

The Signature of the Spirit

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Walking in the Spirit can be defined as moment-by-moment sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But how can we know when we are successful? What does a person look and act like when he or she is surrendered to the Lord? Is there an objective standard by which we can measure the vitality of this relationship?

Yes, there is. *Fruit* is the telling sign. It is not simply *one* mark of a Spirit-filled life; it is the *preeminent* mark. It is a public testimony to a believer's sensitivity to and dependency on the Holy Spirit.

Those who walk in the Spirit will have the following nine virtues: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). I've chosen not to give a blow-by-blow description of each quality in this article.

The Fruit of God's Spirit



If I were to give expanded definitions of each quality, it might prompt you to think:
I want to be a kinder person.
I need to exercise more self-control.
I'm going to become a more faithful person.
I ... I ... I ... I ... I ...

I believe there's a reason Paul listed these virtues and moved on. They aren't given to use as goals to pursue. Why? Because it's not our responsibility to produce fruit. The Holy Spirit is the producer. We are merely the bearers. The fruit of the Spirit was never intended to be a demonstration of our dedication and resolve. **It is the evidence of our dependency on and sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit.**

How else can we characterize those who walk in the Spirit? The closer you get to them, the better they look. They radiate integrity and trustworthiness. They don't rely on personality, intimidation, and trumped-up enthusiasm to win you over. They accept themselves as they are and you as well. They are the people you find yourself wanting to be like because of the depth of their character.

We're not talking about perfection. They still have the flesh to contend with. They can be as unkind and insensitive as anybody else. But when they realize their sin, they are quick to apologize. They are not afraid to admit their faults. But they are aware that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they can rise above their sinful desires.

The results of the Holy Spirit's presence in someone's life are a *by-product* of being tuned in to the Spirit of God. **The more Spirit-conscious we become, the more fruit we will bear.** Fruit is not to be the center of our attention. Our commitment must be to walk in the Spirit. The result of that decision will be the fruit of the Spirit—fruit that remains even during difficult times.

Just as unconditional love in a marriage or friendship shines brightest in the midst of our differences, so the fruit of the Spirit demonstrates its divine source when circumstances and relationships take a turn for the worse. Then it becomes most apparent that the source of abiding character is something that lies deep within those who walk by the Spirit. When all the crutches and props are kicked away, and they are still standing, no one can argue that their uniqueness was simply a by-product of their environment.

They don't win every battle. Doubt, temptation, hurt, and disappointment take them out of the race from time to time. When they are treated unjustly, they feel the outrage and frustration that accompany such acts. But they don't dwell on them either. They refocus their attention on the big picture, acknowledge the truth that their peace is from the Lord, and they move on. They reset their minds on the things above. They know **“the mind set on the things of the Spirit is life and peace”** ([Romans 8:6](#)).

The fruit of the Spirit is just that: *fruit produced by the Spirit*. Its root is deeply embedded in the person of Christ. When we abide in Him and allow Him to live His life through us, the result is character that endures the chaos of life.

The fruit of the Spirit is:

1. Love – for those who do not love in return
2. Joy – in the midst of painful circumstances
3. Peace – when something you were counting on doesn't come through.
4. Patience – when things aren't going fast enough for you
5. Kindness – toward those who treat you unkindly
6. Goodness – toward those who have been intentionally insensitive to you
7. Faithfulness – when friends have proved unfaithful
Gentleness – toward those who have handled you roughly
8. Self-control – in the midst of intense temptation

It is not uncommon for the fruit of the Spirit to take us by surprise. I have seen this happen many times, especially in the lives of new believers. I was once talking to Pastor Luis and shared the following story with me: Roberto, who grew up in our church, is a good example. During his last two years of high school, he got involved with some rebellious friends. After several years of intense rebellion, Roberto finally came to the end of himself.

Roberto reentered our fellowship through the youth department. He felt comfortable around the teenagers, and he believed what he had been through might help others. In a short time, we saw a remarkable transformation. His anger and frustration were replaced with peace and joy. His intimidating demeanor disappeared, and he became one of the

kindest gentlemen you could imagine. He took on a group of junior high boys as a ministry project and demonstrated supernatural patience. When asked about his old friends, he said, **“I’m not even tempted by all that. My desire for that lifestyle is gone.”**

If you ask Roberto what he thinks brought about the dramatic changes in his life, one answer you will not hear is, **“My commitment.”** He didn’t set out to master the qualities listed in **Galatians 5**. When you ask Roberto what made the difference, he replies, “I just gave it all to God. I told him that I couldn’t do it and He would have to do it through me. I just stay focused on Him.”

The fruit took Roberto by surprise. That’s what happens when we get our focus off ourselves and onto the Holy Spirit. Abiding frees Him to do what only He can do. The results are uncharacteristic character, effortless change, and fruit that remains (**[John 15:16](#)**).

That is the nature of fruit. It takes us by surprise. We don’t produce it; we discover it. As you begin walking in the Spirit, you will walk away from a heated conversation and think, ***Wow, I didn’t lose my temper.*** You will finish a round with your kids and realize you didn’t raise your voice. You will be asked to go somewhere you have no business going, and you will hear yourself saying, “No, thank you.”

Eventually you will overhear someone saying something to the effect of, “I don’t know what’s gotten into him, but he’s really different.” And you will realize that the person is right. But not because you set out to change. It will happen only when you surrender to the initial promptings of the Spirit. Remember, fruit is not something you work to attain. It’s something that takes you by surprise as the Holy Spirit produces it through you.