

Pinecrest 2022 | Saturday Morning | Dan Greene

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Preacher: Dan Greene

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Is that better?

I'm going to kill myself with this thing, so. If I do, just be patient with me. I think it might have been ten years ago, last time I was here.

And what's encouraging to me is all the new people that are here that I don't know. And I think that's a great encouragement to me to see how God is growing your church and moving in your midst.

And I applaud God in that. I live in Scottsdale, Arizona. I just want to dispel any rumors.

I didn't go out there to retire. I work hard. I'm a full-time pastor there at Scottsdale Bible Church. And it's a church of about 10,000 people.

[0 : 59] And I'm not the lead pastor. I'm like middle management. But I'm the pastor of care there. So trying to care for that many people is an overwhelming task.

But I love what God's called me to do there. I gave Kevin about four options for what I would speak on. Oh, by the way, I'm rusty on preaching. So be patient with me on that, too.

About four options, he picked the fruit of the Spirit. And so when you think of the fruit of the Spirit, it's in Galatians chapter 5, and you can turn there.

But most of us, when we are asked to give the fruit of the Spirit, we say, well, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and so on. If that's you, you can rest comfortably this weekend because I'm only going to get to the first three.

And those that know me know I'm slow. So this is going to be three sessions with love, joy, and peace. Now, some people kind of view the fruit of the Spirit like whipped cream.

[2 : 07] Kind of like you go to Starbucks and you say, I'd like a mint chip mocha. And could you put a shot of espresso pumpkin in there?

And then she says, would you like whipped cream on that? And you say, hmm, not today. Well, let's not view the fruit of the Spirit that way.

In fact, let's look at the context here in Galatians chapter 5. Because if you notice, verse 17. It says, for the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.

For these are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things that you please. The flesh is in opposition to the Spirit and the Spirit to the flesh.

So when you say to the Spirit of God and the fruit of the Spirit, not today. Here's what you get.

[3 : 18] Look at verse 19. Now, the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are these. Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.

Of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, see, it's either or. It's the deeds of the flesh or it's the fruit of the Spirit. There is no neutral ground here. So when we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, this is essential in your life as a believer.

Now, what makes this more challenging is our flesh is not our only enemy. We also have the enemy of the world. You say, well, what is the world?

You probably know this, but the word world is used about three different ways in the Bible. Well, it's used of this planet. In John 1.10, it says, of Jesus, it says, He was in the world and the world was made by Him.

[4 : 47] So the world is the planet. It's the mountains. It's the rivers. It's the earth. But it's also used of the people because when we get to John 3.16, it says, For God so loved the world.

He didn't love the mountains and the hills. He loved the people in the world. But then it's used the third way. And that third way, it's used of a place. It's used of the people.

And it's used of a perspective or a set of values. And for that, I want you to look at a verse in 1 John 2.16. 1 John 2.16.

You're probably familiar with this, but I don't know if you've noticed this before. 1 John 2.16. It says, for all that is in the world.

Now, I looked up that word all in the Greek. You know what it means? All. All that is in the...

[5 : 48] So he's going to tell us everything that's in the world in this verse. All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life.

And it's not from the Father, but it's from the world. Three things are all that's in the world. Lust of the flesh. What does my flesh lust after or desire?

I would say pleasure. The lust of the eyes. What do my eyes see and want? Possessions. What's the pride of life?

Prestige. Position. About the second or third question people ask you is, what do you do? It's nice when you have a title that gives you position or prestige or influence.

And so all that's in the world is these three things. Pleasure, possessions, and prestige. Or you might put it this way. So the desires of the flesh, all that is in the world, is make me happy, make me rich, make me famous.

[7 : 12] Can you relate to that? That's what your flesh is telling you all the time. How do I get happy? How do I get rich? How do I get famous?

How do I get famous? And so when we think about this, what I want you to see is the world is not out there somewhere.

The world is in here. So when you're talking about the flesh and you're talking about the world, the world just stimulates the flesh because they're really one in the same. The problem is inside of you. And so when you don't produce the fruit of the spirit, you get the deeds of the flesh, which the world is really pounding on you as well. And that's where you end up. Jesus said in John 17, I'm sending you into the world just as I was sent into the world.

