

CHRISTIANITY

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



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Introduction — Becoming Like the One We Follow

Everyone knows the list.

*“The fruit of **the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” (Galatians 5:22–23)*

You've seen it on mugs.

Bookmarks.

Bulletin boards.

Sung in Sunday School and quoted in quiet corners of sermons.

But this list was never meant to be a slogan.

It's not a checklist.

It's a **portrait**.

The fruit of **the Spirit** is the character of Jesus.

And Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God.

So what **the Spirit** grows in us...

is the likeness of the Father.

This is not a book about behavior.

It's a book about **becoming**.

Why This Book?

Because we've made the fruit forgettable.

We've turned it into a coloring page,

a sweet concept,

a gentle nod to some moral ideal.

But the truth is far weightier.

These aren't traits to admire.

They are **evidence** of who owns the soil of your soul.

They are the visible sign that **the Spirit** is at work—
and that you are becoming like your **Savior**.

That's why this book exists.

Because many believers, though sincerely saved and full of knowledge, still:

- speak harshly when they're called to gentleness
- give in to pride when they should reflect meekness
- grow bitter instead of joyful
- fracture instead of forgive
- control instead of surrender

We talk about Jesus.

But too often, we don't **look like** Him.

That's not a shame statement.

That's a wake-up call.

And **the Spirit** is the one who does the waking.

What Makes This Book Different

We're not just going to define each fruit.

We're going to trace its shape in the life of Christ.

And then we'll ask the hard question:

Does your life bear the family resemblance?

For every fruit, we'll also expose its opposite—
what grows in us when **the Spirit** is ignored.

Because for every love, there is hatred.

For every patience, there is entitlement.

For every gentleness, a storm of pride.

And for every act of self-control, a trail of unchecked indulgence.

You can't grow both.
One always chokes the other.

What You'll Find in These Pages

This book unfolds in three movements:

1. **The Fruit of the Spirit** — Ten chapters, one for each fruit, showing how Jesus lived them, how the Spirit grows them, and how we must respond.
2. **The Works of the Flesh** — Three chapters unmasking the enemies of fruit—hatred, rage, division, addiction—and how they steal what the Spirit plants.
3. **The Spirit's Work in You** — Two final chapters on surrender, pruning, and how the fruit you bear becomes the evidence of your walk—and your witness.

Each chapter ends with:

- **A Real Life** section: what the fruit looks like when it walks around
- **A Reflection** to consider
- **A Prayer** to surrender the soil

What This Book Is Really About

This book isn't about fruit.
It's about **family**.

You were made to look like your Father.
Jesus showed us the way.
And **the Spirit** was sent to grow that image in you—from the inside out.

*“We all... are being transformed into the image of Christ with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is **the Spirit**.”*
(2 Corinthians 3:18)

This isn't self-help.
This is resurrection.

Because in the end,
you will be fruitful.

The only question is:

Whose image will your fruit reflect?

Chapter 1 — Everyone Knows the List (But Do They Live It?)

Ask a child in Sunday school:
“*What’s the fruit of the Spirit?*”
They’ll sing it.
They might even shout it.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Nine words. Easy to memorize.
Hard to live.

A List Framed on the Wall

It shows up on coffee mugs.
In cursive on kitchen signs.
Crocheted into pillows.
Quoted during altar calls.

But when you walk into that same kitchen, into that same church, into that same soul—
what do you *feel*?

- Love? Or control?
- Peace? Or passive aggression?
- Gentleness? Or dominance?
- Self-control? Or excuse-making?

We know the list.
We just don’t look like it.

It's Fruit, Not Furniture

Paul doesn't say, "*Here are nine traits to try harder at.*"
He says, "*Here's what grows when the Spirit's in charge.*"

"But the fruit of the Spirit is..." (Galatians 5:22)

Is.

Not "could be."

Not "should be."

Not "some of these sometimes."

Is.

This is what grows when God lives in you.

So if it's not growing?

Something else is.

We Don't Get to Pick and Choose

You don't get to say:

- *"I'm loving, but not really patient."*
- *"I'm joyful, but I struggle with self-control."*
- *"I'm kind when people deserve it."*

That's like saying your apple tree only grows stems.

Fruit comes as a package.

If one is missing, it's not the tree's fault.

It's the soil.

It's Easy to Fake Fruit

You can put plastic grapes in a bowl.
They shine. They sit still.
They fool no one for long.

Christianity is full of plastic fruit.

- Big smiles masking resentment.
- Public prayers hiding secret sin.
- Busy service used to cover dead branches.

Jesus called that a whitewashed tomb. (Matthew 23:27)

This book isn't about looking fruitful.
It's about *being* rooted in the Spirit so real fruit grows.

The Flesh Talks. The Spirit Walks.

Talk is cheap.
Even demons can quote Scripture.

“By their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matthew 7:16)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’...” (Matthew 7:21)

A reputation isn't a relationship.
Church attendance isn't transformation.
Knowledge isn't obedience.

The true test is not how loud you sing, but how deeply you love.
Not how many verses you know, but how often you show peace, patience, kindness.

You Can't Fake a Garden

When the storms hit, what's underneath gets exposed.

- Anger under the joy.
- Envy under the kindness.
- Fear under the peace.
- Pride under the gentleness.

We don't just need pruning.
Some of us need new roots.

This Book Isn't a Pep Talk

It's not a checklist.
It's not a self-help guide.
It's not even about being "better."

It's about surrender.

Because you can't grow this kind of fruit.
But **the Spirit** can.

If you let Him plant.
If you let Him water.
If you let Him cut back what shouldn't be there.

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:24)

No room for both trees.
You can't grow weeds and expect grapes.

Where We're Headed

Each chapter ahead will take one fruit at a time.
We'll define it, feel it, follow it, and fight for it.
Then we'll rip out its enemy—the fleshly lookalike.

But don't skip ahead.
This isn't a quiz. It's a journey.

You'll know by the end not just what's written on your wall...
but what's written on your life.

Reflection — What's Growing in You?

- 1. Which fruit of the Spirit do you *talk* about more than you *walk* out?**
What would someone close to you say grows most easily in your life?
What would they say is noticeably absent?
- 2. Have you ever used personality as a reason to excuse lack of fruit?**
("I'm just not a naturally patient person." "That's not how I show love.") What does that reveal about who's running the garden?
- 3. Is your faith more recognizable by knowledge or by fruit?**
If someone followed you for a week with the sound off—no words, no Bible quotes—what would they say you're rooted in?
- 4. Do you try to grow fruit through effort instead of surrender?**
Where have you been striving in your own strength instead of asking the Spirit to take over?

Prayer

*God, I know the list. I've said the words. But I don't always bear the fruit.
Forgive me for trying to look fruitful without being rooted in You.
Uproot what is dead. Expose what is fake.

Plant me in Your Spirit—deep, real, and open.

Let every word, every reaction, every quiet choice reflect You.

Not for show. Not for self.

But for Your glory and the good of those You've placed near me.*

Amen.

Chapter 2 — Love: Rooted in God, Not Feeling

Love comes first in the list.

Not by accident. Not by alphabet.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love...” (Galatians 5:22)

Without love, the rest don’t matter.

Paul said so himself:

“If I have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:2)

What It Isn’t

Love isn’t a mood.

It isn’t chemistry.

It isn’t tolerance.

It isn’t affirmation of sin.

It isn’t nice.

It’s sacrifice.

Love does what’s best for the other person—
not what they *want*,
what they *need*.

And love is *only* love when it’s **rooted in God**,
because *God is love*. (1 John 4:8)

Not “has” love.

Not “shows” love.

Is love.

So if it doesn’t look like Him, it’s not love.

Jesus Didn't Just Feel It. He Proved It.

He healed. He wept. He fed. He taught.

But He also flipped tables.
Rebuked Peter.
Confronted hypocrisy.
And walked to the cross.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”
(John 15:13)

He didn’t just say it.
He didn’t just feel it.
He *gave* it.

That’s real love.
And that’s the only kind that counts.

Love Isn’t a Feeling. It’s a Verb.

Most people wait to feel love before they show it.
Jesus showed it—then proved it with His blood.

Love acts.

It walks toward the outcast.
It forgives the repeat offender.
It cooks breakfast for the one who denied you three times.

You won’t always *feel* it at first.
In fact, you often won’t.

But as you obey God and love anyway—
through action, word, sacrifice—
a strange thing happens:

The feelings catch up.

