

The Fruit of the Spirit

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[0:00] Why do I have to? There's so many commands. But why should I obey God? Why should I obey God? Johnny reminded me of a video I saw the other day of someone interviewing a few Olympic athletes.

! The athletes were asked two questions. Number one, how much do you train? How much do you train? Who here likes to wake up at 5 a.m. every day just to torture your body for a few hours? I certainly don't. But these athletes, 6-7 days a week, a few hours a day, a few times a day, would train. The second question they were asked is this.

How often do you drink alcohol? How often do you drink alcohol? Any guesses for what they said? What do you think they said? Yeah, nothing. Never. Almost never.

And why is that? Because they know that alcohol hurts their bodies. It will hurt their performance. So why do athletes do this? Some athletes are sponsored. Maybe they're endorsed by Nike or the Hong Kong Sports Federation.

[1:04] And have contracts requiring them to train. And they pull up the contract and it says, Thou shalt train 30 hours a week. Or thou shalt not drink alcohol. Or thou shalt slurp on egg yolks and drink smoothies.

Maybe that's what the contract says. I don't know. I've never received a contract. But some athletes are bound by this contract, by the written law, and they have to obey it. That's one way that athletes train.

But I don't think that's the mindset that brings top athletes to the podium. Olympians, they train hard. They discipline themselves because they love their sport.

They love basketball. They love running. They love gymnastics. And they want the prize. The countless hours of blood, sweat, and tears abstaining. It's all worth it when they hear their anthem playing.

They see the flag being raised. And they have gold around their necks. And that's the same reason why we obey God. That's the reason behind our Christian obedience. We don't obey because we're bound by contract, because we're bound by law, by a set of rules.

[2:08] We obey because we love God, because we have faith in Christ. We believe in Him. And we want this reward. We believe His promises. And we're looking forward to what He promises us.

And that's what the book of Galatians is about. Galatians is a letter from the Apostle Paul to the Church of Galatia. And speaking of the top hits of the Bible, let me tell you about Galatians.

Galatians hits hard. Paul doesn't pull any punches. He is absolutely scathing. And the reason why is because the Galatians turned away from the most important thing.

Paul says, I'm astonished that you turned away from the Gospel. I'm astonished. In Galatians, Paul defends an essential element of the Gospel. And that's this. Justification by faith in Christ, apart from works.

We are justified, meaning that we are forgiven and counted righteous by God, not because of what we do. We can't be justified by our efforts to keep God's commands. We can't earn righteousness by following the contract, because we can't keep the terms of the contract.

[3:12] We're justified only through faith in Jesus. Counted righteous only because Jesus died for our sins, died in our place, bearing the punishment and guilt that we deserve. And he rose from the dead.

There's only one name under heaven and earth by which we may be saved. Not Cubon, not Ellen, not Tony, not Gabriel. Only Jesus.

There's only one name and that's Jesus. Now in Galatians 5, Paul says that just as we were justified by faith, we now also obey God by faith.

There's a lot of commands in the Bible, but the commands aren't a chain around our necks or handcuffs behind our backs. The commands are like the string on a kite that ties us to the person playing with the kite.

The person enjoying the kite and holds us so that we may be free to fly, free to soar, free to do like loops and stuff. And free to put smiles on other people's faces. That's what God's commands are like.

[4:09] Also, Olympians, they train and abstain by their own exertion and efforts. They work hard on their own, but that's not how Christians obey God. We have a helper.

We have the spirit of God in us, the third person of the Trinity. God himself dwells in us and dwells in all who are in Christ. And his spirit changes our hearts, transforms us and empowers us to do what is pleasing to God.

So today, as we look at the fruit of the spirit, let's keep in mind this, the point in verse 16, that we ought to walk by the spirit, walk by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Christians do not obey God by keeping the law using brute strength. We obey by following the spirit, walking with him, keeping in step with him. Verse 18 says, if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law.

As we walk by the spirit, he, he produces in us the fruit of the spirit that pleases God. He changes our hearts to hate sin, to love God, to do what is good.

[5:12] So as we go through the fruit of spirit, let's keep in mind that Christian obedience is not done by keeping the law, but by following the spirit as he leads our hearts. So with that said, the plan for today is that we'll, we'll click, we'll quickly run through the fruit of the spirit.

And then we'll take a step back and make a few general observations, tying them all together. Does that sound good? Okay. Now the fruit of the spirit, the first fruit of the spirit is love.

It's not without reason that love comes first. Love is the chief fruit. It's the one that ties all the fruit together. Paul says in Galatians 5, 13, for you were called to freedom, brother.

Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love is the greatest commandment in the Bible. All the other commands, everything God demands of us boils down to this. Love God and love others. What is love? Love is first something that we feel.

[6:13] Love is when we're attracted to something. When we take delight and we take interest in something. Love then moves us to action. We act according to what we love.