He also said in that same passage, which is his prayer to the Father, you are not of the world just as I am not of the world. And then he prays and he says, set them apart from the world just as I am set apart from the world.

[8 : 28] Now that's interesting. We're to be different from the world just the way Jesus was. Now how was Jesus different from the world? We know naturally we tend to think when we're separate from the world, we do two things.

We either isolate from the world or we go into legalism to separate ourselves from the world. We tend to isolate.

The church fathers, a lot of them went out and built monasteries in the desert so they could go get away from the world and be out there away. That was their idea of separation from the world.

Some of them built poles and lived on them to stay away from people. Isolation. Or we do legalism. Legalism is just building fences. You know, God gives us something as an exhortation and we say, well, that's God's rule, but I'll build a fence over here to keep myself safer.

[9 : 35] I had a guy in our church when I was back in Cape Girardeau. And he came and visited our church and I got a call from another pastor saying, you know, this guy's been at about eight different churches and he wears out his welcome pretty quick.

So I just wanted to warn you, he showed up at your place. So I invited him to lunch. And when we met, I said, well, where do you want to go?

And I said, why don't we go over here to, I don't remember, maybe Applebee's. And he said, I don't go to any restaurants that have bars.

I said, oh, do you have a problem with alcohol? No, I've never drank it in my life. But he's making rules. See, he's making rules. This will help me be better.

This is God's standard, but I'm going to make more rules. I live in a gated community. I hate it.

Because they have a homeowners association and they make all these rules and drive me crazy.

[10 : 42] But I've got a fence around our whole neighborhood. What if I just said, I'm going to build a fence around my lot and make me even more secure than I feel?

That's what we do with legalism. How is Jesus separate from the world? You know, he was different in his message and his character.

In fact, when you think about it, if you think about Jesus, externally, he was not very religious. In fact, he wasn't religious enough for the religious leaders of that day.

And they kind of looked at him and said, you know, he's really kind of a lawbreaker. Because he's always defined the Sabbath day. And his disciples don't wash their hands in the ceremonial way that they're supposed to.

And he hangs out with pimps and prostitutes. He's a lawbreaker. Or they looked at him, remember they accused him of being a glutton.

[12:01] The guy eats too much. He's a drunkard. He's always got a wine glass in his hand. And so he didn't appear very religious when you looked at Jesus.

But when you got close to him, then you discovered two things. And that was his message and his character. How are you to be different from the world?

You're to be different, not in your appearance of being religious, but in your message and your character. You know what your message is to be?

It's to be the cross of Jesus. You know what your character is to be? You're carrying your cross every day.

It's that simple. The message is the cross. My character is the cross has crucified me. The cross, Jesus died for me.

[13:11] Carrying the cross is I have died with him. That's it. It all boils down to that. So when we talk about the world, it's not something out there.

It's something in here. It's the difference in my message and my character. You say, I want to be like Jesus.

So what do you do? You carry a big black Bible. You get a bumper sticker. Wear a Christian t-shirt. You don't do things and hope your neighbors will notice that you don't do them.

No. No. The issue is your message and your character. Ephesians chapter 5 says, Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18. Then after that, it gives the results of that. What happens when you're filled with the Spirit? It says, You're speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks in everything.

[14:25] And then it says you're to be submissive to one another. Husbands to wives, parents to children, masters to slaves. So when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, it plays itself out in your life in terms of your relationships.

I want you to get this. We like to say, Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship.

And we're right. It's a relationship vertically with God. But it's also true that when you get that vertical relationship with God, then it plays itself out horizontally in your life.

And so how do people see Jesus in me? By my relationship with the Father and by my relationship with people.

This weekend, we're going to talk about the first three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. And I want you to understand that these are character qualities that not only does God produce in you, but He wants to make you different in this world by these very things.

[15:44] Now look at Galatians 5, 22. It says, The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Now how do you think your relationships would be different if these things were prominent in your life?

The evidence of Jesus in your life is not that you have all the gifts.

