

Edible Evidence
Part One
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Today we are beginning a two-part series on the nine characteristics of a Spirit-filled Christian. These are listed in Galatians chapter 5. The Apostle Paul, the author of Galatians, refers to these characteristics as the fruit of the Spirit.

We have entitled the series “Edible Evidence”. In other words, the evidence or proof of being a Christian is in the type of fruit you exhibit. It should be good edible fruit that attracts people to you and gives honor to God.

Jesus said we should be recognized by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. He said every good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Sometimes when we use the term “**Spirit filled**” we think of someone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit and operates in the gifts of the spirit. And although this is definitely a part of allowing the Holy Spirit to operate in us, it is just a small part of living the Spirit-filled life.

We probably all have had the unfortunate experience of being around people who seemed really spiritual until something doesn't go their way. They became angry, rude, manipulative and self-serving.

I grew up in a church that emphasized outward expressions of spirituality but pretty much ignored what was going on inside a person. As Christians, we have this tendency to emphasize outward expressions as evidence of spirituality. Such as how we worship and pray.

But Jesus and Paul tells us that **it is the inner character qualities or the fruit of the Spirit that determine how spiritual a person is.**

I heard someone say, the hallmark of a Spirit-filled Christian is not how high you can jump in worship but how straight you walk the rest of the week.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that you can speak in tongues, prophesy, have great faith and even give away all your money to the poor but that doesn't make you spiritual. He said **the key is how well you love people. How kind you are and how patient you are with people**

The Christians at Galatia were having a hard time lining up their walk with their talk. They kept struggling with both their behavior and inner heart issues. Paul explains to them what it means to walk and live in the Spirit.

Read Galatians 5:13-26

Paul lists 9 evidences or 9 fruit qualities that a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-controlled person will exhibit in their life. The emphasis is not on being perfect in all these but that we are maturing and growing more fruit in our lives.

Paul defines all these fruit qualities as a single fruit. One way of looking at this is to say that the fruit of the Spirit is love with many expressions of love such as patience, kindness, goodness and so on.

Many of the characteristics of both natural and spiritual fruit are the same. For instance:

Fruit does not strain to become fruit but draws from the life flow it is connected to.

Did you ever walk into an orchard and hear the apples or peaches groaning to become good ripe edible fruit? Of course not. The fruit doesn't have to strain and fight because it is connected to a life source greater than itself.

- **As long as it stays connected it keeps growing as a fruit.**

The same is true of developing spiritual fruit in our lives. The key is remaining connected to Jesus our vine.

John 15:4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

So often in the Christian life we think we must overcome in our own strength. But Jesus took on the battle for us on the cross and won the victory. He says: ***“Stay connected to me, the vine, and my power and victory will flow through me to you.”***

But like Paul **we must first of all admit we can't change ourselves** in our own strength. Sooner or later you will be confronted with something in your life that brings you to this realization.

- For me it was a struggle with negative thinking. I always imagined the worst happening. I had little faith. It was the work of the Holy Spirit that changed me.

The first step in Celebrate Recovery is to - Realize I'm not God; and admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable.

The problem with Christians at times is that we put on this false image that we have it all together when in fact we don't. We like to act like we are in control and are doing fine.

God is not just asking us to just be nice loving Christians on the outside but to be transformed from the inside. Did you ever do the right thing but inside you were muttering and resentful?

When we do the right thing with the wrong motive or attitude there is no reward in it for us from God.

We can reform some things on the outside with pure will-power but only God can transform and change our heart which brings lasting change.

- **God doesn't reform he transforms!**

The key is abiding or staying connected to Jesus our vine. – How?

- **We stay connected thru the scriptures and thru prayer**
- **Need to nurture a daily relationship with him**
- **Fruit stays connected all the time. Not just on Sundays. And so must you and I if we are going to live a victorious fruitful life!**
- **Hanging out with Jesus makes you more like Jesus**

When we try to overcome the self-indulgences of the flesh in our own strength and will-power we keep falling on our face.

In the book of Galatians Paul explains that legalism and self-effort is not the answer to this problem. **No amount of legislation, laws, rules, shaming, threats, punishment and good ole will-power can solve the sinful flesh problem in us.**

Right now, we are facing a drug epidemic problem in our county. It is effecting all races, ages and socio-economic groups. People are dying at an alarming rate.

- In my mind, I wonder why people keep doing these drugs if they know many of the drugs are tainted and will kill them.
- Several weeks ago in Lanc Co we had 75 overdoses in 72 hours

We know passing more laws and increasing the penalties does little to stop the use of drugs.

