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# **The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love**

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**Series: The Fruit of the Spirit**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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## The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love

William Dixon lived in Brackenthwalte, England. A widower who had lost his only son, he looked out his window one day, and to his amazement saw that his neighbor's house was on fire. Although the aged woman who owned the house had escaped, her orphaned grandson was trapped inside the blazing inferno. William Dixon, climbing an iron pipe up to where the boy was, grabbed the child, and lowered the boy to safety, holding on to that red hot pipe, badly burning his hands in the process.

A short time later the rescued boy's grandmother died, leaving the lad homeless. The town council was determined to find someone who would care for the boy, so they called a meeting. Two people arrived offering to take the child as their own. The first one, a man whose own boy had also been taken by calamity, spoke up first. He stood up and told how he would choose to love that child, if he were given the chance. The second man was William Dixon. Rising to his feet, he said nothing. Instead, he simply held up those scarred hands. He was given custody of the child.

The caption over the story read, "*He merely showed his hands.*" The first man said, "I could love that child." The second, merely by the lifting of those wretchedly scarred limbs said, "I already have." One was *professing love*. The other had already *demonstrated love*. And that is what your God has done for you. He has not only told you He loves you; He has demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were sinners, trapped in the blazing inferno of an impending eternal hell, He died for us. Thus God defined love. This poem explains it:

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“LOOK UPON MY HANDS”

The weary pilgrim, teary-eyed,  
Inquired of His Lord,  
“Blessed Father, what is love?  
Can you define the word?”

“Define the word?” the Lord replied,  
“No language is complete  
To give the word its meaning;  
Here, gaze upon my feet.

“Look upon My side, dear one.  
See the spear’s dread scar.  
Look upon my blood-stained brow,  
The crown of thorns did mar.

“Look upon My hands, my child;  
See the nail-prints lined;  
Look upon My hands, my child...  
And you’ll see love defined.”

To seek to define love is either the most impossible task known to mankind, or it is the simplest, depending on your perspective. Apart from Calvary, you see, love cannot be defined. It can be addressed; it can be alluded to, but it cannot be defined. But take a walk up Calvary’s hill and defining love is no longer your task. God has done it for you. *Simply look at His hands.* You have *seen* love.

Believe it or not, defining love is what this lesson is all about. For we are about to begin today a nineteen-lesson journey into the depths of the Spirit as He reveals Himself through man. Paul tells us in Galatians, chapter five, that there is a war going on in the heart of every man and woman. Satan is trying to reproduce the fruits of his spirit in lives in order to perpetuate his horrendous curse on mankind. When allowed to do so, *even the believer’s life*, according to Paul, will manifest such ungodly characteristics as immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, jealousy, anger, drunkenness and the like. That’s what verses 17-21 are all about.

But praise God, the story has a happy ending. Paul doesn’t stop there. He concludes that *this isn’t the normal Christian*

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*life.* The normal Christian life isn't permeated by anger, isn't characterized by envy, and isn't marred by impurity. The normal Christian life is a supernatural life filled and flooded with the supernatural qualities of God Himself.

For this I say, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

Then, having painted the bleakness of Satan's nature across the horizon, Paul turns the page heavenward and adds:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. (Galatians 5:22 NIV)

The fruit God produces, when allowed to control the believer's life, is so demonstrably different. That a waiting world will watch in awe and exclaim, "They have been with Jesus." It is our desire these next few weeks to use the vehicle of meditation to appropriate those nine elements of His nature, so we can more continually allow them to flow through our lives unhindered. Today we begin with the first and apparently the most important expression of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit...love. The title and outline, then, for today's study is as follows: The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love.

- I- The Foundation
- II- The Explanation
- III- The Expression

### I- THE FOUNDATION

The essence of this study must be explained in its early stages. It is this: Love is the foundation of the Christian life. It is not an ingredient of the Christian life; it is *the* ingredient from which all others flow. Carefully consider three things about God's love:

#### 1- Love is the primary expression of God's character in man.

Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13:13 NKJV)

When all else is dissolved, the love of God remains. It is

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eternal. It never fails.

Love never fails. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

(I Corinthians 13:8)

But love never ceases, never fails, never ends its quest to redeem, or its pilgrimage to reveal the nature of God. It will survive when all else is gone...the Love of God.