It is that you have all the graces of the Spirit of God. Now why does the Word of God compare the character that the Holy Spirit creates in us as fruit?

Well, let me give you three reasons. Number one, fruit is visible. It can be seen, touched, smelled, tasted.

[16:59] It's not some abstract thing. It's concrete. You say, Well, Dan, I've got this fruit. It's just hidden way down inside. I've got this fruit.

I'm sure it's there. People just can't see it. It's hidden. Well, that's not possible. Because you see, if you have love, I can see it.

If you have joy, I can see it. If you have peace, I can see it. If you have patience, I can see it. Fruit is visible.

Secondly, fruit is verifiable. And what I mean by that is, it is distinct and unique.

When you go to Schnucks, you don't need signs in the fruit department telling you what the fruit is. See, you know that's an orange.

[18:00] You know that's a lemon. You know that's a kiwi. You may grab a plantain and think it's a banana until you eat it. And then you know it's not.

It's verifiable. Jesus said in Luke 6, 44, Each tree is known by its own fruit. And then he said, You don't get figs from a thorn tree.

You don't get grapes from a briar bush. And listen, you don't get the fruit of the Spirit from a life devoid of the Spirit.

Heard about a little boy who had a fruit tree right outside his bedroom window and he was always getting grounded. And so when he got grounded, he had to go to his bedroom.

So he'd go and close the door and open the window and climb out into the branches of the fruit tree and climb down and go play and come back and climb back up and get in his bedroom again before anybody knew he was gone.

[19:01] Some of you can relate to that. One day he overheard his dad say to his mom, That fruit tree hasn't borne fruit in years. I'm going to cut it down.

So he enlisted the help of his brother and they went to the store and bought two bushels of apples. And they came back and they climbed up into the old tree and they tied the apples into the tree. That evening when their father came home, he burst into the kitchen and said, Honey, it's a miracle. That old fruit tree has borne fruit.

And then he said, The biggest miracle is it's got apples and it's a peach tree. I can't pass up the opportunity of asking you, Have you ever tied fruit to your life?

You're in a situation you say, I better act really spiritual here. So I better be very patient around that. I get that sometimes when people are talking to me and then they say, What do you do, by the way, for a living?

[20:16] Like, I'm a pastor. And then they go, Oh, I better tie some string on my life, or some fruit on my life. Fruit is verifiable.

It clearly reflects the tree. fruit is valuable. Fruit only exists for one reason, and that is to be eaten. And so the fruit in your life, now this is not across the board true because actually, you enjoy the fruit in your life because if you have joy, you really enjoy that.

And if you have peace, there's nothing like the peace of God in your life. But for the main part, that fruit exists for the benefit of other people because people want to be around a person who has these kind of characteristics growing in their life.

And so fruit is valuable. Let me point out a few more things about the fruit of the Spirit. Notice the word of.

[21:33] The fruit of the Spirit. Fruit is not produced by you. You don't manufacture it. You don't, you know, buff up and generate it in your life.

Fruit is produced by the Spirit of God inside of you. And then notice something else. the word fruit is singular.

It's one fruit in all these characteristics. What's that tell us? This list is not multiple choice. You don't get to say, well, I'd like some joy.

I'd like some peace. Patience. Driving would be boring if I was patient.

And I'm not real high on this self-control thing. Now, it's not like picking apples off a tree. I'll take that one. I'll take that one. When you think about the fruit of the Spirit, it'd be better to think about a bunch of grapes.

[22:47] You take the whole bunch and you get all the grapes. Or maybe a better illustration would be it's like an orange.

Take an orange and you peel it open and what do you get? A bunch of sections. So you get one fruit, but you get all of these various multiple sections.

The Holy Spirit bears one fruit in you with multiple characteristics. Now, the first characteristic is love.

I don't think that's a coincidence. Andrew Murray says, love is the key and all the others are ways in which love is manifested. He's saying, love is the orange and all the others are sort of sections that come along with that.

That's hard to argue with. 1 Corinthians 13 says, love is patient. Love is kind.