- You show kindness to your enemy—and bitterness begins to melt.
- You serve the one who overlooked you—and resentment begins to fade.
- You pray for the one who hurt you—and **the Spirit** begins to soften what you couldn't.

Real love starts with a cross, not a hug.

That's why it takes **the Spirit** to grow it.

Love Has Enemies in Disguise

Sometimes the opposite of love isn't hate.

It's indifference.

Or control.

Or convenience.

We "love" people as long as they're lovable.

We "love" God when our prayers get answered.

We "love" the Church until someone offends us.

But love doesn't flinch when it gets hard.

Love stays.

Love speaks truth.

Love forgives again.

Love doesn't keep score.

"Love is patient, love is kind... it keeps no record of wrongs." (1 Corinthians 13:4–5)

We recite that verse at weddings.

God wrote it for war.

You Can't Manufacture It

The flesh can mimic love.
For a while.

We perform. We pretend.
We say the right things, smile at the right people.

But **the Spirit** sees through it.
And eventually, so do people.

You don't need more effort.
You need more surrender.

This kind of love only grows from the Vine.

“Apart from Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

No root in Him = no fruit from Him.

Love for Enemies Isn't Optional

Jesus didn't just say, *“Love your friends.”*
He said, *“Love your enemies.”* (Matthew 5:44)

That's not poetic. That's impossible—
without **the Spirit**.

It's the *proof of the Spirit*.

The world can love those who love them back.
The Spirit empowers us to love people who betray, hurt, mock, and curse.

Anything less isn't fruit. It's flesh with a friendly face.

Love is the Root of All Fruit

Every other fruit of **the Spirit** flows from this one.

- Joy without love becomes escapism.
- Peace without love becomes detachment.
- Patience without love becomes passive aggression.
- Kindness without love becomes manipulation.
- Goodness without love becomes self-righteousness.
- Faithfulness without love becomes legalism.
- Gentleness without love becomes weakness.
- Self-control without love becomes pride.

Without love, the fruit rots on the tree.

What Love Looks Like in Real Life

Love:

- Buys the meal but stays to listen.
- Doesn't gossip, even when it's "a prayer request."
- Says no when sin knocks, even if it costs the relationship.
- Shows up at the hospital, even when it's inconvenient.
- Tells the truth in tears, not triumph.
- Keeps calling when everyone else stops.
- Gives the benefit of the doubt.
- Leaves room for growth.

- Chooses mercy over memory.

Love Grows When We Die

“We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

We don't love to earn God's favor.

We love because we already have it.

But love costs.

To love like Christ is to die to pride, bitterness, revenge, and self-preservation.

It's to say: “Not my will, but Yours.”

And that kind of death?

It brings life.

Reflection — Root Check

1. When has your “love” actually been self-protection in disguise?

What do you expect back when you give love? What happens when you don't get it?

2. Who is God calling you to love right now—even if they don't deserve it?

How have you been resisting? How could love look like truth, boundaries, or grace?

3. What part of your life lacks sacrificial love?

Is there a relationship, a habit, or a setting where your love has grown cold or conditional?

4. What would it mean for you to love like Jesus this week?

Be specific. What needs to change?

Prayer

Lord, I don't want to talk about love—I want to live it.

Rip out every root of selfishness, scorekeeping, and bitterness.

Plant Your love deep in my soul—the kind that stays, that gives, that bleeds.

Teach me to love those who hurt me.

Teach me to love without expecting return.

Teach me to love like You loved me—first.

Let this be the root of everything else You grow in me.

Amen.

Chapter 3 — Joy: Untouchable by Circumstance

Joy doesn't need a good day.
It doesn't wait for a raise.
It doesn't vanish when the lights go out.

Joy is not happiness.
Happiness reacts.
Joy endures.

Joy Is a Fruit, Not a Mood

“The fruit of the Spirit is...joy.” (Galatians 5:22)

Notice it doesn't say “cheerfulness,”
or “optimism,”
or “personality.”

Joy isn't extroverted.
It's not loud.
It's not fake smiles in the church lobby.

It's a fire inside—
kindled by **the Spirit**,
sustained by hope,
untouched by circumstance.

Jesus Had Joy—and a Cross

“...for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross...” (Hebrews 12:2)

Joy and suffering are not opposites.
They're often neighbors.

Jesus wept.
Jesus grieved.
Jesus hurt.

But Jesus never lost His joy.
Because joy isn't the absence of pain.
It's the presence of purpose.

Joy Comes from Knowing the End of the Story

You can walk through a hard chapter
if you know how the book ends.

That's why joy isn't shaken by suffering.

- We know Christ wins.
- We know death dies.
- We know our pain has purpose.
- We know the garden is being restored.

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Joy hears that—and smiles through tears.

Joy Doesn't Always Feel Loud

Sometimes joy is tears with hope in them.
Sometimes it's silence with a song under the surface.
Sometimes it's waking up on the worst day and still saying,
“God is good.”

Joy doesn't mean you like the season.
It means you trust the Gardener.

Joy Is Dangerous to the Enemy

Joy is not just personal—it's *powerful*.

Satan can handle religious people who grumble.
He can tolerate legalism.
He can work with frowns.

But joy?
Joy rooted in Jesus?
That's a threat.

Because it's proof he can't steal what matters.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

No joy = no strength.
No strength = no fight.

Joy is what keeps us standing
when everything says sit down.

Joy Can Be Recovered

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation...” (Psalm 51:12)

If David could lose it, so can we.
If David could get it back, so can you.

If your joy has gone dim,
don't fake it.
Don't bury it.
Don't medicate it.

Ask for it back.

Cry out. Confess. Return.
Joy isn't manufactured—it's restored.

Joy and Love Walk Together

Joy without love is shallow.

Love without joy is heavy.

But when joy springs from love—
especially God’s love—
it can’t be stopped.

That’s why Paul sang in prison.

That’s why martyrs smiled at the stake.

That’s why Jesus didn’t curse as He bled.

Love gave the reason.

Joy gave the song.

What Joy Looks Like in Real Life

Joy:

- Sings in the hospital room.
- Smiles when no one says thanks.
- Dances while washing dishes.
- Raises hands in the rain.
- Serves again after being burned.
- Finds something to praise for—even in the funeral.

Reflection — Is Joy Still There?

1. Have you confused joy with happiness?

What happens to your joy when life doesn’t go your way?

2. What do you believe joy depends on?

Comfort? Control? Outcomes? How does that line up with Scripture?

3. Can others see your joy?

Not the fake smile. The deep, untouchable gladness. Where is it visible? Where is it missing?

4. When was the last time you asked God to restore your joy?

What would it take for you to sing again?

Prayer

God, I confess—I lose my joy too easily.

I let my circumstances rule my emotions.

I let disappointment dim my faith.

I let pain rob me of praise.

But You are my joy.

Not my situation. Not my outcome. Not my mood.

Restore to me the joy of salvation.

Remind me that the story ends with victory.

*Let joy rise again—not because life is easy,
but because You are near.*

Amen.

Chapter 4 — Peace: What Chaos Can't Touch

Everyone wants peace.
But most settle for quiet.

Peace isn't just the absence of noise.
It's the presence of **God**.

Not as the World Gives

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” (John 14:27)

The world offers peace in the form of escape:

- Take a vacation.
- Meditate and breathe deeply.
- Numb it. Avoid it. Ignore it.

Jesus doesn't offer escape.
He offers Himself.

Peace Isn't Passive

Peace isn't sitting back and letting life happen.
It's standing firm because you know who holds the future.

- The world's peace avoids the fire.
- God's peace walks *in* it—unburned.

Just ask Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
There was a fourth man in the flames. (Daniel 3:25)

That's what peace looks like.

It Doesn't Make Sense (And That's the Point)

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)

Peace that *makes* sense isn't supernatural.

Peace that *surpasses* understanding is.

It's when:

- The bills aren't paid—but you sleep.
- The diagnosis comes—but you sing.
- The relationship breaks—but you forgive.
- The war rages on—but you still praise.

You can't explain it.

You just know—**He's here.**

Peace Isn't Natural—It's Grown

Peace is fruit.

Not talent. Not personality. Not training.

You don't “just have it.”

You cultivate it.

- By abiding in Christ.
- By believing His promises.
- By surrendering control.