Right? For example, I love Jojo, my fiancée, and... Because I love her, I might give her a hug.

Okay? Or I might buy her flowers.

Right? Now, she may have asked me to buy her flowers once or twice. But it's not a command.

Right? And actually, if I bought her flowers just because she commanded me to do it, I don't want to see how that turns out.

Yeah, it's not good. And the same is true. That's not love. That doesn't please her. Right? And the same is true when we obey God out of obligation without love.

That's not how God wants us to obey him. We do it out of love. Love is a disposition of the heart first that then expresses itself in action. And God shows us true love.

[7:21] 1 John 4.10. We went through this a few months ago. It says, In this is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God shows us what real love looks like. Love is sacrificial. It seeks the good of others. God loved us so much that he sent his son to die for us. And do you love?

It's easy to love when it's convenient, but the true test of whether we love is when it costs us. It costs God his son. That's how much he loved us. And 1 John 4.11 says, If God so loves us, we also ought to love one another.

Love expresses itself in action, both big and small. Maybe you need to do something big, but small things are a good first step. I've had a hectic few weeks, as Julian said, and I felt loved when people reached out to encourage me.

It can be as small as that. Let us love one another. Love. Love. That's the first fruit of the spirit. The next one is joy. What comes to mind when you think of joy?

[8:26] I think of inside out. There's this bubbly, cheery emotion that's always happy and positive. But Christian joy is more than that. It's deeper than a shallow happiness.

Christian joy doesn't depend on circumstances. It's a peaceful happiness that shines in every circumstance. And how's that possible? When I think of joy, I also think of Philippians, one of Paul's other letters.

Philippians is one of Paul's most joyful letters, in fact. And he praises God. He's rejoicing. He's hopeful. He's full of joy. But it's interesting that Paul writes Philippians when he's in jail, in a low. He's in jail. He had joy even in the worst of circumstances. And that's possible because joy is related to love. Joy stems from love.

Joy is a celebration, really, of what we love. Right? When Johnny was in the Olympics, no one told him to cheer when Djokovic scored a point. But no, he cheered because he loves tennis.

[9:31] He loves Djokovic. He probably stood up and cheered in joy whenever he scored a point. Right? Or when a husband loves his wife, he feels joy.

A child smiles at his parents, his grandparents. They feel joy. Or when friends feel, they see each other. There's joy. Because they love one another. See, worldly joy doesn't last because sometimes Djokovic loses.

Not this time. But maybe your friends and family will disappoint you. But we can have joy in every situation because we love a God that never fails. We have unshakable joy because Jesus died for us.

There's this unshakable truth. Joy in every circumstance because our names are written in heaven. Because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. See, what are the things that you find joy in?

Family, friends, career, fame. These are good things, but they will disappoint you like broken cisterns as we talked about. God is better than these things. He is the only one that can hold your joy.

[10:36] Love him with all your heart, soul, mind, strength. And then we will have true joy. That's love and joy. Next up is peace. What is peace?

Peace was God's design for us from the beginning. Peace is a state of quiet well-being. There was peace in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, they walked with God.

They had every need taken care of. Work was easy. They just reached out, grabbed a fruit, just not from that one tree. It was easy. They lived in the presence of God and walked with him. But sin destroys peace.

There's no peace for the wicked. Sin broke our relationship with God and brought death and suffering into this world. And that's why we need Jesus. See, Jesus made peace by the blood of his cross.

Romans 5 says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus died for us, we know that the sovereign God of the whole universe, he is for us.

[11:35] He provides for us. And we can look forward when Jesus returns and he restores the peace that we were meant to have. When there's no more tears, no more pain. Where we will be God's people, he will be our God.

The peace that the spirit brings, frees us from anxiety. We don't have to be anxious about everything when we know that God's watching over us, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we will let a request be made known to God.

And then his peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We can cast our anxieties on him because he cares for us. Love, joy, peace.

Next, we have patience. The King James Version translates patience instead as long suffering, long suffering. Now, as common as in the King James, no one uses this word anymore, but I quite like it in this case.

Patience is more than just waiting. It is long suffering. It's tolerating suffering and provocation for a long time. And God displays his patience with us.

[12:37] When we sin, we provoke God all the time. He promised Adam and Eve, the day you eat of this fruit of the tree, you will die. Surely you will die. But yet he is merciful and gracious to us, slow to anger, patient, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

When do you need to show patience? For me, it's as simple as when people stand on the left of the escalator. But also it takes patience to pray for our friends and family for years, for them to know Christ.

May the Spirit lead us to display the patience that God showed us. Love, joy, peace, patience. Next is kindness. Kindness is being helpful and seeking the good of others.

Kindness is benevolent and it's generous. And see how kindness relates to love? Love seeks the good of others and kindness is the display of that. Kindness is an expression of love.