[23:58] And so these other characteristics are actually descriptions of love. So I don't think it's a coincidence that love comes first. Love is prominent here and the others flow from that.

Now, what is love? Most people get their definition of love from Hollywood. And Hollywood's definition of love is that it's either sentimental or cynical or sexual. It's always sentimental. You think about the love songs we hear. There's how sweet it is to be loved by you. Crazy little thing called love.

My wife and I, can you believe this? My wife and I will be married 12 years in November. Our first date was at her company Christmas party and they had a dance there. I can't dance but my wife can. so I'm one of these. This is my place right here and she can dance so they all watch her and that's, it's great.

[25 : 13] But I really enjoy slow dancing because that's my thing. You know, I don't have to move much. Just, you know, maybe spin her around a little bit, you know, when I get carried away.

But there was a song that they played there that we sort of adopted as our song and it's Etta James At Last.

And I pulled up the words this week because I thought, that's our song, you know. Pulled up the words. Here's what it says. At last, my love has come along. My lonely days are over and life is like a song. Oh, yeah, yeah. At last, the skies above are blue. My heart was wrapped in clover the night I looked at you. I found a dream that I could speak to, a dream that I can call my own.

I found a thrill to press my cheek to, a thrill that I have never known. Oh, yeah, yeah. You smiled, you smiled. Oh, and then the spell was cast and here we are in heaven for you are mine at last.

[26 : 19] So I realized that we like the song. It's kind of a mushy, sentimental kind of thing. If it isn't sentimental, it's cynical. You have Tina Turner singing, what's love got to do with it?

Or it's sexual. I feel like making love. What's your definition of love? Let me start by exposing some false presuppositions.

Most people believe incorrectly that love comes naturally. It just comes. In his book, *Bold Love*, Dan Allender tells the story of an enlightening conversation he had while sitting next to a man on an airplane.

He writes, When I told him I was on my way to address several hundred people on the topic of love and forgiveness, he peered over his bifocals and replied, How nice.

Love, huh? Well, I guess we all need to be reminded of the importance of love. Our discussion soon centered around what he viewed as the central driving purpose in his life.

[27 : 33] He told me that what pleased him most about his grown children was their tenacity in pursuing education, careers, and success. They had learned well from their father and he was indeed proud.

He later told me that his three children had experienced five divorces and that he had grandchildren whom he had not seen for five years due to the unhappy marital endings.

And his own two divorces seemed to trouble him little. I eventually asked him how important it was to teach his children to love and remain tenaciously committed to people.

His response was highly illuminating. He said, I never taught my children about love. I suppose I thought they would naturally pick up what needed to be learned about those things.

Love, he told me, was noble and natural, therefore as basic to life as breathing. Then he added, I taught my children to love by example, not by word.

[28 : 35] I hope that was enough. And Allender concludes, it was difficult to tell him that it was not enough.

love. This man's relational carnage, seven divorces among four people in two generations, gave evidence.

It doesn't come naturally. The deeds of the flesh is what comes naturally to us. Love doesn't come naturally, it comes supernaturally.

It's fruit born by the Spirit of God. A second false presupposition, most people believe incorrectly that love is uncontrollable.

We fall into love. We fall out of love. Say, whoops, I'm in love again. Didn't see that coming. We hear people say all the time, my head is spinning, my knees are weak, I'm in a whirlwind, I must be in love.

[29 : 50] It's kind of like the flu, you get the symptoms, oh, here it goes again. It's uncontrollable. People in love do the craziest things as if that's a good thing.

Listen, the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is love. The last characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is what?

Self-control. See, love that is the fruit of God doesn't get you out of control. It gets you in control. And then a third false presupposition. Most people believe incorrectly that love is only a feeling. Someone has said, love is a feeling you feel when you feel that what you feel is a feeling you've never felt before.

That's pretty common. Love is a quiver in your liver. It's an ocean of emotion. It's all about the emotions. Of course, the problem with feelings is they come and go.

[31 : 08] And people who base love on feeling go from exciting to existing to exhausting to expired. Someone has said, puppy love doesn't last through the dog days of life.