If you want peace,
you can't just pray for comfort.
You have to **give up the throne.**

The Flesh Fights Peace

The flesh wants control.

Peace requires trust.

The flesh wants answers.

Peace requires faith.

The flesh wants vengeance.

Peace chooses grace.

The flesh says, “*Fix it now.*”

The Spirit says, “*Wait with Me.*”

No wonder so few have peace.

It means war with your flesh.

Peace Isn’t Always Felt. It’s Often Chosen.

Some days you won’t feel it.

The fog will press in.

The panic will knock at the door.

But you can still choose peace.

- Through prayer.
- Through worship.
- Through surrender.

Peace isn’t passive.

It’s a fight to stay still.

“*Be still, and know that I am God.*” (Psalm 46:10)

Peace Guards the Soul

Paul says peace *guards* us.

Not just comforts us.

Guards.

It's a shield. A helmet. A gate.

Without peace, anxiety floods in.

Fear takes over.

The heart gets pulled in every direction.

But with peace?

We stand.

Unshaken.

Unmoved.

Unworried—even if the storm doesn't stop.

What Peace Looks Like in Real Life

Peace:

- Waits instead of panicking.
- Doesn't retaliate when attacked.
- Prays when it can't fix.
- Doesn't fear death.
- Apologizes first.
- Doesn't need to be understood.
- Speaks softly in chaos.
- Sings while waiting.

Reflection — Is Peace Possible?

- 1. What has been robbing your peace lately?**
Is it something external... or internal?
- 2. Do you truly believe Jesus gives peace right now?**
Or do you only expect peace in eternity?
- 3. What would peace look like in your specific situation?**
What would you say or do differently if you fully trusted God with this?
- 4. Are you trying to manage peace... or surrender to it?**
What control are you clinging to?

Prayer

Prince of Peace, I invite You to rule where I've tried to reign.

*I confess—my fear has been louder than my faith.
My anxiety has led more than Your Word has.*

*Teach me to rest.
Teach me to trust.
Teach me to stand still while You fight for me.*

*Guard my heart and mind.
And grow in me a peace that no circumstance can take away.*

Amen.

Chapter 5 — Patience: Power in Slow Motion

We want miracles.

God grows trees.

We want the promise fulfilled.

God says *wait*.

“The fruit of the Spirit is... patience.” (Galatians 5:22)

Not speed.

Not instant results.

Not quick fixes.

Patience.

And not the kind that clenches its fists.

The kind that rests in God’s timing—*on purpose*.

Waiting Isn’t Wasting

Some of the most powerful moments in Scripture happen in the waiting:

- Joseph in prison.
- David on the run.
- Sarah with no child.
- Jesus, 30 years before preaching.
- Lazarus, four days in the grave.

God isn’t slow.

We’re just impatient.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise... He is patient...” (2 Peter 3:9)

If God waits with purpose, so should we.

Patience Is Not Passivity

Waiting doesn't mean doing nothing.
It means doing the *right* things
while refusing to rush the wrong ones.

Patience:

- Obeys in the meantime.
- Prays instead of pushes.
- Works while trusting.
- Doesn't panic when it's not working yet.

Impatience tries to open doors God locked.
Patience knocks, then waits on the porch.

The Flesh Hates Patience

The world trains us to expect now:

- Fast food.
- Two-day shipping.
- Instant answers.
- Microwave results.

The flesh says:
“*If I don't have it now, I'm being wronged.*”

But **the Spirit** says:
“*Wait. I'm working beneath the surface.*”

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him...” (Psalm 37:7)

Stillness is strength.

Silence is trust.

Patience Isn’t Weakness. It’s Strength Under Restraint.

It takes strength to wait.

More than it takes to act.

More than it takes to vent.

More than it takes to quit.

Ask Moses—40 years in the desert.

Ask Noah—decades building a boat in dry weather.

Ask Jesus—still silent before Pilate.

The Spirit-filled aren’t in a hurry.

They trust the One who never is.

Patience and Love Are Connected

“Love is patient...” (1 Corinthians 13:4)

No patience = no love.

Impatience is about *me*:

my time, my feelings, my goals.

Patience is about *you*—

your growth, your needs, your journey.

You can’t love well without waiting well.

What Patience Looks Like in Real Life

Patience:

- Listens fully before responding.
- Resists the urge to interrupt.
- Doesn't retaliate with sarcasm.
- Keeps serving when results are slow.
- Trusts God's timing in unanswered prayer.
- Bites the tongue when emotions rise.
- Keeps showing up when nothing changes.
- Doesn't give up on people—or on God.

Reflection — Can You Wait Without Breaking?

- 1. Where in your life are you tired of waiting?**
Is your frustration leading to prayer... or pressure?
- 2. How has impatience caused you to act ahead of God?**
What were the results?
- 3. What would patience look like in that relationship, that prayer, that disappointment?**
What are you tempted to rush?
- 4. Do you believe God is working even when you can't see anything changing?**
Why or why not?

Prayer

*Lord, I confess—I move too fast.
I react too quickly. I hate to wait.*

*But You are never in a hurry.
You are never late.
You see the full picture.*

*Grow in me the strength to trust Your timing.
Teach me to love slowly,
speak carefully,
and wait expectantly.*

*When I'm tempted to rush,
remind me You're still working.
Make me patient—not passive—
but anchored in faith.*

Amen.

Chapter 6 — Kindness: Not Nice, but Good

Kindness is not about being liked.
It's about showing love.

Not soft.
Not fake.
Not just polite.

“The fruit of the Spirit is... kindness.” (Galatians 5:22)

This isn't personality.
It's power under **the Spirit**'s control.

Kindness Isn't the Same as Niceness

Niceness avoids offense.
Kindness confronts with compassion.

Niceness keeps it shallow.
Kindness goes deep—even when it hurts.

Niceness smiles on the outside.
Kindness gives—even when it costs.

Niceness is about *perception*.
Kindness is about *truth and action*.

God's Kindness Changes Everything

“Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness... not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)

God's kindness doesn't just comfort—it **convicts**.

- He draws you when you deserve distance.
- He offers mercy when justice is due.

- He opens the door again when you slammed it.

That's not "nice."

That's **holy love in action.**

Jesus Modeled Costly Kindness

- He touched the leper no one else would.
- He fed crowds that would later walk away.
- He restored Peter after betrayal.
- He forgave His killers as they mocked Him.

"Father, forgive them..." (Luke 23:34)

Kindness in blood.

Kindness in pain.

Kindness in silence.

Not weak.

Not easy.

Not optional.

Kindness Doesn't Wait to Be Deserved

Kindness gives before it's earned.

It serves without being asked.

It blesses when cursed.

"Love your enemies... do good to those who hate you..." (Luke 6:27)

Kindness is more than doing no harm.

It's doing *good* where harm has been done.

And it only grows when **the Spirit** is in charge.

Kindness Is Often Inconvenient

Kindness is rarely scheduled.
It interrupts.
It costs something.
It notices what others overlook.

Kindness is:

- Picking up the phone.
- Writing the note.
- Staying a little longer.
- Carrying the burden.
- Letting someone merge.
- Seeing a person instead of a problem.

You don't plan it.
You just live ready for it.

Kindness Is a Weapon of Heaven

The enemy uses cruelty, mockery, and shame.
The Spirit uses kindness.

It disarms.
It softens.
It cuts through pride.

You want to win someone's heart?
Try kindness—not as a strategy,
but as the overflow of a Spirit-filled soul.

What Kindness Looks Like in Real Life

Kindness:

- Doesn't hold grudges.
- Notices the lonely person in the corner.
- Doesn't interrupt.
- Makes time when time is short.
- Reaches out even when rejected.
- Serves when no one sees.
- Speaks gently when others shout.
- Helps without asking for credit.

Reflection — Is It Really Kindness?

1. **When has your “kindness” been more about keeping the peace than offering real love?**
What conversation or action have you avoided?
2. **Who do you find it hardest to be kind to right now?**
Why? And what would Spirit-filled kindness look like toward them?
3. **What does costly kindness look like in your week ahead?**
What would it require of your time, energy, or pride?
4. **When was the last time you were changed by someone else’s kindness?**
How might God want to use *you* that same way?

Prayer

Jesus, You showed kindness when I deserved wrath.

You gave when I was thankless.

You healed when I didn't ask.

You came close when I was running away.

Make me kind like that.

Not just pleasant—but Spirit-led.

