



[This one-off message is a good starting point for explaining the characteristics of God and how through the Holy Spirit, when we truly surrender our lives to Jesus as LORD of our lives, we begin to develop these same traits and qualities as the fruit of the Spirit takes over in our lives.]

Welcome to youth tonight! I am so excited to see each of you here, and we have had a great time of fun and fellowship so far! I'm so thankful for our opportunity each week to fellowship and share a meal together as we continue to strengthen our relationships. I want to thank the worship team for leading us as we prepare our hearts to hear from the Lord tonight.

Today, we live in a world where we see a lot of contradiction in people around us who claim Christianity as their faith. But then what we see doesn't seem to add up to what we have come to expect according to God Word, and the transformative power of Jesus.

Now don't misunderstand what I am saying, we are not talking about Christians doing their absolute best to follow Jesus, and making mistakes. We all fall short, and followers of Jesus mess up from time to time. It's just a part of this life. We will not reach perfection until either Jesus returns, or our life here ends, and we meet Him face to face.

We are all in a different place in our sanctification journey and we have all battled different sin struggles. So, what we are talking about tonight is going to require us to look a little deeper, and mostly within ourselves. When we accept the free gift of salvation, transformation is an absolute guarantee. Again, it may look different and some may experience parts of it faster than others but change will occur.

### 1. Jesus Created Change

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 [a]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV*

These "fruit" are all characteristics of Jesus, and characteristics that are shared with us through the Holy Spirit upon accepting God's grace. They

become a part of who we are in our day to day activities. They serve as evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and as a way that we can reflect Jesus to the world around us.

We may give evidence of the Spirit's presence in our lives through the form of possessing a joy in situation that others couldn't because we have the assurance that Jesus works all things to good for those called according to his purpose. Or it might be when we demonstrate kindness through sitting down with the new kid at school for lunch, that kid whom no one else will acknowledge. It could also be the self-control we demonstrate to turn down the invitation to that party where you know that the things happening there would create temptation that you should avoid.

These are all things that may be tough in the moment, but I want you to understand two things.

First, even if it doesn't seem that way at the moment, Jesus works through these moments to reveal Himself to others. Now, that person who sees the Spirit at work within you may not run to an altar or ask you how to be saved at the specific second, and truthfully you may not know when they do acknowledge their need for a savior. But when they do, you will have been a part of planting a seed through your obedience and willingness to allow the God to work through you.

Second, these things don't just happen, they come as part of a willingness on our part to seek Jesus. This means actively engaging in God's Word, more than just on Sunday and Wednesday. You should be in His Word daily. Your prayer life should be a constant.

You know the sins you struggle with, and you have to and you need to be asking for His help and guidance in navigating the temptations and struggles that you face.

Also, you need to take advantage of the community of believers God has given you. This group is your encouragement and support system. Walking with others who are working through the sanctification process and giving their all to follow Jesus only helps us to conquer these battles of life. Speaking of those battles, let's back up a few verses and look at the "fruit" before there was fruit of the spirit.

## 2. Before Jesus, the Fruit was Rotten

*19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: [a]adultery, [b]fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, [c]murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV*

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have recognized the need there was for change. If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, I want you to understand these verses and take note of the ending and the statement that those who practice will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

You see, this is how we enter this world. We don't seek out being bad, but we are naturally bent toward a nature of sin. We are born separated from God, and we need something to bridge that gap.

Now if you go through verse 19-21, and list all these things in your life, you may not say you have battled every single one of them. But I can guarantee that you have dealt with at least one of them. Many of us can pinpoint two or three that have been a struggle. This "fruit" before Jesus is just rotten fruits.

These things highlight for us the need for a Savior and point us directly to what Jesus did for us by living, dying, and rising again. He bridged that gap and now we have the opportunity to access God the Father.

The key to this is that God is not a forceful God. He has given us the ability to choose between these fruits. Our choice is between "Rotten Fruit" or "Fruit of the Spirit." If I held out a fresh orange and an orange that has spots and even mold on it, and I offered you one of them and you choose, I am pretty sure I know which one you are taking. The choice is really that simple. We get to decide for ourselves.

Just like with all other decisions we make in life there are consequences that follow those decisions. If we choose the fruits of the Spirit, we surrender our lives to Jesus, we actively pursue Him through Scripture, prayer, and fellowship, and we allow Him to use us for the greater purpose of His kingdom, there is an eternal reward in heaven in the presence of our Creator for all eternity.

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