2- Love is also the singular ingredient from which all of the other elements of God's nature are revealed, and the foundation stone on which all of the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit find their meaning. Love isn't just one of God's attributes; God is love. The essence of His being can be defined as love. Therefore, His mercy is nothing more than His love forgiving; His grace is nothing more than His love enabling; His Power is but His love accomplishing; His Wisdom is but His Love revealing. God is Love. You define God by love and love by God. Thus, in explaining the Fruit of the Spirit, you must realize that not only is the Fruit of the Spirit love, joy, peace, etc., the Fruit of the Spirit is Love. That Love, God Himself, reveals as joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Joy is the love of God enduring circumstances. Peace is the Love of God resting in storms. Patience is the Love of God waiting for the Father's timing. Kindness is the Love of God expressing itself to others. Goodness is the Love of God revealing the Holiness that makes its love unique. Faithfulness is the Love of God demonstrating its steadfast hope. Gentleness is the Love of God responding to earth's wrongful abuse. Self-Control is the Love of God in control of life's choices. The Fruit of the Spirit is Love. The Love of the Spirit flows through the life of God's child and manifests itself in eight supernatural expressions of itself. Love isn't one way God reveals Himself. God is Love, so in every way God reveals Himself, He is simply revealing His Love.

3- The Love of God cannot be separated from the Cross of God. This third truth is paramount to this study and is perhaps the most profound of all. We referred to it early in this lesson. If you cannot define love any other way, simply point to Calvary and say, "Love = Calvary". It is a formula so simplistic

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in its appearance, yet so rich in its expression, that it will never cease defining itself. It will flow like a river through the endless expanse of eternity. Love is Calvary. Calvary is Love. Love, then, is the nature of God as it looks dying on a Roman Cross.

- Love is God giving His life for a rebel, knowing he'll always be a rebel.
- Love is a King becoming a slave for the honor of being slain.
- Love is God leaving Heaven's throne to hang between two thieves.
- Love is the heart of God bleeding to death.
- Love is the hands of God willingly torn by the nails of sin.
- Love is the eyes of God beholding a leper saying, "I choose to die for him."
- Love is the ears of God tenderly listening, as His disciples argue over who will be exalted in Heaven, while He prepares to be humiliated on earth.
- Love is the feet of God walking steadfastly into the enemy camp when twelve legions of angels could have swept Him into His Father's arms.
- Love is Calvary personified. Calvary is Love enacted. You cannot separate the two. That is why, until a man or woman has been to Calvary, they not only cannot possess love, they cannot even define love.

Love, you see, is God giving up everything —

- so those who deserved nothing... could possess it all
- at the expense of the Only One... who deserved anything.

## II- THE EXPLANATION

Love is the essence of who God is; and thus is the foundation for all God does. It can best be defined by a Cross: in fact,

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it cannot be defined without that Cross. All of history before Calvary pointed to that moment. All of history since points back to that moment. Calvary is that supreme second when eternity enveloped time so that fallen man could participate in all God is forever.

But there is a need to further elaborate on what love is Scripturally, so that *as God's love flows through us* we can recognize it; and if *it doesn't*, we can ask for it. Thus, we will seek in these few brief moments to let the Word of God itself explain how love works, when it is revealed through the life of man.

Here is that definition:

*Love –*

*That supernatural expression of the nature of God (Romans 5:5, I John 4:16) that causes a person to:*

- humble himself..... Philippians 2:3
- abandon his rights..... Phillippians 2:4
- relinquish his reputation ..... Philippinas 2:7
- and give his life away ..... Ephesians 5:2,  
John 3:16, I John 3:16
- for the glory of God ..... Philippians 1:11, 2:10,11
- unreservedly..... Romans 8:35-39
- unconditionally ..... Romans 5:6,9
- undeservedly ..... Deuteronomy 7:7,  
Matthew 5:43, 44
- continually ..... I Corinthians 13:8
- whether returned or not..... Matthew 5:46

That is love. If you leave out *any* of those ingredients, you may misinterpret whether or not what you construe to be God's love flowing through you is indeed His love. Let this become your checklist, and then begin a pattern of meditating on the verses that illustrate each facet of the definition. Then, as you allow God to be Himself in you, you will naturally see Him supernaturally love. It won't be something you will have to do; but it will be something you will have to choose to let Him do, moment by moment by moment. Only if you understand what

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love is and appropriate what love is through the Scriptures, can you free Him to really love through you.

*Love: a supernatural expression of the nature of God.*

Because love is initiated by God, it cannot be present in the natural man. Apart from a divine encounter with the Living God through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, it is impossible to love. But that encounter causes God to place in you His Spirit, which then allows Him to express His nature through you... supernaturally.

The Living Bible says this:

...no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

(Romans 5:5 TLB)

The book of John explains the reverse. Jesus is speaking to unbelievers, and He says:

And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him, ye believe not.