Let me see the ones others ignore.

Let me speak when silence would be easier.

Let me serve when it costs more than I want to give.

*Grow kindness in me—not to be liked,
but to show who You are.*

Amen.

Chapter 7 — Goodness: Doing Right When No One's Watching

We admire goodness.

We expect it in others.

We rarely pursue it ourselves—especially when no one's looking.

But:

“The fruit of the Spirit is... goodness.” (Galatians 5:22)

Not image. Not rule-following.

Not selective obedience.

Goodness.

Not just what's *right*.

But what's *righteous*.

Goodness Comes from God—Not Guilt

Jesus was asked, “*Good Teacher...*”

He stopped the man cold:

“Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.” (Mark 10:18)

Translation:

If it's really good, it didn't start with you.

Real goodness isn't about being better than others.

It's about being connected to the One who is Goodness itself.

The World Rewards Image. God Grows Integrity.

In the flesh:

- We act good to be seen.

- We give to get praise.
- We obey when it benefits us.
- We clean the outside of the cup.

But **the Spirit** sees the hidden life.

“The Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

And goodness?

It flows from a heart that fears God even in the dark.

Goodness Isn’t Just Avoiding Evil

It’s not just what you don’t do.

It’s what you do.

Goodness:

- Steps in when others step back.
- Speaks up when silence would be easier.
- Does the hard right instead of the easy wrong.
- Pays the price for someone else’s healing.

This isn’t *nice*.

This is **costly courage** rooted in God’s truth.

Goodness Is Not About Being Liked

Sometimes goodness looks like:

- Saying no.
- Calling out sin.

- Refusing to compromise.
- Losing a friendship over truth.

Jesus was perfectly good—
and they killed Him for it.

Goodness Is Steady in the Shadows

When no one claps.
When no one notices.
When everyone else cuts corners.

Goodness stays clean.
Stays faithful.
Stays generous.
Stays humble.

You know why?

Because it's not for them.
It's for Him.

You Can't Fake Goodness Forever

Eventually, the tree shows what kind of seed it came from.

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit...” (Matthew 7:18)

That doesn't mean perfection.
It means pattern.

Do you return to righteousness even after you fall?
Do you repent when you get it wrong?
Do you long to please the Lord more than people?

That's Spirit-born goodness.
And it grows.

What Goodness Looks Like in Real Life

Goodness:

- Tells the truth, even when it hurts.
- Protects others when no one is watching.
- Deletes the message before it's sent.
- Refuses to cheat when it would be easy.
- Pays fairly, prays deeply, gives freely.
- Confesses quickly.
- Forgives quietly.
- Chooses God's way over man's applause.

Reflection — Good in the Shadows?

1. Do you associate goodness with behavior or with heart?

Where do you see self-made goodness in your life? Where do you see Spirit-made?

2. When has doing good cost you something?

Are you still willing to obey even if no one claps?

3. Is your private life consistent with your public one?

What would change if your thoughts or search history were revealed?

4. Do you see goodness as weakness?

How might God be calling you to take bold, holy action in a situation right now?

Prayer

*God, I want more than a good reputation—
I want a good heart.*

*Not to earn Your love,
but because I've received it.*

*Grow in me what cannot be faked.
Make me the same person in the dark that I am in the light.*

*Give me the courage to do right when it's costly,
the clarity to call sin what it is,
and the humility to point all goodness back to You.*

Amen.

Chapter 8 — Faithfulness: Still Here. Still His.

Some start strong.

Few finish well.

But faithfulness?

That's the fruit that shows up **after the hype dies down.**

“The fruit of the Spirit is...faithfulness.” (Galatians 5:22)

Not flashy.

Not fast.

Not famous.

Just steady.

Faithfulness Is Rare—Because It Costs

The world chases “what's next.”

The Spirit empowers “what's now.”

- Faithfulness stays when it's boring.
- Shows up when no one notices.
- Keeps doing right when the reward is far away.

It's not glamorous.

But it's **glorious** in God's eyes.

“Well done, good and faithful servant...” (Matthew 25:21)

Notice He didn't say brilliant.

Or successful.

Or popular.

Faithful.

Faithfulness Is God's Heartbeat

God doesn't just *like* faithfulness.
He *is* faithful.

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful..." (2 Timothy 2:13)

"His faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

He doesn't bail.
He doesn't back out.
He doesn't forget.

So when we walk in faithfulness,
we walk like Him.

Faithfulness Is Tested Over Time

You can't microwave this one.
It only shows up in years, tears, and trials.

Anyone can:

- Say "I do."
- Start a ministry.
- Make a promise.
- Join a church.

But only **the Spirit** can help you **stay**:

- In the hard marriage.
- In the dry season.
- In the obscure place.
- In the slow obedience.

Faithfulness Isn't Loud

It's the parent who prays quietly for decades.
The pastor who shepherds a small flock with big care.
The worker who refuses to cut corners.
The spouse who forgives again. And again.
The believer who still kneels after a thousand "unanswered" prayers.

Faithfulness is often invisible—
but never unnoticed by God.

Unfaithfulness Starts Subtle

- Just one compromise.
- One skipped prayer.
- One little lie.
- One delay in obedience.

And before long, the heart drifts.

But faithfulness notices the drift.
It repents early.
It comes home fast.

Faithfulness doesn't mean *never failing*.
It means *always returning*.

Faithfulness Isn't Just for "Big Things"

If you're waiting for a platform to be faithful—
you've missed it.

Faithfulness is:

- Being on time.
- Finishing what you said you'd do.
- Keeping a promise.
- Honoring your word.
- Praying for someone after you said you would.

These are Spirit things—
not just manners.

What Faithfulness Looks Like in Real Life

Faithfulness:

- Shows up on day 1,000 like it did on day 1.
- Keeps giving when no one says thank you.
- Speaks truth when lies are easier.
- Follows through when it's inconvenient.
- Tithes when money's tight.
- Stays when it's not exciting.
- Trusts when it can't see results.
- Loves when feelings fade.

Reflection — Are You Still His? Still Here?

- 1. What have you walked away from that God called you to stay with?**
Is He asking you to return, repent, or re-engage?

- 2. Where has your faithfulness grown thin?**
Home? Work? Ministry? Marriage? Friendship? Prayer?
- 3. Do you equate faithfulness with results?**
What would it look like to stay faithful even if the outcome never changes?
- 4. How has God shown you faithfulness in your own story?**
What would your life look like if He gave up on you the way we give up on each other?

Prayer

God, You are faithful when I am not.

*You keep Your promises. You never forget.
You don't leave when I get tired, fail, or wander.*

*Make me like You.
Steady. Present. True.*

*Forgive my inconsistency.
Restore my commitment.
Help me stay when it's hard, serve when it's hidden,
and obey when it's slow.*

*Let me hear those words in the end—
“Well done, good and faithful servant.”

And let me live like they matter now.

Amen.

Chapter 9 — Gentleness: Strength in Restraint

Gentleness is not weakness.

It's not softness.

It's not being walked on.

It's what happens when **strength submits to the Spirit**.

“The fruit of the Spirit is... gentleness.” (Galatians 5:23)

The strong can crush.

The gentle choose not to.

Jesus Was Gentle—And Fierce

“I am gentle and humble in heart.” (Matthew 11:29)

The same Jesus who flipped tables,
cast out demons,
and calmed storms—

also touched children,
restored lepers,
and whispered grace to the broken.

Gentleness didn't lessen His strength.

It revealed its purpose.

Gentleness Isn't Timid—It's Tamed

Wild strength tramples.

Spirit-filled strength knows when to stop.

- A harsh word could win the argument—but lose the soul.
- A fast reaction could prove a point—but miss the person.
- A loud answer could silence the room—but harden the heart.

Gentleness chooses **relationship over retaliation.**

Gentleness Has an Enemy: Pride

Pride yells.

Pride interrupts.

Pride needs the last word.

Gentleness listens.

Gentleness considers.

Gentleness doesn't fear being overlooked.

Pride says, "*I'm right.*"

Gentleness asks, "*What builds up?*"

One tears down.

The other restores.

The Flesh Fakes Gentleness to Manipulate

Sometimes we act gentle to appear good—
but our motives betray us.

Gentleness without truth is flattery.

Gentleness without love is control.

The real thing can't be faked.

Because the real thing flows from *humility*.

"Let your gentleness be evident to all." (Philippians 4:5)

Not just at church.

