

**DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 10 Jun 2019)****Read - Galatians 5:22-23**

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” v 22-23*

Last week was Pentecost and we focused on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each one of us. The reason God sent the Spirit into us is so that the Spirit could change us to be more like Him.

One of the most important ways that the Spirit changes us is by bearing fruit. We tend to think in terms of activity when we think about ‘bearing fruit’, but here Paul is not talking about what we do, but how we do it. Over the next 9 weeks we will be looking at the different fruits that Paul mentions.

We start with love. Paul told us in 1 Cor 13 that: “these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” He was in no doubt whatsoever about the importance of love in our relationship with God.

In our modern world ‘love’ has become a word that can be quite frivolous and almost bland. But in the times when the Bible was written, life was far more tough, brutal and savage than it is today. In fact love was something quite unusual except in the context of a man and a woman.

The concept of loving other, even your enemies, was completely foreign because you defeated and vanquished your enemies in that ‘dog eat dog’ world.

Yet God asks them, and us, to love.

**Prayer: Father, please help me to love.**

**DAY 2****Read - 1 John 4:7-21**

*“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love”. v 7-8*

John’s first epistle is one of the go-to books on love in the New Testament, and especially chapter 4.

John starts by making it clear that we love because God first loved us. Love is not something that is natural for us as humans, and so we learn how to love by looking at how God loves.

All the way back in Deuteronomy 7:9 we find this: “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

God has always shown us how to love and we find out all about God’s love in the Bible – He has faithfully loved His people for hundreds of generations and will continue for hundreds more.

Jesus told us that we need to “remain in His love” [John 15:9] and that “greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” [John 15:13] So our example, our model, and our source of love is to be found in God, and through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

That is why true love is a fruit of the Spirit. If we try to love in our own strength it may be OK, but real, true, life-changing love comes from the Spirit moving in us to love others.

**Prayer: Help me to love as You love me.**

**DAY 3****Read - John 15:9-13**

*“Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” v 9-10*

Jesus points out that the way we love is to do what He commands us to do. God made the same point in our Deuteronomy quote yesterday. This may sound a bit odd because surely loving because we are commanded to is not real love.

The way it really works is that when we are working towards the same objectives that God has (doing what He commands us) the power of the Spirit comes alive within us and changes the way we do things so that we do them more in the way God would do them – with love.

This is how the Spirit working within us changes our actions into something more aligned to the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit transforms us, our actions and the way we do things to be more aligned to God’s way, and so God is truly working through us to achieve His purposes.

So then we are not depending on our own human efforts to do His will in the right way, but moving forward along the way He wants us to go and letting God express Himself through us, by His Spirit. But only if we are doing what God wants.

As a result, people are able to experience God’s love through our feeble actions, and don’t have to try to understand it only by reading about it in the Bible. God shows love, through us!

**Prayer: Father, please help me to demonstrate Your love through my actions.**

**DAY 4****Read - 1 John 4:7-21**

*“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us ... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.” v 16, 18*

God’s love is not only something that we know and pass on to others. It is through God’s love for us that we have assurance in difficult times.

John makes the point that because of God’s love for us, and because of His amazing faithfulness, we can rely on that love – we can know that He wants the best for us; that He will always be there for us; and that we don’t need to fear God or what He might ask of us.

Even with our best soul mate, be it a spouse or a dear friend, there is always the risk of something happening that might break that relationship. But not with God!

Through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and working through us, we can help others to experience that faithful love. Not because we are capable or special, but because it is God’s Spirit within us that bears the fruit of real love.

As ‘agents’ of God in this world, it is through people like us that God’s love and message is spread, but only if we let the Spirit of God work through us.

There are many people who have been hurt by the church and other Christians – that is when the people try to do things their own way and not in the power of the Spirit.

We need the Spirit in order to bear fruit.

**Prayer: Please help me show You to the world and not me.**

**DAY 5****Read - 1 Corinthians 13**

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” v 4-7*

This passage from 1 Corinthians is a popular passage to read at weddings. However, Paul was not talking about romantic love when he wrote it.

He was giving a description of the type of love that we should show when we are serving God – that is very clear from the rest of the chapter and the ones before and after.

This sort of love is not fully possible in our human strength and is only possible if it is God’s love flowing through us to others by the power of His Spirit. You see this is a description of God’s love for us.

No person, other than Jesus, has ever truly loved like this except as a service to God. Mother Theresa is someone who would come close, but she would be the first one to point out that this was God’s love flowing through her to others.

The only way that we can show this love is if we let our nature, ambitions and feelings get out of the way so that the Spirit can flow through us.

This is how the fruit of the Spirit work: they come from God, flow into us, but can only flow out of us if we are being led by the Spirit to do God’s work so that others can experience God’s love.

**Prayer: Make me a channel of Your love.**

**DAY 6****Read - Galatians 5:22-23**

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” v 22-23*

So, as we begin our journey through the fruits of the Spirit, it is vitally important that we truly understand what ‘fruit of the Spirit’ means.

There are two parts to this. Firstly the fruit are those characteristics of God that come into our lives when we open our lives to the working of His Spirit. That means hearing and doing what God wants us to do, working towards the growth and glory of His kingdom.

This happens when we follow the promptings of the Spirit and allow the Spirit to change the decisions we make about how we live our lives, what we do for others and the nature of our character. This is not easy, as we have to put our reliance on our own ways aside, but it is greatly rewarding – who does not want love, joy, peace in their lives?

But secondly, the fruit of the Spirit is also what should be flowing out from us for the world to see and experience. When people think of words to describe us these are the words we should be wanting them to use.

The real truth of experience is that the more we show the fruit to others in the what we do and how we do it, the more we experience the fruit ourselves in our lives.

**Think: How would people describe me?**

**Prayer: Lord fill me and use me for Your glory that people may see your fruit through me.**