...ye have not the love of God in you. (John 5:38,42b)

It is summarized this way:

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

(I John 4:16)

Love is a supernatural expression of the nature of God. If you possess God, you have the capacity for agape love. If you don't, you can't. Therefore, praise God, the capacity to love can never be in question again, if you are a believer. When you initiate love, God in you takes over, and because Love abides in you, supernaturally you possess the attitude described in the rest of this definition

Love—that supernatural expression of the nature of God that causes a person to humble himself, abandon his rights, relinquish his reputation, and give his life away.

We call I Corinthians 13 the “love chapter”. But Philippians, chapter two, qualifies in a totally different way for the same

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title. While the I Corinthians passage speaks of the expression of God's love, it is the Philippians two passage that tells of the essence of that love. It reads like this:

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

(Philippians 2:1,2)

Then Paul explains what that "same love" looks like when it's operative:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

—Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, *and was* made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

(Philippians 2:3-8)

Want to know how love looks when it's working? *It's humble.* It humbles *itself*. It lays aside robes of self-righteousness and takes on the cloak of a slave. *It has no rights.* It esteems everyone else as more important. *It has no reputation.* Only God's reputation is at stake, and the more you give yourself away, the more Glory accrues to Him. The less of you there is to glory in, the more of Him there is to praise. That's the attitude of love.

Now for the activity of love. Its sole purpose is to give itself away. Listen:

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for

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a sweet smelling savour.

(Ephesians 5:2)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(John 3:16)

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

(I John 3:16)

When love is operative in you, it has no pride. It has no rights; it has no reputation. Therefore, it is free to give itself away, not because it is convenient, not because it is expedient, but because it is essential if God is to be Himself in us. God so loved who? The whole world. The devil-filled drugdealer who delights in destroying life for gain, the ruthless dictator who views people as pawns and God as irrelevant; the pious religious fool who parades his righteousness as though God were beholden to him; the foolish hypocrite who preaches holiness to the multitudes and lives behind a cloak of sin. God so loved everyone, without exception, that He gave Himself away. He gave up the one thing He had to keep, to keep the one thing He had to save. His goal was spiritual. He didn't do it to make us more comfortable; He did it to make us eternally His. He didn't do it to pacify our desire for religiosity; He did it to replace our passion for religiosity with reality. And hereby perceive we the love of God. Here is how we can tell it. He gave Himself away for us, and when He is being Himself in us, we'll give ourselves away...for the same people He gave Himself for: lepers, castoffs, rejects, paupers, Pharisees, disciples, and all the rest.

God gives. We take. God in us will stop taking and start giving...even to the point of death. When one hurts, we ought to hurt. Anyone. When one weeps, we ought to weep. Anyone. When one is hungry, we ought to suffer the same pangs until we rush to feed them as we would to feed ourselves. When one is lonely, we suffer loneliness. We do not simply empathize with them, we go to them and minister to them, and encourage them. If need be, we die for them; because Jesus in us must live that way if the world is to know that He is God.

We're to do it only for God's Glory. The moment we take

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credit for that supernatural expression of God's nature, we lose our reward. We swap a "pat on the back" on planet earth that lasts two or three minutes for a golden crown in Glory that will last for eternity and will serve as material the more with which to worship the King as we cast our crowns at His feet.

Here we are told why God pours the fruit of His Spirit through us:

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

(Philippians 1:11)

Philippians 2 concludes that beautiful passage on the essence of love by saying,

Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:9-11 NKJV)

That's the natural fruit of love...Glory to God. If you love in your energy, you will accrue attention from the world. They will "Ooh" and "ahh" and give you humanitarian awards. But you let God do it; particularly if you are not by nature the giving kind, and when you love, no one but God can receive Glory. When God does it, that love is so supernatural, it passes human understanding. Look at what it's like:

You love unreservedly. That means your love is not limited to time or place or circumstance. To love someone some of the time is not to love. To love someone partially is not to love. Romans 8:35 asks, "What shall separate us from God's love?" Then it answers: "nothing." It has no limits. Neither does God's love through us.

You love unconditionally. We are reminded that...

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

(Romans 5:6)

His love for us did not wait to respond to our love. He loved

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us even before we demonstrated any inclination to His love. That is the kind of supernatural love that God wants to flow through us.

You love undeservedly. What glory is there for loving the lovable? Even the world can do that. Satan encourages that. But God in you loves your enemies through you with the same intensity as your friends.

You've heard it said, "Love your neighbor; hate your enemies..." [Nonsense.] Love your enemies; pray for your enemies; bless your enemies; do good for your enemies.

(Matthew 5:43,44 paraphrase)

We cannot even understand that. But that is the nature of God's love.

You love continually. I Corinthians 13:8 says love never stops. Even when it meets opposition; even when it gets tired of giving. It gives more. It is eternal; therefore, it knows not the limits of time or weariness.