Not just when you're winning.

To all.

Gentleness Doesn't Mean You Don't Speak

It means you speak with care.

- It says hard things with a soft tone.
- It confronts sin without crushing the sinner.
- It doesn't avoid conflict—but enters it clothed in grace.

"If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently." (Galatians 6:1)

Gentleness calls people back—
not drives them away.

Gentleness Starts Closest to Home

The real test?

- Spouse.
- Kids.
- Parents.
- Roommates.
- That one coworker.

If you're only gentle in public,
you're not Spirit-led.
You're image-managed.

What Gentleness Looks Like in Real Life

Gentleness:

- Asks questions instead of assuming.

- Uses words that heal, not bruise.
- Holds truth and mercy at the same time.
- Lowers the volume when tension rises.
- Doesn't demand attention.
- Steps back before stepping in.
- Gives correction with love, not ego.
- Stays calm when everything says explode.

Reflection — Strong Enough to Be Gentle?

- 1. When are you most tempted to be harsh?**
What's usually beneath it—pride, fear, control?

- 2. Who gets the *least* of your gentleness?**
And what would it look like to reverse that?

- 3. Do you confuse gentleness with weakness?**
Where have you withheld your voice when **the Spirit** was prompting truth?

- 4. How has Christ shown you gentleness when you deserved correction?**
How should that shape your next conversation?

Prayer

*Jesus, You could have crushed me.
But You carried me instead.*

*When I rebelled, You restored.
When I wandered, You whispered.
When I broke things, You bent down to mend.*

*Make me strong enough to be gentle.
Free me from the need to dominate, prove, or win.*

*Give me words that heal.
Eyes that see pain.
Hands that build—not break.*

Grow in me a gentleness that looks like You.

Amen.

Chapter 10 – Self-Control: Saying No Because You Said Yes

Read the fruit of **the Spirit** again:

Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness.
Gentleness. Self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23)

On the surface?
Sounds doable.
Like nine healthy goals.
Like a nice checklist for Christian behavior.

But live them?
All of them?
Every day?
With real people?
Under pressure?

Impossible.

Not hard.
Impossible.

Not because the list is too long.
But because the *last word* on the list holds the key to *all the others*.

Without Self-Control, the Fruit Falls Apart

- Love without self-control becomes obsession.
- Joy without self-control becomes distraction.
- Peace without self-control becomes laziness.
- Patience without self-control becomes resignation.
- Kindness without self-control becomes manipulation.

- Goodness without self-control becomes performance.
- Faithfulness without self-control becomes tradition.
- Gentleness without self-control becomes silence.

Self-control keeps the garden from overrunning itself.

It's the trellis. The fence. The order.

It's not just about resisting sin.

It's about *sustaining fruit*.

Paul Tried—and Failed

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” (Romans 7:15)

Paul wasn't lazy.

He wasn't confused.

He wasn't insincere.

He just... couldn't.

Why?

Because **wanting to do good isn't enough**.

Knowing the truth isn't enough.

Even preaching it isn't enough.

“For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”

(Romans 7:18)

That's where most of us live—stuck between desire and defeat.

The Flesh Wants to Run the Show

Self-control is *not* about suppressing desire.

It's about surrendering it.

The flesh wants control.
The Spirit demands surrender.

The flesh says:

- Say it now.
- Eat it now.
- Click it now.
- Prove your point.
- Feed your appetite.

The Spirit says:

- “*Walk with Me instead.*”

“*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*” (Galatians 5:24)

This isn’t behavior modification.

It’s war.

Self-Control Is Always Spiritual

Don’t confuse willpower with self-control.

The world can quit sugar.

The world can train for a marathon.

The world can white-knuckle a habit.

That’s **discipline**.

But self-control—**real self-control**—is fruit.

It’s grown. Not forced.

From the inside out. Not the outside in.

You can't *push* your way to it.
You have to *yield* your way into it.

Saying No Because You Already Said Yes

That's what self-control is.

You say no to temptation,
because you already said yes to Jesus.

You say no to gossip,
because you already said yes to love.

You say no to anger,
because you already said yes to peace.

You say no to lust,
because you already said yes to purity.

It's not about rules.
It's about *allegiance*.

Self-control is how we live out our yes.

You'll Be Tempted to Blame Other Things

- “*I'm just wired this way.*”
- “*I didn't get enough sleep.*”
- “*They provoked me.*”
- “*It's my personality.*”

But **the Spirit** offers something stronger than instinct.

Self-control isn't about temperament.
It's about **Lordship**.

Who rules you?

Your habits?

Your hunger?

Your hormones?

Your history?

Or your King?

What Self-Control Looks Like in Real Life

Self-control:

- Walks away from gossip, even when it feels good to vent.
- Closes the browser instead of taking one more look.
- Waits to speak.
- Keeps a budget.
- Confesses the impulse before it becomes a sin.
- Doesn't let feelings make the final call.
- Puts down the fork when full.
- Refuses a second pill when one was enough.
- Turns off the show before the binge.
- Shuts the fridge when it's about comfort, not hunger.
- Chooses discipline over comfort.
- Tells the flesh, "You don't lead here anymore."

Reflection — Who's In Control?

- 1. Where in your life do you regularly lose control?**
Your mouth? Your temper? Your cravings? Your time?
- 2. What have you called “normal” that is really just undisciplined?**
What would change if Jesus ruled that area?
- 3. Are you trying harder—or surrendering deeper?**
What would it look like to yield to **the Spirit** instead of muscling through?
- 4. What’s one specific area where you need Spirit-empowered self-control this week?**
Write it down. Pray into it. Ask for help.

Prayer

*Lord, I want to be Spirit-led—
but too often I’m self-driven.*

*I say things I regret.
I seek things that don’t satisfy.
I serve desires that betray me.*

*I need more than willpower.
I need You.*

*Rule my heart.
Steady my mind.
Master my impulses.*

*Grow in me a holy “no”
rooted in my “yes” to You.*

Amen.

Chapter 11 – Crucified Flesh, Risen Fruit: The Spirit Who Empowers Self-Control

Self-control isn't a personality trait.

It's not natural.

It's not learned.

It's not about getting stronger.

It's about *getting crucified*.

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24)

That's violent.

And necessary.

Because the flesh doesn't just misbehave.

It demands to rule.

You're Not in Charge Anymore

“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

Let that sink in.

You don't belong to you.

Not your mouth.

Not your body.

Not your mind.

Not your impulses.

The Christian life isn't about managing sin.

It's about *executing the old self*.

And letting **the Spirit** raise up something new.

The Flesh Doesn't Die Quietly

It negotiates.

It offers partial surrender.

It says, “*Okay, I won't speak out loud—but let me stew inside.*”

But **the Spirit** isn't looking for peace talks.

He's here to take over.

You don't need help becoming a better version of yourself.

You need a ***new self***.

“*If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

That's not metaphor.

That's ***transformation***.

You Can't Grit Your Way to Freedom

Trying harder doesn't crucify the flesh.

Only the **Spirit** does.

“*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*”

(Galatians 5:16)

It's a **walk**—not a sprint.

A posture of dependence.

A daily “yes” to **the Spirit**, and “no” to self.

What Does It Mean to Walk by the Spirit?

It means:

- You **pray first**, not react first.
- You invite **the Spirit** into your **thoughts**, not just your church time.

- You feed your soul on **Scripture**, not just slogans.
- You **pause** long enough to hear conviction before you act.
- You obey even when you don't feel like it.

Walking by **the Spirit** doesn't mean you never fail.
It means you never *fight alone*.

Appetite Isn't the Enemy. Ownership Is.

God gave you:

- A need for food.
- A desire for connection.
- Longings for intimacy, purpose, and joy.

But sin hijacks those desires.
Twists them. Inflates them.
Turns gifts into gods.

Self-control isn't about rejecting desire.
It's about *returning desire to its rightful Master*.

The Spirit Doesn't Just Restrain. He Rebuilds.

He doesn't just keep your hands from sin.
He fills them with new purpose.

He doesn't just say, "*Don't*."
He says, "*Do—this instead*."

He turns:

- Lust into love.
- Anger into advocacy.

- Gluttony into gratitude.
- Apathy into action.

That's not self-improvement.
That's resurrection.

A Garden Needs a Gardener

The fruit of **the Spirit** doesn't grow automatically.
And you're not the gardener.