In another way, it's love acted out. It's love in action. That's kindness. After kindness is goodness. And goodness is straightforward. We don't really need to overcomplicate things. Goodness is simply being good.

[13 : 41] It's having high moral character and worth. Goodness. And what I want us to notice is that the fruit of the Spirit is good. As we walk by the Spirit, the attributes, the characteristics that the Spirit brings us, that he produces in us, those are good things.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. What fault can you find in those fruit? What can you say to someone that displays these fruits? That's why verse 23 says, against such thing there is no law.

When we produce the fruit of the Spirit, there's no law saying you can't love, you can't be kind, you can't have peace. Against such fruit there's no law. The Spirit leads us in what is good.

My shepherd, he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. Why wouldn't we want to follow the Spirit? Why would we instead choose to go our own way?

Let us walk by the Spirit because he produces in us what is good. So love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness. And next up is faithfulness. Faithfulness is the quality of being reliable, dependable, and trustworthy.

[14 : 48] If you are faithful, then you will keep your word. You'll be good for what you promise. You will follow through on what you say. Faithfulness is the fruit of the Spirit because God is faithful.

He is true and he can't lie and he will do what he promises. And I'm thankful that God is faithful, that we can take him at his word. Right? What good is it if Jesus maybe died?

If he maybe rose from the dead, if I call on him, I might be saved. Do you promise that I may be forgiven? No, we have the unshakable promise that we are saved because Jesus died and rose from the grave.

Because God is faithful. We can take him at his word. That's why we can hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering because he who promised is faithful. How terrible would it be if God weren't faithful?

We'd have no hope. And we represent him. So let also our yes be yes and our no be no. After faithfulness, there's gentleness.

[15 : 51] And we've said it before, gentleness isn't the same as weakness. Gentleness isn't weakness. You can be both strong and gentle at the same time. A few months ago, I went with Young Life to Thailand and we saw some elephants.

And they weighed maybe 5,000 kilograms and were twice my height. They were huge things. They could have mauled me or stepped on me and there's nothing I could do to stop them. But they were gentle. With the strength, they didn't use it to harm us, but they played with us.

They carried us around. They used the strength not for harm, but to serve us, to connect with us. And that's gentleness. And we use our strength for the good of others, to serve others, to build others up.

We have this example in Jesus who is God and had all the power of God, who commands angels' armies. But like a lamb led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth.

When he was mocked, when they drove nails in his hand, he didn't strike back. He humbled himself and used his strength to serve us, to die for our sins. And so when our families, our coworkers, classmates, maybe they make fun of you for what you believe.

[16 : 59] Or when our parents, girlfriend, husband, they say that one thing, there's always this one thing that pushes our buttons. Let us walk by the Spirit. Follow the example that we have in Jesus.

And we can respond in gentleness. That's gentleness. Lastly, we have self-control. And I'll keep this brief because we'll talk more about self-control later. Self-control is the ability to restrain ourselves, restrain our impulses and emotions.

It's really, as the name suggests, self-control is the ability to control ourselves. When you have self-control, you're not led by every impulse and desire you have. You can control yourself. You can have a sober second thought and then choose to act, not just on your impulses.

So the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It's a long list and we went through it quickly. And maybe you didn't relate to every fruit, but I pray that the Spirit this week will bring to mind one or two of these fruit that we can practically live out this week.

So that was a quick tour of the fruit of the Spirit individually. Now let's take a step back, zoom out, and make a few observations at this passage as a whole. And the first observation I'll make is that we couldn't do it.

[18:12] We couldn't do it. We can't produce this fruit on our own. We were all sinners dead in our sins. As Alex read out in Ephesians 2, we are dead in the trespasses and sins we once walked, following the course of the world, the prince of the power of the air.

We were dead. We were following the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. That's what we were. And Paul mentions the desires of the flesh in verse 16. He uses the term flesh to refer to the sinful nature that we all inherit. There's a laundry list of sins starting from verse 19.

The works of the flesh, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and et cetera. Things like these.

And maybe we haven't done all these things, but at least some of them. And the problem in verse 21 is that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who follow the desires of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[19:13] Punishment for sin, any breaking of the law is death. We couldn't obey God. We couldn't do it. We couldn't do it, but Jesus did it. Jesus did it for us.

We couldn't keep the law. And so God sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. He died the death that we deserve, took the punishment and guilt that we deserved. That's Jesus on the cross.

God poured out all the wrath on him that should have been on us. And so the debt is paid. Our sins are forgiven. The guilt is gone. And on the third day, the spirit raised Jesus from the dead and the same spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

As we sung about, he dwells in us and gives life to us also. That's the promise for all who believe in Jesus. Forgiveness of sins, crediting of righteousness, this dwelling, empowering of the spirit.

