an imitator....

Limited love. It's an artificial fruit, a counterfeit that masquerades as the real thing.

This is pretty obvious....it's where instead of loving unconditionally as Jesus modeled for us and as His Spirit produces in us.....we love with limits.

Love with limits is what every single unbeliever does. Because you can't love unconditionally without the Holy Spirit.

When we love conditionally, we are operating in our sin nature.

Matthew 5:46 (NKJV)

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Loving people does produce godliness in you. Godliness in you produces love for people.

Galatians 5:24 (NKJV)

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

It takes a day by day process of submitting to God in order to overcome evil tendencies.

Don't be fooled but the imitator. Don't settle for loving people you like, people that are good to you and nice. It does not produce the righteousness of God.....it's a fake.....God knows it....and people often do too!

So what do we do? Uproot the weed of hate. Identify the imitator, limited love. And then what?

Matthew 22:37-39 (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The Holy Spirit produces the fruit. And His fruit is always the outward manifestation of the submitted believer's inner life.

We've got to see weeds and the imitator, but then we have to bear the fruit. We have to bring forth what the Spirit produces. It's not a "do nothing" and God does all the work. He produces love, He provides it, it's there.....YOU have to bear it, YOU bring it forth.....choose to operate in it.

It's not all about defining love....the bible doesn't define love, it illustrates love.

All of life is love for Jesus!

Physical fruit grows because it was produced by a living plant.....the fruit of love is produced in you because it's produced by the Spirit that is alive in you.

As a new creature, a branch to the vine, you are still responsible for taking an active part in bringing forth that love. A love that has been given to you,

Jesus spoke of this love, He taught us of this love and then He SHOWED us this love.

He gave His life for His enemies. Those who were against Him.....He loved them without conditions. He didn't hate them. He didn't say if they do this or that then I'll love them. He loved them.

What about you?