He is.

Your job?

Abide.

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself... apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4–5)

Nothing.

No love.

No peace.

No patience.

No self-control.

The fruit isn't proof of your effort.
It's proof of His presence.

What Surrender to the Spirit Looks Like in Real Life

Surrender:

- Confesses quickly instead of justifying sin.
- Starts each morning asking for help.

- Chooses Scripture over scrolling.
- Listens for **the Spirit**'s whisper in conversation.
- Doesn't push past conviction.
- Trades independence for intimacy.
- Asks: "What would glorify You right now?"

Reflection — Who's Cultivating the Garden?

1. **Are you trying to grow fruit by effort or by abiding?**
What's the difference—and where are you leaning?
2. **Where in your life do you still claim ownership?**
What part of your flesh hasn't been crucified yet?
3. **Do you see the Holy Spirit as a helper—or your Master?**
How would your daily life look different if He truly led?
4. **What would radical surrender look like this week?**
What's one habit, one decision, one prayer you need to begin?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, I can't do this without You.

I don't want willpower. I want resurrection power.

Crucify my flesh. Pull up the roots of pride, lust, anger, and self.

I belong to Jesus.

Not my cravings. Not my impulses. Not my plans.

Make Your home in me.

Grow fruit that lasts.

Rule me. Shape me. Lead me.

Not in word only—but in power.

Amen.

Chapter 12 – Rotten Roots: The Enemies of Love, Joy, and Peace

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy...” (Galatians 5:19–21)

Obvious. That's the word Paul uses.

Not hidden.

Not subtle.

Not harmless.

Obvious.

These aren't quirks. They're *fruit-killers*.

And they don't just grow in darkness.

Sometimes they flourish in church settings, dressed in spiritual language, robed in religious pride.

This chapter is about what grows when we ignore **the Spirit** and let the flesh have the soil.

And it starts with the three sins that directly **oppose love, joy, and peace**—the first three fruits.

1. Hatred — The Anti-Love

Hatred doesn't always look violent.

Sometimes it's:

- Cold shoulders
- Quiet slander
- Avoidance

- Bitterness buried so deep we don't even call it hate anymore

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.” (1 John 2:9)

Cain didn't hate Abel overnight.

It began with comparison. Then envy. Then anger.
Until finally, blood in a field.

Hatred starts when love is withheld.

It deepens when we convince ourselves someone isn't worth forgiving.

Jesus said hatred *is* murder in the heart (Matthew 5:21–22).

And it grows in soil where **the cross has been forgotten.**

2. Discord — When Unity Gets Cut

Discord isn't disagreement.

It's disunity weaponized.

It's what happens when:

- Opinions become ultimatums
- Preferences become dividing lines
- Unity becomes conditional

Paul warned the Corinthian church:

“I hear that there are divisions among you... and to some extent I believe it.”
(1 Corinthians 11:18)

Discord says, “You're not like me, so I don't need you.”

The Spirit says, “You're not like me—and that's exactly why I do.”

Discord breaks the body of Christ into camps, cliques, and echo chambers.

The early church was filled with Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor—
and **the Spirit** made them **one**.

Anything less is **flesh**.

3. Jealousy — When Love Turns Competitive

Jealousy is love flipped inward.

It says:

- “Why not me?”
- “Why them?”
- “That should’ve been mine.”

Saul loved David—until David got more applause.
Then he hated him.
Then he hunted him.

“Jealousy is as cruel as the grave.” (Song of Songs 8:6)

Jealousy poisons friendships.
It twists admiration into resentment.
It makes you enemies with someone who hasn’t hurt you—just *surpassed* you.

It can’t celebrate with others because it sees their joy as a personal loss.

Jealousy is a soul that believes **God has shortchanged them**—
and someone else got the blessing.

4. Fits of Rage — Joy’s Implosion

Joy is deep gladness rooted in God.
Rage is uncontrolled emotion rooted in self.

They cannot coexist.

Rage isn't just anger.
It's **explosive**, dominating, flesh-first reaction.

It shows up when:

- We lose control and want it back
- Someone wounds our pride
- Plans break and we blame

“Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” (James 1:20)

Even Moses—who saw God's glory—lost the Promised Land because of a single outburst (Numbers 20:10–12).

Joy must be protected from the kind of rage that rots it at the root.

5. Bitterness — Quiet Rot

Bitterness whispers:

- “They don't deserve forgiveness.”
- “I'll never forget what they did.”
- “I'll just keep my distance—and keep this wound alive.”

“See to it that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”
(Hebrews 12:15)

Bitterness always starts underground.

But it never stays personal.
It *defiles many*.

Churches have split. Families have frozen. Friendships have died—because bitterness found a welcome heart.

Bitterness is the grave where joy goes to die.

6. Anxiety and Control — The Theft of Peace

Peace requires surrender.

Anxiety demands control.

And when we try to control what God hasn't asked us to carry—
peace vanishes.

Martha wanted help. She had good intentions. But she was frantic. Distracted. Driven.

"Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things." (Luke 10:41)

Sound familiar?

We say, "I'm just being responsible."

But underneath, we're panicked.

We've stopped trusting.

Anxiety isn't always sin.

But **refusing to lay it down is.**

Peace can't grow in a heart ruled by *what ifs*.

The Spirit says, "*Trust Me anyway.*"

What the Flesh Looks Like in Real Life

Flesh:

- Gossips behind someone's back
- Clenches its fists while smiling

- Can't celebrate someone else's success
- Reacts in rage, then justifies it
- Holds the grudge—but spiritualizes it as “boundaries”
- Lies awake rehearsing worst-case scenarios
- Tries to be god by controlling everything

Reflection — Which Root Is Still Alive?

1. **Which of these has felt “normal” in your life?**
Hatred, comparison, stress—have they been excused or surrendered?
2. **Who do you still withhold love from?**
What would crucifying that part of your flesh look like?
3. **Do you see the emotional sins—jealousy, rage, anxiety—as flesh?**
Or just as personality?
4. **What’s one area where peace, joy, or love has died?**
Can you trace it back to a root that needs pulling?

Prayer

God, I confess the roots I've let grow.

*Jealousy. Resentment. Bitterness. Anxiety.
I've justified them.
I've called them something else.
But You see them for what they are.*

*Rip them out, Lord.
Not just the fruit, but the root.
Don't let hatred hide.
Don't let discord stay quiet.
Don't let control dress itself up as wisdom.*

Give me a new heart—one led by love, anchored in joy, and ruled by peace.

Amen.

Chapter 13 — Poison in the Garden: When Goodness Is Corrupted

Some weeds don't look dangerous.

They start soft.

Subtle.

Even logical.

But over time, they choke the fruit.

This chapter deals with flesh that often *passes* as maturity, wisdom, or honesty.

But it's not.

It's poison, spreading beneath the surface.

1. Impatience & Entitlement — When We Reject God's Pace

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness...” (2 Peter 3:9)

We want immediate answers.

Instant change.

Quick deliverance.

But God grows things.

When He delays, impatience grows teeth:

- “I shouldn't have to wait for this.”
- “Why do they get it and I don't?”
- “I deserve better.”

That's **entitlement**—flesh disguised as expectation.

Israel didn't want to wait for Moses.

So they built a golden calf instead (Exodus 32).

Impatience didn't just cost them time.
It cost them **God's presence**.

2. Harshness & Cruelty — The Anti-Kindness

Some say, "*I'm just blunt.*"
Others, "*I don't sugarcoat truth.*"

But if it wounds instead of heals,
it's not boldness—it's **harshness**.

And **the Spirit** does *not* produce it.

"Let your gentleness be evident to all." (Philippians 4:5)
"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."
(Proverbs 15:1)

We can speak the truth and still sin with our tone.
We can quote Scripture and still crush someone's spirit.

Cruelty isn't just action.
It's apathy.

- Ignoring pain.
- Shrugging off tears.
- Saying, "*That's their problem.*"

Jesus was **never cruel**.
Even His hardest truths were soaked in tears.

3. Hypocrisy & Corruption — Counterfeit Goodness

Goodness is doing what's right when no one sees.
Hypocrisy is looking good when someone's watching.

Jesus saved His fiercest words for religious leaders—**not the immoral**, but the fake:

“You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence.” (Matthew 23:25)

Hypocrisy:

- Performs in public
- Pretends in prayer
- Demands from others what it won’t do itself

It’s the enemy of goodness because it cares more about looking holy than being holy.