We couldn't do it, but Jesus did it for us. And if you haven't put your faith in Jesus, if you're trying to do it on your own, if you're trying to earn righteousness on your own, why keep trying to do it on your own?

[20:11] You can't. Put your faith in Jesus today. Believe in him and find life. We couldn't do it, but Jesus did it for us. And now we can do it by the spirit. Now we can do it by the spirit.

There's a reason why all this is called the fruit of the spirit. It's because Jesus, his spirit, he dwells in us and transforms us to be more like him.

All the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are all the attributes of God. These are all part of God's character.

It's not a list of things to do. It's not just a list of things to do. Love. God loved us. He so loved us. He sent his son to die for us. Patience. God is patient toward us, not wishing that any should perish, but also reach repentance.

Faithfulness. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. Right? This is not a list of commands to follow, but it's a list of reasons why we should praise God. It's a list of God's manifold perfections.

[21:10] The fruit of the spirit are attributes of God. And the good news of the gospel is that we have the privilege, not just to worship God for these things, but we get to share in them by his spirit. We get to be like God, live out the image of God that we were meant to do.

We have this by the spirit. So we don't obey because there's a list of things to do. We obey because God is good and we get the privilege of becoming like him. So we couldn't do it, but Jesus did it.

And now you can do it also by the spirit. That's the gospel that Paul defends in Galatians. We couldn't keep God's law, but Jesus did it for us. He became a curse for us, hanging on the tree.

And now we are free to walk and live by the spirit. Okay. So how do we do it? How do we do this?

We can do it by the spirit, but how do we rely on him? Verse 16 says this, it describes it like this, to walk by the spirit.

Walking by spirit means actively following him, keeping in step with him. Verse, I think 23, 24, 25. Wow. Yeah.

[22:16] Keeping in step with him. Um, yeah, actively following him as he guides our hearts. The spirit changes our hearts. He tugs at our desires.

We see this in verse 17. There's, there's talk of desires. There's, there's two competing desires. There's the desires of the flesh, our sinful nature, and the desires of the spirit. They are opposed to each other.

They are at war to keep us from doing what we want to do. And the way we, when we're sin, when we're tempted by the desires of the flesh, the way to fight this is by the competing desires of the spirit.

Right? Let's look at the fruit of the spirit and see that the spirit changes our desires. Right? First with, with love. All of us love something. But the problem is that we, we love wrong things.

If we look at the list in verse 19, these come from misplaced love, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality. Those come from a love of self, a selfishness, love of satisfying our lustful cravings rather than a love for people created in the image of God.

[23:16] Amnestsy, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy. Those come from a love of our own interests or a love of being correct, being right. Love for our own power and position rather than a love for others, for seeking the good of others.

And the spirit changes what we love. He opens our eyes to see that sin doesn't, it's tempting, but it doesn't lead anywhere. It leads to death. He opens our eyes.

The spirit helps us to see that God is good, that he, that he leads us to love what is good and hate what is evil. And that's why we should obey him. Because the spirit leads us with new love.

We're not under the law. Verse 18 said, if you're led by the spirit, you're not under the law. We're not shackled to, to obey the law, like a weight on our shoulders. The law is against us when it's opposed to what we want to do, when it's opposed to desires, when we're following the desires of the flesh.

But when we love God, his commands are like guides that we freely follow, like rollercoaster tracks so that we can do loop-de-loops rather than falling off the tracks. Or like the kite string that holds us so that we don't fly off and drift away, but that we can, we can be free to fly.

[24:26] Staying in the presence of God, because in his presence, there's fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. And we can repeat this exercise, seeing how the spirit changes our desires and all the fruit.

I'll skip over them and highlight self-control now. It's important to realize that our self-control comes through new desires. Verse 16 says, walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Self-control and Christian obedience, they don't come by following rules and it's getting close to the line of what God says as possible. Maybe I can't go to the website, but I'll scroll through this feed instead.

That's okay, right? No, that won't work. We can't get by with sin management like that. That's happy with just getting as close as possible, craving the sin, but getting as close as possible to the limit. Self-control comes from new desires. It's only when we taste the sweetness of God that you gag when you taste sin. Or when you see a seafood buffet, you don't want to be eating potato chips anymore.

[25:30] There's a better taste. Walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Right? Sin is like weeds in a garden that chokes out fruit.

And the normal state of affairs in this world is that the weeds win. The weeds will just destroy the fruit, kill them. But the fruit of the spirit is a supernatural fruit. It's a different sort of fruit. The fruit of the spirit grows and grows and grows and pushes out and kills all the weeds.

That's how we fight sin. We fight sin by cultivating the fruit of the spirit, by walking by the spirit. And my experience is that the closer I am with God, the more I love him, the more I grow in the fruit of the spirit.