- People use drugs for many different reasons and like most life controlling problems it can quickly overtake us.

Your struggle and my struggle may not be drugs but the desires of our flesh are just as real. We keep trying to do better but keep going back to our old patterns.

The Apostle Paul admitted his own struggle in trying to use the law and pure will-power to overcome his problems. **Romans 7:17-20**

But I need something *more!* For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't *do* it. I decide to do good, but I don't *really* do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. (MSG)

This is the human dilemma. But Paul goes on to explain that our only hope is in Jesus' transforming power. It is not simply in "will-power" alone. Our will is always involved but there is a deeper work of the Holy Spirit we need in our life.

That's why most secular drug/alcohol programs have such a low success rate. They are missing the Jesus factor. Only he can do an inner transformation of the heart.

Gal 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

The remedy is to live by the Spirit and allow the fruit of the Spirit to grow within us.

Living by the Spirit means - I fully surrender to God and his authority, I welcome his guidance, I accept his correction, I rely on his power to deny myself and I put my trust in him to live a victorious life.

Paul said if we will do this the result is we will not gratify the selfish desires of our sinful nature. We will instead exhibit the fruit of the one living in us. The one we are yielded to – the Holy Spirit.

Another characteristic of fruit is that it takes time to develop. Each year we should see the fruit of the Spirit growing and maturing in our lives.

The older we become the more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled we should become. It's called growing old gracefully.

Let's briefly look at the first five of the fruit of the Spirit that God wants to grow in our lives. This is what it means to be spirit-filled.

1. Spirit fruit helps us become less selfish and more loving.

As humans, our default mode is selfishness. We look out for ourselves. We put our desires ahead of others. But when we are walking after the Spirit we begin to put the needs of others ahead of our own. We have a new default mode - Love

We begin to love our neighbor as our self.

2. Spirit fruit helps us become less complaining and more joyful.

Another human tendency is to complain. When it's hot we complain, when it's cold we complain. We find faults with people, places and things.

The Holy Spirit wants to deliver us from being complainers and make us joyful people. It is possible to be joyful and thankful in all situations. Not in our own strength but by the Holy Spirit.

3. Spirit fruit helps us become less anxious and more peaceful.

We live in a stressed out anxious world. There is a supernatural ability that comes from staying connected to Jesus that enables us to be peaceful in stressful situations.

4. Spirit fruit helps us become less demanding and more patient.

People get on our nerves at times. They irritate us with their quirks. Sometimes they are irresponsible and immature and very frustrating.

But, God grows his patience in us. God is patient with us and he wants us to be patient with others. This doesn't mean we excuse people's bad behavior but it means we learn how to walk with people and disciple them.

5. Spirit fruit helps us become less rude and more kind.

The world can use more kindness. It seems like everyone is mad at someone. The public discourse is filled with hatred and meanness. If you disagree with someone you are seen as the enemy instead of just someone with a different viewpoint.

Sadly, this attitude is among Christians too. But to be Spirit-filled means you are kind in how you treat and talk to people.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this message, I suggested that the primary fruit Paul is talking about is love and these other things he lists are simply expressions of the fruit of love. I get this from what Paul wrote in 1 Cor 13 where he describes the characteristics of love.

I paraphrased **I Corinthians 13:4-8** as follows: Let's see how spirit-filled we are by Paul's standard.....

LOVE MEANS:

- **I am patient in how I respond to people**
- **I am kind in how I say things**
- **I do not envy when others are singled out and I am overlooked**
- **I do not boast and call attention to my accomplishments**
- **I am not proud, thinking I am better than others**
- **I am not rude to people**
- **I am not self-seeking – always trying to have things go my way**
- **I am not easily angered or irritable**
- **I keep no record of wrongs – when I forgive I forgive completely**

- **I do not delight in the failings of others but rejoices in their successes**
- **I always try to protect people and their reputations -I don't get pulled into gossip**
- **I trust people and give them the benefit of the doubt**
- **I always hope and try to be positive**
- **I always persevere when others are ready to give up**

This is a big part of what it means to be a Spirit-filled, fruit -filled follower of Jesus

Stand for Blessing:

May the Lord make you a fruitful vine as you draw near to him

May you grow in love and may the depth of your joy go deeper than whatever you are going through

May the fruit of peace keep your mind in a place of rest

May the fruit of patience enable you to help those who need a friend to believe in them

May the fruit of kindness surround everything you say and do.

May you stay connected to Jesus the source of your life and strength.