And it leads to **corruption**—where the *system* protects appearances and ignores sin.

Even churches rot from the inside when leaders become unaccountable, arrogant, and image-driven.

4. Unfaithfulness & Betrayal — When We Give Up Too Soon

Faithfulness stays.

Unfaithfulness drifts.

Betrayal doesn’t just happen—it *builds* from a series of small yeses to self.

- Samson loved God... until he loved Delilah more.
- Peter swore loyalty... until the fire grew cold and the fear grew hot.
- Judas walked with Jesus... until the silver looked better.

“A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.” (Proverbs 28:20)

Unfaithfulness shows up when:

- We break promises that are inconvenient
- We back out when it gets hard
- We leave when staying would mean dying to self

Betrayal doesn't always feel like a knife.

Sometimes it's a quiet exit without repentance.

How the Flesh Corrupts What Was Meant for Good

The devil doesn't always tempt us with rebellion.

Sometimes he tempts us with **shortcut versions** of the good:

- Impatience instead of trust
- Harshness instead of boldness
- Applause instead of goodness
- Escape instead of endurance

But they bear no fruit.

Just thorns.

What the Flesh Looks Like in Real Life

Flesh:

- Interrupts because it knows better
- Shames others in the name of “truth”
- Uses Scripture to dodge accountability
- Demands loyalty but offers none
- Gives up when commitment gets costly

- Smiles on the outside while the inside rots
- Assumes God owes something for obedience

Reflection — Are You Covering Flesh with Fruit Words?

1. Do you confuse bluntness with honesty?

Has your “boldness” ever wounded someone unnecessarily?

2. Where has impatience led you to make poor decisions?

Have you blamed God’s timing for your bad response?

3. Are there any public areas of your life that don’t match the private ones?

What would “goodness” look like without an audience?

4. What promise, person, or calling have you quietly walked away from?

Is the Spirit calling you to return—to be faithful again?

Prayer

*Father, I see where I’ve faked fruit.
I’ve called impatience urgency.
I’ve called harshness boldness.
I’ve looked clean on the outside and ignored the inside.*

*I repent.
I want to be faithful, not flashy.
Gentle, not dominant.
Steady, not impressive.*

*Restore integrity in me.
Expose the hypocrisy I’ve hidden.
Make me good—not just in reputation, but in heart.*

*Grow what only You can grow.
Pull up what doesn't belong.*

Amen.

Chapter 14 – When the Walls Fall: Pride, Indulgence, and the Collapse of Self-Control

You can't build a garden without a wall.
You can't keep fruit alive if the gates are broken.

That's what this chapter is about:
What happens when the **walls fall**.

We're talking about the final, fatal works of the flesh:
Pride and indulgence.
The two that often look least sinful—because they feel so normal.

But they are **spirit-killers**.

1. Pride & Dominance — The Opposite of Meekness

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Pride isn't always loud.
Sometimes it's just... certain.

- Certain we're right.
- Certain others are wrong.
- Certain we're owed more.
- Certain our truth trumps God's.

The Pharisees knew Scripture.
They tithed. They fasted. They prayed.
And they crucified the Son of God.

Pride blinds.

It makes correction feel like attack.

It makes repentance look like weakness.

It keeps us from apologizing, listening, or lowering our voice.

It shows up as:

- Control in marriage
- Superiority in leadership
- Isolation masked as independence
- “Discernment” that’s actually division

“*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes...*” (Isaiah 5:21)

When pride leads, **the Spirit** steps back.

Because He will not share glory.

2. Indulgence & Addiction — The Collapse of Self-Control

This is where it ends.

Where the fruit falls, **the Spirit** is silenced, and the flesh takes full control.

And it rarely starts big.

- One more drink
- One more scroll
- One more dessert
- One more night
- One more excuse

But soon:

- The appetite owns you
- The habit defines you
- The desire sits on the throne

“They are slaves to depravity—for ‘people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.’” (2 Peter 2:19)

This is not about behavior.

It’s about **ownership**.

Who owns you?

The Spirit?

Or your cravings?

Indulgence always says the same lie:

“You deserve this.”

And every time we believe it, we trade freedom for slavery.

3. The Flesh Isn’t Just Weak—It’s Opposed to God

“The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” (Romans 8:7)

That’s the part we forget.

We think the flesh is just *immature*.

It’s not.

It’s *hostile*.

The flesh doesn’t want to be managed.

It wants to **rule**.

And when we give it space—when pride and indulgence rise—**the Spirit** is grieved.

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...” (Ephesians 4:30)

Fruit cannot grow in a soul where pride and indulgence run free.

This is the great collapse:
Not one big fall.
But a thousand small compromises
that rot the roots and **break the walls**.

4. Only the Spirit Can Rebuild

You can't reform pride.
You can't out-discipline addiction.

They have to be **crucified**.

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24)

That's not behavior management.
That's death.

And only **the Spirit** can bring resurrection.

The fruit doesn't grow because we try harder.
It grows because we die sooner.

Die to self.
Die to status.
Die to sugar-coated slavery.

And live to Him.

What the Collapse Looks Like in Real Life

Flesh at full strength:

- Always has an answer, but never an apology
- Refuses correction

- Explains away sin with “grace”
- Hides behind busyness, success, or ministry
- Can’t stop scrolling, eating, shopping, clicking
- Calls indulgence “freedom”
- Justifies pride as “confidence”
- Can’t hear **the Spirit**—because it won’t listen

Reflection — Are Your Walls Still Standing?

1. **Where has pride made you unteachable or unrepentant?**
What would humility look like instead?
2. **What appetite is beginning to own you?**
Food? Media? Approval? Comfort? How long have you avoided surrender?
3. **Do you see the link between indulgence and the absence of fruit?**
What’s the cost of keeping that door open?
4. **Are you trying to manage the flesh—or crucify it?**
What needs to die this week so fruit can grow again?

Prayer

*God, I see the cracks.
The pride I renamed as “strength.”
The indulgence I excused as “freedom.”*

*But I’m tired of falling.
I’m tired of managing death.*

*Crucify my flesh.
Pull me out of slavery.
Rebuild the walls I've let fall.*

*Where self ruled, let **the Spirit** reign.
Where I collapsed, grow new fruit.
Where pride screamed, let humility speak.
Where indulgence ruled, let worship return.*

*I can't do this without You.
And I no longer want to try.*

Amen.

Chapter 15 — Spirit-Grown: Soil, Pruning, and Gardens in the Desert

We've walked through the fruit.

We've exposed the flesh.

We've seen how much hangs on surrender, not striving.

But still... there's one truth that must be settled in our bones:

You cannot grow this fruit. Only the Spirit can.

And He doesn't grow it in polished, easy places.

He grows it where we least expect:

- In broken soil
- Through pruning love
- And in the driest deserts

1. Fruitful Soil — What Kind of Ground Are You?

Jesus told a story about soil (Luke 8:4–15).

Same seed.

Different results.

Why?

Because the condition of the soil determines the harvest.

- **The path** — hard hearts, truth rejected
- **The rocky ground** — shallow hearts, joy without roots
- **The thorns** — crowded hearts, fruit strangled by worry and wealth
- **The good soil** — honest hearts, fruit that *lasts*

“The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.” (Luke 8:15)

**The Spirit is the Gardener.
But you choose the soil.**

A soft heart.
A teachable spirit.
A life not overgrown with distraction.

If you want fruit—start by checking the ground.

2. The Spirit Works Below the Surface

We like fast change.
Visible results.
Spiritual metrics.

But **the Spirit** works like a gardener:

- Slow
- Hidden
- Daily

You don't see roots growing.
But you water anyway.
You trust the seed.
You wait on the sun.

“Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.” (Mark 4:27)

Fruitful lives often look **boring** at first.
But underneath—miracles are forming.

3. Pruned by Love — When God Cuts to Bear More

“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit... while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” (John 15:2)

God cuts what He loves.

Not to harm it.

But to make space for more.

That dream He let die?

That relationship He removed?

That opportunity that fell apart?

It might have been **pruning**.

Not punishment.

Preparation.

Pruning feels like loss.

But it's always gain in the hands of the Gardener.

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time... but later it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace...” (Hebrews 12:11)

God removes what won't bear fruit—
so you can become who He designed you to be.

4. What If It's Too Late?

What if you've wasted years?