I can't worship God for his patience and then turn around and be impatient with others. Right? I can't love God without loving others. So we can cultivate the fruit of the spirit.

One way to do this is by cultivating our love for God, our relationship with him. And how do we do this? God gives us means of grace to do this means by which we can experience more of what

Jesus bought for us.

[26 : 33] Such as prayer, reading the word, the fellowship of gathered believers. So those aren't laws to be followed, but ways by which we can experience more of God and cultivate the fruit of the spirit.

So we can do these things. Go and pray, read the word, gather with believers, encourage one another, not as law to be followed, but just to enjoy God more, to enjoy more of his grace and fight sin.

That's how we fight sin by cultivating our relationship with God. And we also need to follow the prompting of the spirit throughout the day constantly. See, we're not simply passively led by the spirit.

We have to actively follow him also. It's the spirit and us working together. We see this in verse 17 that there's competing desires. The desires of the spirit and of the flesh are opposed to each other. They're contrary to each other at war. We're at war and constantly we need to choose to follow the spirit. You have to choose one. So follow him, follow, listen to his voice and follow his prompting.

[27 : 40] When you bump into maybe your aunt that's hard to love, or this is coworker that you were always impatient with, or there's this report you're preparing. You're tempted to be unfaithful in you have a choice. If you're in Christ, the spirit, he dwells in us and he's, he's prompting us.

He'll convict us. He'll bring to mind what is good. Maybe it's not what we want to do in our flesh, but he'll, he'll, he'll remind us of what is good. And we can choose to follow him. Listen to his voice.

And this gets, this comes with practice. This becomes easier as we choose daily to follow the spirit. That's how we're transformed. Right? Romans 12 says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

The renewal of your mind that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. It's just transformations, testing that comes with time. It takes daily transformation practice to discern the will of God, to hear the voice of the spirit, to walk by the spirit and keep in step with him.

And sometimes we do fail. Sometimes we will choose the desires of the flesh, but we have this promise. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[28 : 49] So all that being said, to close, I spent the last six years, as Julian said, working in finance. And every day when I walked into work, the temptation I faced was that I was surrounded by money.

Maybe that's the same for some of you here too. Right? I was given power to control money. I was surrounded by people who knew money and offered money. There's the temptations of power and money right there.

You can be big and influential. You can be well liked. You can be accomplished. You can live in comfort. You can sit back and relax. If only you had more money, you could be well known.

How do you hold onto the faith when you're surrounded in this environment? How do you avoid being choked out by the cares of the world, this deceitfulness of riches?

And for me, I needed God. Without him, I know I'm dead. The temptation is too strong. We're, as we said last week, fighting the spiritual battle and we need to put on the armor of God.

[29 : 50] You can't go into battle without the armor. I needed to walk by the spirit to fight off the desires of the flesh. I needed a habit of delighting myself in the Lord in the morning of cultivating that relationship with him through prayer, reading the word.

I needed the encouragement of the gathered church. I need to pray throughout the day. And to fight temptation, you need these things too. And God gives them to you, not as commands to be followed, but as a good gift so that you can grow in the fruit of the spirit.

Because the only way to stand firm against temptation, it's not by following the law. By saying, I'm not going to do this. I'm going to put this off by my own strength, but it's by putting on something better. By seeking God, wanting more of him.

To love God more than the things of the world. That's the only way to fight the desires of the flesh. And I, by no means, did this perfectly. There's some times where I went through the whole day sitting at my desk, watching the stock markets.

Stocks go up and down and didn't think about God once. Let him know and pray. There are days when that happened. There are stretches of time when I didn't read my Bible. There are times, yes,

when I did love money.

[30:58] I craved it. I wanted more of it. That happened. There are stressful times when I lacked peace. When I was anxious, I lacked peace looking at all the work I had to do.

And there are times when I wasn't patient, kind, and gentle with my coworkers. When I snapped at them when something messed up and I had to apologize to them. Right? And that's why I'm glad that I'm not saved by my works.

I'm not saved by works of the law, but just saved purely by grace through faith in Christ. Purely by what Jesus had done for me. Because if it was up to me, I'd be dead. And I need the spirit.

I need the spirit to free me. Bear the fruit that God demands because I can't do it on my own. So why do we obey God?

It's because we believe in him. We believe that Jesus died for us and we love him. We obey him.

How do we obey? By walking by the spirit, by following the leading of the spirit, by his empowering, actively choosing his way over the desires of the flesh.

[31:58] We listen to his voice when we're tempted. We seek him. We build this relationship with him through the means of grace, prayer, reading the word, fellowship, worship, so on.

That's how we cultivate the fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Let's grow in all these things. That's how we fight sin. That's how we obey God. So, so let us walk by the spirit.

