

What Holy Spirit Fruits Are You Serving Your Spouse?

Eating is a wonderful part of our lives. I love going to restaurants that serve meals created with excellence. It does not matter if it is a burger, filet mignon, french fries or lobster, if it is done with excellence, I really enjoy the effort, sacrifice, wisdom and creativity it takes to serve such an item.

Why am I talking about food? Good question! In a marriage of several decades, you “eat” (so to speak) so much of what your spouse is serving during the marriage.

Your spouse’s service toward you impacts your life, but the quality of service itself can be anywhere on the spectrum, from awful—even toxic—to amazing and fortifying. The fruit from your spouse’s attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and motivations are all foods you get served every day.

Figuratively, we eat from and are greatly impacted by the lives of our spouse. Who they are, what they bring to the table of our relationship from their family, their personality, choices, sins, level of awareness (or lack thereof), emotional or spiritual development, maturity (or lack thereof)—all of this becomes a meal we are subjected to by our spouses. We do the same, offering similar meals to our spouses day in and day out, for decades.

As you read this, do not come with a heart to measure your spouse’s food toward you. If you do, it would mean you do not get the point of being a servant in marriage as opposed to being served. You will be aware of your spouse’s food, but you can only change your own food. Remember, servant marriage works to improve us and makes us Christlike, not to be experts in our spouses’ weaknesses.

As I am working with a food analogy, I want to take you to a familiar Scripture that also utilizes a food analogy to make its point on how we are to live a Christian life. Look at Galatians 5:22-23a: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control

The Holy Spirit in us bears identifiable fruit. Through the Spirit, this fruit can flow through us at any time as we allow Him to be expressed in our lives. Being a servant in your marriage is not about trying to produce a better you, but about walking in the Spirit of God, giving *His* fruit to your spouse.

We will now look more closely at some of the amazing fruit believers can regularly serve to our spouses if we have the heart and intentionality to do so. Each fruit is different and will be unique to your spouse in how they want to receive it (I’ll only cover a few of the fruits, but you can go over the rest of them and find ways to apply them to your spouse as they are all applicable.)

Love

The first and probably most famous and most needed fruit from which our spouse would benefit is love.

Love is not a passive emotion. Love is an *in* motion, not an *e*-motion. Love moves toward the other person. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). When God loves, He gives Himself. Love costs us. Christ so loved us that He gave all of Himself at the cross. The fruit of love will usually be inconvenient and costly for us as we regularly give it to our spouses, day in and day out.

When love is received, it can be healing, life-changing, energizing, humbling, touching and a whole host of other emotions, depending on when it is applied to our hearts. Hopefully you have experienced this. If you have, you would so

want your spouse to experience it as well.

Love keeps its heart open in a marriage as we scar each other (not abuse) throughout the journey.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor 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. Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:4-8, NIV).

Over the years of your marriage, you will have ample opportunities to love. As a servant, this is an endless opportunity for you to become even stronger and more loving toward your spouse.

Joy

As I write this, it is the holiday season. As I get in my truck to go here or there between writing, I turn on the radio, and Christmas music fills my otherwise quiet truck. I enjoy hearing “Joy to the World” as I drive around Colorado Springs. Joy is a great fruit of the Spirit. Joy, unlike happiness, has nothing to do with circumstances.

Joy is a disposition in which you or I willfully choose to be grateful, not easily offended, buoyant, upbeat or optimistic about our lives, our marriages and pretty much everything.

Joy, like love, is a gift of the Spirit that flows through us to our spouses. Joy is an “up” type of energy that says, “Life is good” (like the T-shirt). This cheerleader-like energy is contagious and can add a little buoyancy to your spouse. Have you been around a person with real joy?

The energy of joy really can influence the environment of people around you. If it has been challenging for you to allow joy to flow through you, you might need to focus on this so

your spouse gets some of God's fruit of joy in his or her diet from you.

Patience

I do not know about you, but patience is not my strong suit. I find this particular fruit of the Spirit needs regular attention and intention to mature in me.

Have you ever thought of how perfect a marriage situation is to actually grow more patience? God takes two genders from two backgrounds, sprinkles different personalities, preferences, family histories and giftedness in, and over many decades, forges them to become one flesh.

The opportunities for patience are endless in marriage. I would wager that even in a healthy marriage of two good Christian people, the opportunity to share small (or not so small) doses of patience would be helpful just about daily. Whether it involves how to best place dishes in the dishwasher, relating to in-laws, agreeing on room temperature, parenting, accepting the way your spouse drives differently or even just agreeing on how you will be entertained on a given evening—all require patience. Patience is more than tolerance of the differences between you and your spouse. It is more like being gracious and understanding and staying in a servant position during the opportunity to be patient.

I will bet that in some areas, you have become more patient over the years. In the big picture, it is about seeing how amazing your spouse is and accepting their little quirks—the small set of behaviors which may have annoyed you even for decades. This is where God may be working on you to become more lovingly patient before He convicts you of the behavior that bothers you.

I know it might sound ambitious, but we can move toward the goal of giving good fruit or food to our spouse—the kind of fruit that comes from the Spirit and nourishes them. An

intentionally well-fed spouse is in better condition than one not fed on a regular basis.

For more information on being a servant in your marriage by manifesting the fruits of the spirit, get my book *Servant Marriage*. Let your spouse feast on your new attitudes and behaviors! {eoa}

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