What if the soil has gone dry?

What if everything in your life looks like a dead tree?

Hear this:

God plants gardens in deserts.

“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.” (Isaiah 35:1)

“I will make rivers flow on barren heights... I will turn the desert into pools of water.” (Isaiah 41:18)

You are not too far gone.

Your failure is not too final.

Your past does not cancel your future.

The Gardener restores what you thought was gone.

5. Gardens in the Desert — Stories of Spirit Fruit

Moses — Angry, impatient, running from murder

God met him in the desert.

He became the meekest man alive (Numbers 12:3).

Peter — Loud, impulsive, prideful

He denied Jesus three times.

But **the Spirit** transformed him into a bold, faithful shepherd.

The Woman at the Well — Rejected, ashamed

Five husbands. One broken heart.

But she became the first evangelist to her entire town.

You?

What has **the Spirit** done in your desert?

What will He do next?

6. You Don't Have to Force Fruit

Branches don't strain.
They stay connected.

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you.” (John 15:4)

If you're abiding, fruit will grow.
Not perfectly.
Not instantly.

But **surely**.

Because the Gardener never fails.

What Spirit-Grown Fruit Looks Like in Real Life

Spirit-grown lives:

- Don't panic when fruit takes time
- Don't resist pruning
- Don't compare their branches to someone else's
- Stay rooted in truth even when the sun scorches
- Trust that God waters in secret
- Look back one year later and *see what only God could've done*

Reflection — How Is the Garden of Your Life?

1. **What type of soil best describes your heart today?**
Hard? Shallow? Thorny? Open?

- 2. Has God pruned something recently that you mistook as punishment?**

What might He be preparing instead?

- 3. Where have you seen unexpected growth in a hard place?**

How has God turned desert into garden in your past?

- 4. What would it look like to stop striving and start abiding this week?**

What needs to be surrendered?

Prayer

*Gardener of my soul,
You are slow. You are wise. You are faithful.*

*Prepare the soil of my heart.
Pull up the thorns. Break the stones.
Soften what's grown hard.*

*And when You prune,
let me not fight You.
Let me trust Your hands.
You never cut without purpose.*

*Grow fruit in me—even in deserts.
Even in grief. Even in the unknown.*

*I am not the vine.
I am the branch.
Let me stay connected. Let me stay surrendered.*

*You are the life.
I am Yours.*

Amen.

Chapter 16 — You Will Know Them by Their Fruit: A Final Word on Discernment

Jesus didn't say, "*You'll know them by their passion.*"

Or "*You'll know them by their gifting.*"

Or "*You'll know them by their church attendance, Bible knowledge, or charisma.*"

He said this:

"By their fruit you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:16)

Not their feelings.

Not their following.

Not their theology alone.

Their fruit.

Because fruit doesn't lie.

1. What Grows Reveals What's Rooted

You can memorize verses and still hate your brother.

You can preach sermons and still lack peace.

You can volunteer weekly and still be ruled by pride.

The Pharisees did all of it.

And Jesus said:

"On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Matthew 23:28)

They passed the eye test.

But they failed the fruit test.

Because the fruit test is about **who's in charge**—the flesh or **the Spirit**.

2. Not Everyone Who Says “Lord” Bears Fruit

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...” (Matthew 7:21)

That verse should shake us.

Jesus is not impressed with spiritual language.
He wants Spirit-led lives.

He goes on:

“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy... and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:22–23)

That’s the danger of **performance without presence**.

Doing without knowing.
Gifts without fruit.

It looks like success.

But it ends in separation.

3. Fruit Isn’t Optional—It’s Evidence

The fruit of **the Spirit** isn’t a spiritual bonus.
It’s a **sign of life**.

If **the Spirit** is in you,
fruit will grow.

“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matthew 7:17)

No tree bears perfect fruit.
But every living tree bears something.

So if there's *no* fruit—no increasing love, no deeper joy, no growth in gentleness, patience, or self-control—then we must ask the hardest question:

Is the Spirit really there?

4. This Isn't About Judgment. It's About Clarity.

Jesus wasn't trying to make us paranoid.
He was calling us to **discernment**.

You will encounter:

- Teachers who say the right things but build their own kingdoms
- Christians who appear spiritual but sow division
- Friends who quote truth but have no love

You don't need to judge their motives.
But you must observe their fruit.

And you must examine your own.

5. So What Now?

The point of this book was never guilt.
It was never behavior management.

It was to bring you to this:

**A surrendered life,
indwelt by the Spirit,
bearing real, lasting fruit.**

The fruit is not the goal.
Jesus is.

But the fruit will come if He is there.

So ask yourself:

- Is **the Spirit** free to work in me?
- Is my life increasingly marked by His fruit?
- Is anything I call “Christian” actually just “me”?
- Am I crucifying the flesh daily—or making peace with it?

What Discernment Looks Like in Real Life

Discernment:

- Asks, “What’s growing here?” —not just “What’s happening here?”
- Chooses leaders based on fruit, not flash
- Walks with people who sharpen and sanctify
- Repents quickly when **the Spirit** convicts
- Embraces accountability
- Examines self more than others
- Remembers: *fruit is proof of life, not the price of it*

Reflection — What Will They Know You By?

1. **If someone followed you for a week, what fruit would they see?**
Where would love, joy, peace, or self-control show up?
2. **Have you confused gifting or effort for fruitfulness?**
What’s the difference?

- 3. Is there one area where the fruit is missing or fake?**
What root needs to be surrendered for that to change?
- 4. Who around you shows the fruit of the Spirit consistently?**
How can you walk with them more closely?

Prayer

*Jesus, You said I'd be known by my fruit.
Not my words. Not my gifts.
Not my intentions.
But by what grows when I surrender to You.*

So I surrender again.

*Let every root of pride be pulled.
Every rotten branch be pruned.
Every counterfeit be exposed.*

*Grow love that doesn't quit.
Joy that doesn't fade.
Peace that holds in the storm.
And self-control that guards the whole garden.*

*Spirit of the Living God—
this is Your soil now.*

*Bear fruit.
Real fruit.
Eternal fruit.*

Amen.

Epilogue — The Family Resemblance

We live in a noisy world.

So much is said.
So little is believed.
So much is claimed.
So little is proven.

But Jesus gave us the test:

“You will know them by their fruit.”

—Matthew 7:16

Not by their statements.
Not by their titles.
Not by how loudly they praise or how much Scripture they know.

By their fruit.

The fruit of **the Spirit** is not a suggestion.
It is not a personality type.
It is not an optional upgrade to your Christian life.

It is **evidence**—that the **Spirit of Christ** lives in you.
It is the reflection of God’s character made visible on earth—through you.

It is the family resemblance.

Because Jesus wasn’t just a teacher of truth.
He *embodied* it.

He didn’t preach love from a distance—He touched lepers.
He didn’t just describe peace—He slept through storms.
He didn’t just call for kindness—He wept at tombs.
He didn’t merely commend self-control—He stood silent before His accusers.

Jesus was the walking fruit of **the Spirit**.

The image of the Father.

The one we are called to emulate.

And **the Spirit**—the Helper He promised—was given for that very reason:

*“When **the Spirit** of truth comes... He will glorify Me, because it is from Me that He will receive what He will make known to you.”*

—John 16:13–14

The Spirit isn't here to give you a better day.

He's here to make you like Jesus.

To break the old, stubborn soil.

To uproot the works of the flesh.

To grow what you could never grow on your own.

The world doesn't need more Christian talk.

It needs Christian fruit.

And not manufactured behavior—
but *supernatural resemblance*.

Love that can't be explained.

Joy that can't be taken.

Peace that doesn't make sense.

Patience that defies pressure.

Kindness in the face of cruelty.

Goodness that stands when no one else does.

Faithfulness when it costs everything.

Gentleness in power.

Self-control in temptation.

That kind of fruit makes people ask,

“Who are you?”

And the answer becomes clear:

“I’m a child of God.”

So let this be the call:

Not just to live differently—
but to live **Spirit-led.**

Not just to bear fruit—
but to bear **His** fruit.

Not just to improve—
but to reflect the One who saved you.

Because this world is watching.
And what they see in us is what they'll believe about Him.

So let your roots grow deep.
Let your branches stretch wide.
And let **the Spirit** make you look like your Savior.

Because that's how they'll know you belong.
And that's how they'll come to know **Him**.