Choose to do this daily, constantly. Walk by the spirit and put to death the desires of the flesh. Let's do this together. Let's pray. Let's pray for this. God, we worship you.

You are good. You are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And we did none of these things. We could not do anything on our own. We just rebelled against you.

But Lord, we praise you that you loved us so much. You sent your son, Jesus, to die for us. To bear the curse, to become the curse for our sake. And you give us your spirit. You raise us to life.

[33:01] You empower us to freely follow you, to live out your design, to have life to the full. Help us to follow you, knowing that you are good.

Free us from being shackled to the law by following you as a list of rules and commands. You give us commands and they are good. And you give us your spirit. You don't leave us on our own. But you guide us.

You produce in us the fruit that you demand. Lord, we praise you for this. And we pray that this week, we would walk by spirit. We would fight the desires of the flesh. And you would show us practically how to do this.

To bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, all those things. We can't do it on our own. So we need you. That's why we come to you in prayer. We have confidence because you're faithful. You promise us all this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Let's round of applause for Gabe. I just want to honor this man as well. This week has been crazy.

[34:00] He's been moving. He had his last work day on Friday. I met one of his colleagues on Tuesday, just me from England. And he said, oh, I heard about this guy called Gabe Wong. He's going to leave this amazing job to go be a priest.

I'm like, kind of, yeah. But he's going to serve the church for sure. But yeah, the priest, Reverend Wong, one day. Yeah, honor you for sharing on a crazy week.

But yeah, if I had to give an example of someone who lived out the fruit of the Spirit, who would be one of them? But I want to embarrass him today. He's already done such an amazing job. I wanted to share a story about another dear friend of mine to wrap up.

Dear friend of Stephen's, actually. I got to know him maybe three years ago. His name is David Ho. And this is a story about someone who Gabe just talked about, who loves God more than anything this world can offer.

Some of you have heard this story. Some of you have met him. The early Alpha course had a chance to hear his testimony in person. You know, there's just some people who just oozes the fruit of the Spirit. You know those people?

[35:04] Like, I look at Aaron. He just oozes this gentleness. I look at Danny. He oozes this patience and kindness. I see Gracie and Rebecca just shaking their heads.

I see the fruit. I see the fruit. I call you. I see you, bro. I see the fruit. And he's like... Lord help us. And David Ho, he was this type of man.

He had the fruits of the Spirit. I had never encountered that in my life. The quick story is, I met him three years ago. It was two days before Christmas. It was 22nd of December. I got a call from David's sister-in-law, who I met actually at another dear friend's funeral, Em.

And she said, hey, Joe, I was at Em's funeral. And my brother-in-law is really, really sick. He's only got probably a few weeks, maybe a month or two to live. Would you come and visit him?

And Alex and I had plans that day. And we're like, okay, we'll drop everything and we'll go. And we went to his house. And as we walked in, I met David. He was a frail man at the time.

[36:07] He wore a woolly hat. And he looked like a man who only had a few weeks to live. And I said, hey, how can I help you? How can we pray for you? I had no idea the story he was going to share me.

But the summary really was, the night before, a bit of context, he's a practicing Buddhist. He was meditating two, three hours as he was, as something he did normally.

And he uses a YouTube video sometimes to meditate. And he saw this YouTube ad that said, Feng Shui Sifu Sen Yeo Chu. A Buddhist master converts to Christianity.

And out of the blue, he clicks on it. Maybe it's Holy Spirit-led. So Holy Spirit moves through YouTube as well. And he clicked it. And he watched this testimony of this Feng Shui Sifu for 45 minutes straight.

And he told me, everything that that guy said made such more sense and gave me more peace and more clarity than anything I've done before. And immediately, he literally listened to the testimony.

[37:10] He went out of the house. He took out all the idols or any Feng Shui stuff. And he threw it away. And he told his wife, from this day on, this household, we're Christians. We follow the way we follow Jesus. Now find me some Christian to come and pray for me tomorrow.

And yeah, unfortunately, Gabe was still working. The priest was busy. So they somehow found my number and we went and we, he's like, I just want you to pray for me.

I just want to become a Christian. And as an evangelist, these are the five words we yearn to hear. I want to become a Christian. How do I do? And so it was just the most beautiful moment of just sharing the gospel of Jesus, the way, the life, and the cross, the Holy Trinity.

And he accepted Christ on the spot. And he said to me face to face, and Alex was there, and he said, look, now that I know my Creator, now that I know why I'm alive, I'm definitely now ready to die.

He had complete peace. And I sat there thinking, man, this guy is like in spiritual age, just a newborn. And he's sitting, telling me face to face that he's ready to go and see the Creator.

[38:15] And in the background, I just remember Stephen's Godson's four year old, two year old at the back. But this man meant it. He's like, I'm ready to see my Creator, if that's what it means.