Listen, love is not a feeling. of the emotions. It's a commitment of the will. In fact, if love was an emotion, then God couldn't command it.

In John 13, 34, Jesus said, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another. In fact, in Matthew 5, 44, Jesus said, love your enemies.

love your enemies. Now, when are you going to feel like loving your enemies? It's not going to happen. Love is not a feeling. It's a commitment.

What is love? Let me give you my definition of love. And this is one that I borrowed from several people and have worked on through life and have changed and adapted and I think this is as good as I can get.

[32 : 24] Love is desiring the very best for the other person. No matter what it costs you. And expecting nothing in return.

Love is desiring the very best for the other person. And notice I didn't say giving the other person what they want.

Because what they want may in fact not be what they need. Naturally, what do they want? I want to be happy. I want to be rich.

I want to be famous. It's desiring the very best for the other person no matter what it costs me and expecting nothing in return.

Now let me add a disclaimer. After giving you that definition I have to tell you that love can't be defined.

[33 : 31] Ephesians 3.19 Paul prays and he says I pray that you will know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. So you can't take God's love and put it into a nice little package.

We can't really know it mentally. We can only know it experientially. As we receive his love and then give it away to other people.

That's why you won't find a definition of love in the scriptures. You say well Dan what about 1 Corinthians 13? That's a description of love.

Love is love is love is. It's not a definition of love. You see in the Bible love is not defined it is demonstrated.

Romans 5.8 says but God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. 1 John 3.16 We know love by this that he laid down his life for us.

[34 : 46] What's the demonstration? it's the cross. Jesus was desiring the very best for you forgiveness and eternal life no matter what it cost him his death on the cross and expecting nothing in return it's a gift.

That's love. Galatians 2.20 says I've been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and what gave himself for me demonstrated.

Ephesians 5.2 says and walk in love just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for me. It used to bother me when I was younger and I would read the Bible and the Bible when it talks about God loving us it always uses love in the past tense.

You ever notice that? I'm always sending texts to my wife to remind her that I love her. If I send her a text say I love you and she sends one back and says I loved you like something's wrong here.

Why does God say I love you? Well because love is demonstrated. And what's the ultimate demonstration of his love?

[36 : 32] It's the cross. So he's always looking back and saying if I loved you that much what won't I do for you today?

Okay. John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he had a gushy feeling.

Is that what it says? God so loved the world that he got all tingly. God so loved the world that he set up in heaven and sang oh earth things I love thee.

No. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Love is action.

God so God so it's demonstrated. And I like the fact that it's demonstrated personally. John 3 16 is nice.

[37 : 41] God so loved the world but that's pretty big. I like Ephesians 2 better. It says God loved us. A little smaller circle.

But I really like Galatians 2 20 where it says he loved me. me. Call me selfish.

But that means everything to me. When Jesus went to the cross he had you on his mind.

And that's why I don't think you'll ever get a better favorite song than Jesus loves me. You know not only does God demonstrate love but 1 John 4 8 and again in verse 16 it says God is love.

Now marinate in that for a minute. God is love. It's not an occasional mood that he gets into.

[39 : 04] You know you don't have to come to prayer with God and say I hope he's in a good mood today. God is love. My kids did that. They would say we got to ask dad a tough question.

Let's ask him after dinner. He's probably a little more mellow at that point. God doesn't have office hours. God never changes and God is love.

Whenever you come to him he is always desiring your very best no matter what it costs him and expecting nothing in return.

He doesn't manufacture love. He doesn't send love. He doesn't generate love. He is love. You cannot think of God without thinking of love.

You say how much does God love me? Well it was demonstrated. How much does he love you?

This much. When I was in Bible college a long time ago I had a girlfriend and we had this was before email so we we had mail for you younger people.

[40 : 24] You actually wrote things on paper. Put them in envelopes and handed them to postmen. But we had these cubby holes that were our mailboxes and so when we got mail they would be in there.

What you really wanted to get was a little piece of paper that said you have a package because that would be something from home like cookies and that kind of thing. but I went to the box one day and pulled out a piece of paper that was there.

