

The #1 Key to Finding God's Will for Your Life

When I was a little boy living in northwest China, we didn't get fresh fruits and vegetables. I loved oranges. Somehow, we'd gotten an orange and I saved the seeds to plant an orange tree so I could have oranges on a regular basis. I put some dirt in a little clay pot, put the seeds in it and then put it by the stove. It was bitterly cold, and I knew I had to keep it warm.

I really expected that within a few months, I'd have a tree growing out of my potted plant with oranges falling off of it. I'd watch it every day and nothing happened. I'd water it faithfully, but nothing ever grew. I think as Christians, we often want things to happen instantly. But the fruit of the Spirit tends to be more developmental. The development of fruit in all of the disciples was a growth process. It did not happen immediately. Peter did not become the rock overnight. It happened over time.

I see the fruit of the Spirit as sequential in development, much like the locks on a canal. A canal operates to move ships into a closed space called a lock. One body of water is lower than the next body of water they're moving to. Gradually, by the ship going uphill or downhill, it moves through a sequence of locks. Each of the locks the ship moves through fills up with water and floats the ship higher. Slowly, it moves into the next lock and goes on.

I think developing the fruit of the Spirit is like that. Beginning with love, we progress until we've moved all the way through and come at last to that hardest of all to develop—the fruit of self-control.

The fruit of the Spirit tells us God is far more concerned

with who we are than what we're doing. If you're looking for God's will for your life, don't look first of all at where God wants you to go, or even what God wants you to do. Look first of all at who God wants you to be. Probably 99 percent of knowing the will of God is being the person God wants you to be. Because if you are that person, you can go anywhere and do anything and you'll be guided by God and in His will.

The fruit of the Spirit allows us to take the high ground, rather than let somebody else's bitterness and anger get into us. There's no room in the Spirit-filled life for impoliteness, curtness, nastiness, self-pity or self-promotion. The fruit is designed to get all of those things out of our life. It often grows in adversity. This is the opposite of fruit in the natural sense.

When there is a chill, fruit freezes. If the weather is bad, a tree cannot survive. But the great thing about the fruit of the Spirit is that nothing can kill the development of Christ's personality within our life. Christ's personality grows in all kinds of temperatures, atmospheres and circumstances. The fruit of the Lord's personality is shown even to the point of martyrdom. Consider Stephen, who experienced a one-time gift as he was about to have his life extinguished. He responded with the love of Christ to those who were stoning him. He said, "Do not hold this sin against them."

Revelation 22:1-2 points us to the future age when, in that eternal city of God, there will be a river running down the main street—a river called the river of the water of life. On either side of that river is the tree of life, changing fruit for every one of the twelve months of the year. I think this symbolically describes that where the life of God is present. There you will have the full and rich variety of the fruit of God.

I suggest we apply that picture of Revelation into our life

now. When Christ's life is living in us, we will see the wonderful sight of His life-giving water bringing fruit to our own life. The great thing about fruit is that it's no good if it's just left on the tree. Fruit is meant to be eaten. This is how we are to be in our relationships with one another.

God wants to make us delicious—delicious to the people we are living with. If we'll let Christ's personality be developed in our life, people who know us well will have a satisfying experience partaking of our life. This is why it's contradictory to be a crabby, mean or cantankerous Christian.

Fruit is meant to be tasted. The Scriptures tell us, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). And we might add that the Lord wants us to be His tasty fruit in the world.

The gifts of the Spirit come to us through the miraculous endowment of God's Spirit. Some of them may also be developmental. The baptism in the Spirit happens often in a moment. But the fruit of the Spirit grows as we continue to sink our roots down in Christ. The key to developing fruit is to abide in Christ. "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit" (John 15:5).

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