And he was at peace. And we talked about how do we bear fruit? It's this complete surrender. That moment he surrendered his life like I've never seen before. I've met people who have been in the church for 10, 40, 50 years that aren't fully surrendered yet.

And they wonder why they're not bearing fruit. But I saw David. I saw that full surrender he had. There was nothing in this world holding him. He had an incredible job that many people would envy. Many young people would reply for it, just like Gabe's job.

Yet he said, that is just so secondary right now. I know my Creator. I know who He is. And I'm loved by Him. And I just looked at the calendar. I was like, okay, let's just maximize the time we have.

I think we did two or three Bible studies every week. We went through Alpha. We went through Christianity Explore. We went through all the scriptures. And he would carry that same discipline that he had before. Two, three hours a day in meditation.

[39:18] But he would now read the scripture two, three hours a day. I mean, how many of us do that here? Again, maybe he just gave. But really, it's just this discipline that he had.

He carried through. And again, it's just this works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. He had discipline before, but it wasn't producing fruit. But now, after this act of surrender, he was continuing this discipline, but he was bearing fruit.

And every week I met him, he was just, he just got the gospel. He was growing in it. I could see the fruit. I literally had the first rose seed, and Stephen could share. He saw his best friend just become this new incredible father, incredible friend, incredible husband.

And, you know, three months down the line, I noticed, hey, you're getting a bit chubbier. Your hair's growing back. And, you know, what's the doctor saying? And he went in to see the doctor the next week. And the doctor was like, you know, the cancer cells are going down drastically.

In fact, your health is going to be back to normal soon. And the doctor didn't have an explanation. Now, all of us might think, oh, it's because he became a Christian, so God saved him.

[40 : 25] Not once did David see that. David didn't count that because I surrendered, God blessed me and healed me. No, he just said, wow, God's given me extra time. I'm going to use every day, every week that I have to share my testimony to people.

Is it that difference? The world, when we get given amazing bonus or we win the lottery, we're going to spend it on ourself. We're going to say we earned it. But no, the first thought he was is, I want to, how can I share more to my bank of friends?

How can I share more to people I invest for? I remember sharing him even last year, Alex and I got given this sweet house deal. Like it's pretty much free rent living near Wan Chai.

Naturally, we could be like, oh, we can just live it to us. Like just use it ourselves. There's a playroom, there's a clubhouse, everything we dreamed of better than a walk up that we were in before. But Alex and I, we just said, and I told David, I remember, I was like, how can I use this to bless others?

And how can I host this? Maybe half the people here have been over to have dinner. Half a dozen of you have stayed over and lived with us for a season. Like, how do we give it away? It's not about us just to keep to ourselves.

[41 : 27] Because we didn't earn it. And we recognize that. And I think David postured that his whole life. And fast forward, two extra years, God gave him.

It was about six, seven months today, he passed away. And the last month, two months, was really hard. And cancer came back and it came hard.

And his body was, he was in so much pain. And you can ask Stephen, you can ask his wife. Not once did he complain to God. Not once did he say, I don't deserve this.

Two days before he did pass away, I was on my usual Zoom and Bible study. And as always, we'd pray for healing. And we'd do the prayer and we'd finish praying. And he said, remember, Joe, I was healed two years ago.

I was healed two years ago. I've got all the healing I have. I'm ready to see my Creator. And even in his baptism, he shared, you know, the doctor gave me a few months left to live.

[42 : 25] The doctor's right. I've died and I've come back. And in that baptism, my brother Stephen came to faith and many others were touching and making as well. And again, so this is just a story of someone who oozed the fruit of the Spirit into the very last day.

There was not one day that he relied on his flesh. His flesh was literally weak. And I pray that we each here can learn that before we get to a point where we can learn to humble before we're humbled.

That we can learn to bear fruit and surrender now that we start yielding the fruit. Because on that funeral, I can tell you this. We didn't share about the amazing, amazing, many business deals he did, investments he did.

We shared about who he was. It wasn't about the works of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit.

And we shared about his patience, his kindness, his gentleness, his self-control until the end. And again, the way of the world is always focused about the works of the flesh.

[43 : 30] I'm just thinking, even if a new couple and you're dating a new person, Trevor's girlfriend, and how do you explain Trevor to your parents? Oh, I'm dating this guy. He's a doctor.

That's going to be the first thing that we always say. It's very rare that we're going to be like, Trevor's got this incredible patience. He's incredibly gentle and self-controlled. That's not the first thing that comes to mind when we talk about people.

We immediately run to what they do, what they do well. Teresa's nodding her head. And so I encourage you, church, encourage you, family, to how do we be a community that doesn't care so much about what we do in the world, but who we are as people.

We're coming up to one year now as the gathering here in the space. I look out, and it's not about the numbers. It's not about the numbers. It's how healthy we are.