It was a handwritten note that said written by my girlfriend because I knew her writing but it said God loves Danny Green just as much as he loves Jesus Christ.

I remember reading that and thinking stupid girl. That's heresy.

And so I started looking in scripture to refute what she said and I came across John 17 which is Jesus' prayer right before the cross and in chapter 17 in verse 23 Jesus said I in them and you in me that they may be perfected in unity so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

[42 : 00] how much does he love me? He loves me as much as he loves Jesus Christ. It's hard to say even. It's like he's the only son and I'm just adopted but guess what?

He loves you the same way. And then if you keep sliding down that chapter look at the last verse in chapter 17. The last phrase says so that the love with which you loved me may be in them.

Not only does he love us with the love that he loves Jesus Christ with but he has placed that same love inside of you and me. Now this is eye opening. That tells me you have the capacity to love like God loves.

No excuses. Well I'm not very loving. Romans 5.5 says the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has given to us.

You have it in abundance. Some of us need some spiritual Drano to get it out of there. It needs to come down to us and then flow out to others.

[43 : 19] It's getting clogged up in a lot of our lives. In fact love is so important in the Christian life that I can actually say two things.

One is love is the evidence to others that I'm saved. It's the evidence. Jesus said by this shall all men know that you're my disciples.

If you can define justification and sanctification and dispensationalism and premillennialism no.

It's not your doctrine. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

You say Dan well I believe the right things I just don't like people. I don't like people. 1 John 4 8 says the one who does not love does not know God.

[44 : 34] It's not optional. It's the evidence to others that I'm saved. Secondly it's the evidence to me that I'm saved.

Look at this verse 1 John 3 13 do not be surprised brothers if the world hates you.

And then he says we know that we have passed we know that we have passed out of death into life. This is how I know because we love the brothers.

The world is going to hate you. They hated Jesus. Nailed him to a cross. If you follow him guess what they're going to hate you. How do I know that I have passed out of death into life?

Because I now love the people I used to hate. Before I was a believer I couldn't stand to be around Christians. I didn't want to be near you guys.

[45 : 42] Why would I want to be around you and feel guilty? That's like I just push you away, stiff arm you, stay away. Now I love you guys. That's pretty amazing because some of you are not that lovable.

And I'm not that loving. What happened? God changed the price tags on everything in my life. And now I love the people I used to not be able to stand.

saved. It's the evidence to me that I'm saved. That I have God's love inside of me. I have two brothers.

I love them. I didn't pick them. They just came along. We're part of the family of God.

We don't get to pick. And some of us come with a lot of warts, a lot of baggage. But we have God's love.

[46 : 56] The love we didn't deserve to be able to give to other people. How do you love? how do you do it?

How does it show up in your life? Jesus made a real practical statement in Matthew 22, 39. He said, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

That's practical. How'd you love yourself today? Tried to make sure you got a good night's sleep? You got up?

I hope you brushed your teeth, washed your face, combed your hair if you have any. Made sure you made it to breakfast to be fed, made sure you had adequate clothing on, you're warm enough, you're cool enough.

Made sure you're safe, made sure you're comfortable. Jesus just said, you already know how to do it for yourself. Just translate it to other people.

[48 : 05] before you're all enthralled with what you need, make sure they have what they need. That's practical love.

Another way to look at it is 1 John 3, 16. We know that we have passed out of death into life. Is that 16?

No. Here it is. We know love by this that he laid down his life for us. Now some of us like to stop that verse right there.

We know love by this that he laid down his life for us, but it goes on. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. Wow.

Wow. We have to do what Jesus did for us. He laid down his life for us.

[49 : 03] We have to lay down our lives for others. You say, well, if I ever get the opportunity to jump in front of a train to save my brother and push him out of the way, I'll do that.

Is that what he's talking about? Look at the next verse. He gives an illustration in verse 17. Whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

There it is. I've got what you need, but I'm keeping it over here in my camp. John says, I got a big question mark about whether you even have the love of God.

Because the love of God is laying down its life. So when you think about laying down your life, I would challenge you to think about this. You need to lay down your life a handful at a time.