You love whether that love is returned to you or not. Matthew asks the question:

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?  
do not even the publicans the same? (Matthew 5:46)

Any fool can respond to love. Only God can initiate love. Anyone can love the one who loves them. Only God can love the ones who don't.

So that's how God looks when He is releasing His love through you. He supernaturally humbles you, causes you to abandon your rights and your reputation and to begin giving yourself away in such a way that only He will receive the Glory. His love will be unlimited, unconditional, undeserved, and unrelated to the response of the one you are loving. It will just give and give and give, because it is of God.

### III- THE EXPRESSION

I am convinced that we as Christians do not know how to love. We think we're here to receive, to be blessed; to be the recipients of miracles, messages, mercy, and money. We wake up in the morning and write out our agenda for the day

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based on what will serve us, or at best will allow us to serve others without being unduly inconvenienced. We wonder why the world is not amazed at our God, and why they look so unconvinced when we shove a tract in their face and say, “God loves you, brother.”

The love of God is the missing ingredient in troubled homes. Jesus instructed husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church—humbly, without rights, without reputation, unreservedly, unconditionally, undeservedly, continually, with or without response. Only God can do that. And God in you can. Men, we think if we offer to clear the table every other Thursday, we’re the epitome of love. We think if we skip a golf game now and then to pick up the kids, we’re in line for the Nobel Peace Prize. We think if we tell our wives we love them, they ought to be impressed, whether we demonstrate our love by giving ourselves away unselfishly or not. Usually we don’t even tell them, for fear of being considered weak. We don’t know what weak is. Weakness is failing to let the love of God shine through. Weakness is failing to give and give and give, because we don’t want to lose our “rights” or damage our “reputation” or appear as though we’re not in charge. Jesus was in charge. He was so in charge He died for us. Then He said, “Husbands, go do that for your mates...go on... give yourself away for them, the way I gave Myself away for you.”

We don’t know how to love our enemies either. We think bottling up our hatred, so it doesn’t show is magnanimous. We think smiling when we pass them on the street deserves an Oscar. God says to give your life for them; pray for them; pray God’s best for them; find their needs and meet them...even if you must do it anonymously, so only God can receive the Glory. The more they persecute you or revile you or lie about you, the more you love them; the more you pray for them; the more you desire God’s best for them. When they desire even to put you to death, you pray “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” That’s God’s kind of love. You don’t see it every day. Unfortunately, some of us go a lifetime without seeing it.

You say, “But I can’t love like that.” True. But God in you cannot love any other way. So your job is to take these

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passages and meditate on them day and night, night and day. Keep them on the tip of your tongue; don't let them depart from your mouth. Then, just relax and start giving yourself away. The minute you choose to love as God loves and begin acting on that love, you release in your spirit from the reservoir of God's love a river of power you never knew you had. You must decide; and you must begin to act on your decision, even if you don't think you can do it. But the moment you begin to act as though you can, God will fill you, and flood you, and pour His love through you.

Your life will dramatically change. Instead of constantly focusing on buying for yourself, doing for yourself, caring for yourself, scales will fall from your eyes and you will begin seeing the needs of others as more important, far more important, than yours. The cost of meeting those needs in time, in money, in loss of pride, or in yielding of rights, will be nothing. You will be so excited at being used of God to share His love that you will forget yourself altogether. That is the day you will have begun to live.

When you were a child, you spoke like a child, thought like a child, behaved like a child, always wanting your own way, always seeing life through the lens of self. Now you're growing up in Jesus. It's time to put away childish things. It's time to look in the mirror and see someone who lives I Corinthians 13, not because you have to, but because it's the natural result of letting Christ be Lord.

As Paul reminded us, that love will not be selfish or rude. It won't demand its own way; won't be irritable or touchy; won't hold grudges. Rather, it will be patient and kind, never jealous, never envious. It will always want the best for the other person, even at its expense.

That kind of love is revolutionary; but that kind of love will change the world. It will change homes. It will change offices. It will change churches. People will be giving other people first place. People will be giving other people first choice. People will be giving other people first billing.

Because the fruit of the Spirit is love, that kind of love now lives in you. You say, "But how can I be sure it will work? I

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have a lot to lose. I might look foolish; I might be laughed at, or scorned.” I have a suggestion for you. Ask God to prove to you that it works. Ask Him to prove that something this demonstrably supernatural can actually change the world you live in. Ask Him how you can be sure it works. Ask Him.

Do you know what He'll do? He'll whisper to you in the dark of the night and say, “Child, come closer, I want to answer your question.” Excitedly, you'll wait for Him to speak, but He'll say not a word. Then suddenly, it will dawn on you, and you'll lift up your eyes, and they will meet His. Still, He'll not speak a word.

He'll simply show you His hands.

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