And how do we know if we're healthy? Are we bearing fruit? And the final thing I'll say before I invite Alex, my wife, if you're hearing this, get ready. How do we know we're healthy?

[44:32] Are we bearing fruit? Focus on the root. If we can focus on the root, God will look after the fruit. Are our roots healthy? Because the deeper the root, the healthier the root, the healthier the fruit.

And I'm speaking to myself here. Sometimes I know there's areas of my life I'm not fully surrendered yet. And the fruit that I'm harvesting, they're not the healthiest fruit that I hope to have. And I hope that as a community, it's not about how many small groups we have or how many people come on a Sunday. It's how many fruits we produce. Because the fruits that we bear, we go out to the workplace, to the hospital, to the banks, to AIA, to around the university campus. We carry fruit in a world that is starving of fruit. Every room we enter, people are dying to see fruit. They're hungry. They're starving without knowing. That's why they're running and stressed and anxious.

But when we walk in with literally a bowl of fruit, just ready to share. And that's what's going to change the city. That's what's going to change this country. That's what's going to change this world. And so I hope that's an encouragement to you.

[45:33] And next week, James is going to be back and he's going to be talking about a sermon, a new series on prayer. How do we surrender? How do we grow roots?

Prayer. That's one of the things I can, like practically, we can do. And in this very room, six days ago, on a Monday morning, 7am, Wesley Ma, one of our favorite people in the gathering, Alex Lee, Aidan Cheng, one of the least quiet people in the gathering.

We're all here, 7am. Actually, Aidan and I got here at 8. But Wes and Alex prayed for a whole hour on their own in silence, 7 to 8. 8 to 9, Aidan and I came and we prayed as a group.

And then we had breakfast and we just thought, wow, Aidan, wasn't that the most amazing morning that we've had in months, maybe even years? We were tired.

We were tired. I tell you, the flesh was weak, but our spirit was full. And we went into the office, like just ready to go. And this whole week, we were filled with the spirit. And there's just something so sweet that we could do together.

[46:38] And this is Wes himself. He's saying, hey, can we do this every two weeks? We don't want, yeah. Yeah, maybe every one of you come, I doubt it, but you're welcome. If we start that, if we launch that, we'll be sure to tell that.

But this space was so peaceful on Monday morning. And we prayed. Fast forward two days. On Wednesday night, we had Mihi, Aririan Mihi, leading us into a time of prayer and worship. And we had 35 people come and we had first half an hour of quiet praying and then the whole hour of Mihi leading us.

And generally, for those who were there, it felt like it was 20 minutes. I looked at the clock. I'm like, that's an hour? Mihi just nonstop led in song, in prayer for an hour. I'm like, wow, how great it is to spend time together with our fellow brothers and sisters in the presence of God.

So we're hoping to cultivate more of that in our gathering. We have midweek groups. I know Josh's group goes to some so-called prayer room. They spend a whole Saturday from 9 to 3 there praying before.

We have another group, Gab's group, praying on a Thursday night at midnight, prophesying over each other, speaking words of encouragement and scripture over each other. Like these are happening. And I encourage you all to get involved.

[47:49] Join a small group. Join an interest group. Come to our prayer meetings. If you want healthy roots, this is a good place to start. And so as we come up for worship, I'm going to encourage us all just to reflect on one question as the band comes up.

How healthy are our roots? And are we bearing fruit? And it's okay if we're not.

And it's okay if we're, again, we're all in works in progress. But what areas in our life have we yet to surrender? The surrenderedness that David had completely for everything.

The surrenderedness that Gabe had for his work and the love of money. Not begrudgingly. He wasn't doing it out of a commandment. He's doing it out of freedom. How beautiful it is when your children obey you out of love and freedom, not out of fear and trembling.

And so what areas in our lives do we have to surrender more? And I pray as a church we can continue to bear fruit. Let's pray. Lord, as the Olympics is wrapping up, we are remembered and reminded.

[49:07] I mean, that we too are athletes. We too are in a race that is way more important than the Olympian. Way more important than the Olympics itself. Lord, that the Olympians may be running for a gold medal that lasts for a few years and worth a lot in Hong Kong.

But we're running for a crown that lasts forever. We're working and running and disciplining ourselves for an eternal crown, for eternal reward.

And so Lord, help us to fight the good fight of faith. But before you run in to fight and work hard, let us not forget that one small step before that is to surrender, to yield, to bear fruit.

Lord, fruit cannot grow itself. It cannot force itself to grow. It can only yield. And so before we wake up early at 7am, before we stay late and don't go on the streets to do homeless missions, may we have this posture of surrender, recognizing that we can only bear fruit in you.

And our fruit that comes from the inside out, not from the outside in. So Lord, let us be a community that cares about what happens on the inside. And from the inside, may we grow and bear fruit.

[50:26] In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.