Every time you see a need, you give up something that you may want or may be an inconvenience for you. That's love. If you died today, what would you give up?

[50 : 16] If you died today, what would you no longer have? No more time? No more energy? No more possessions? No more money?

No more desires? No more plans? He's simply saying, take all of those things and lay them down in a practical way for your brothers and sisters today.

day. That's how you love. Heard about a little girl who was invited to dinner at the home of her first grade friend and the vegetable on the table was buttered broccoli.

And the mother asked her if she liked it. Politely, she said, oh yes, I love it. but when they passed the broccoli around the table, she declined to take any.

And the hostess said, I thought you said you loved broccoli. And very sweetly, the girl said, oh yes, ma'am, I do, just not enough to eat it.

[51 : 26] I love people, but not enough to lay down my life for them.

And then verse 18 of 1 John 3 says, we're not to love in word but in deed and in truth. In other words, you don't talk love, you walk love.

It's evident in your life. Love is the first quality of the fruit of the spirit and everything else flows from it.

It's essential. It's not whipped cream. It's not something you say, not today. 1 Corinthians 13 says, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and I know all mysteries, and I have all gifts, and I have all faith so I can move mountains, but I don't have love.

I'm nothing. How are you different in the world?

[52 : 48] Isolation, legalism, or love? Are you desiring the very best for others, no matter what it costs you, and expecting nothing in return?

That's love. How do I get love? It's the fruit of the spirit. I have to yield control of my life to him.

I mentioned Ephesians 5 earlier, where it says, be filled with the spirit, the spirit, and then it gives the results. It's interesting, if you look at Colossians chapter 3, it has the same results.

You're speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks. You're submissive, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, slaves.

You know what initiates it in Colossians 3? There it doesn't say, be filled with the Holy Spirit. There it says, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

[54 : 01] Now that should give us an indication that being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the word of God are really synonymous. One of the things that I wondered about, you wonder about this when you're a lead pastor, you're like, well, I wonder if I would really be a committed Christian if I didn't have to get up there every weekend.

It's always in the back of my mind, like, would you be a nominal Christian? Would you really study the Bible and read the Bible if you didn't have to get up there every week? That's one of the benefits of no longer being a lead pastor because I found out that I have a thirst for the word of God because it's not just something I study to tell other people, it is my nourishment in life.

it's actually a whole lot more fun to read the Bible now because I'm not always thinking about how I'm going to communicate it, I'm just applying it right here.

And so I would challenge you that if you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, let the word of Christ richly dwell, richly, don't be on a diet, don't count the calories or the carbs, richly dwell in you.

And let me give you one other thought. Go back to where we started in Galatians chapter 5. I want you to notice something. Galatians chapter 5.

[55 : 35] Right after He gives the fruit of the Spirit, He says this.

Verse 24. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh. Deeds of the flesh, fruit of the Spirit, guess what?

God's given you an advantage. Because at the cross, He crucified your flesh. And our task today is to continue to kill the deeds of the body.

So He's already been crucified. You've already been crucified with Christ positionally, but practically. That's why you take up your cross every day and follow Him. Because, I don't know about you, but my dead flesh continues to rise up in me.

Let me give you a clue. Resurrections only happen in cemeteries. So if you want to experience God's resurrection life in you, you need to lay down.

[57 : 04] Some of us are walking in the flesh as believers, and we're getting the results of the deeds of the flesh in our lives. And some of us only wake up when it's gotten out of hand and we say, oh man, we better deal with this now.

The key is to every day acknowledge that you have died with Christ and it's no longer you who live. And then the Spirit can come in through the Word of God and fill you up to be able to produce the fruit that only He can produce in your life.

And that first characteristic of the fruit is love. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your Word today. Thank you for this beautiful passage that really shows us the character of really you in us, only produced by your Spirit.

And Lord, we just pray today that you would just draw us back to you to realize that this is not something we can manufacture. It's something only you can produce in us and therefore only you get the glory for it.

And Lord, we pray to that end today in Jesus' name. Amen. heaven and be in Jesus' name.

[58 : 29] He's a one to