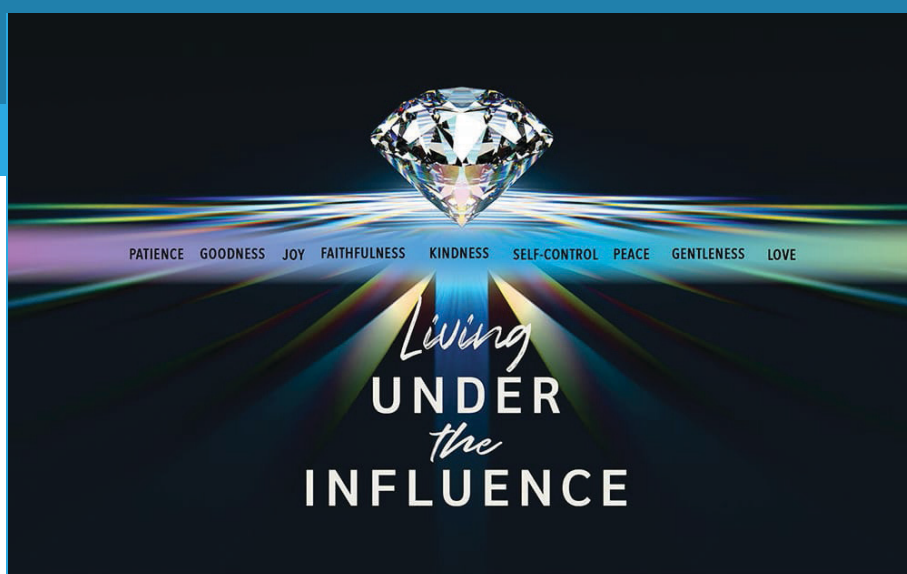


DAILY DEVOTIONAL

A 5-Day Reflection Guide

Joy



SERMON SERIES:

Living Under the Influence

WEEK & TOPIC:

RECAP

DATES:

September 7–11, 2026

This Week's Big Idea

Every life is being shaped by an influence. The Holy Spirit doesn't simply change what we believe—He changes who we are becoming. As we stay connected to Jesus and yield to the Spirit, His character begins growing in us until what is happening invisibly becomes visible. Fruit reveals influence, and a Spirit-influenced life increasingly looks like Jesus.

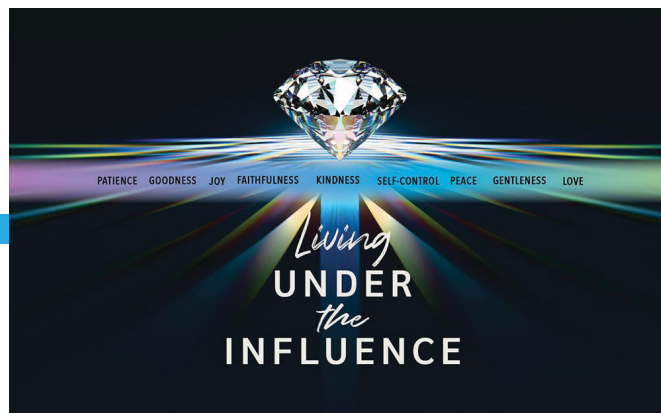
Living Under the Influence

Day 1: **What's Influencing Me?**

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:18 (NLT) “Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Galatians 5:16 (NLT) “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.”



TODAY'S SEED

The thought that launched this entire journey is that “everybody is under the influence of something.” Every day there are voices, pressures, desires, expectations, experiences, and influences competing to shape the way we think and live. Some are obvious, but others work so quietly that we don’t recognize their influence until something happens and our response reveals what’s been growing inside us.

Paul gives us a powerful picture in Ephesians 5. He says, “Don’t be drunk with wine—instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Why would Paul put those two things together? Because he’s talking about **influence**. When someone is under the influence of alcohol, what’s inside begins affecting what’s outside. It can change the way they walk, talk, think, respond, and make decisions.

Paul says there is another influence available to us, the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is more than having a spiritual experience. It’s allowing the Holy Spirit to increasingly influence how we think, speak, respond, forgive, endure, love, and live. That’s why Galatians 5 describes two very

different outcomes. Paul talks about the works of the flesh and then contrasts them with the fruit of the Spirit. Two influences, two currents, two different outcomes.

Throughout this series we’ve asked the question, which current is influencing my life? Sometimes we discover the answer when life bumps into us and something spills out. Pressure reveals it. Waiting reveals it. Conflict reveals it. Disappointment reveals it. Relationships definitely reveal it! And when something comes out that doesn’t look much like Jesus, the answer isn’t condemnation or simply trying harder. It’s an invitation to recognize an area of our lives that needs to come more fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity isn’t behavior modification. It’s **transformation**. God works in us until what He is doing inside us begins showing up through us. The goal isn’t simply to act more like Jesus.

It’s to become more like Jesus. And that happens as we continually yield our lives to the influence of His Spirit.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul’s command to “be filled” comes from the Greek word *plēroō* (πληρώω), meaning to fill, make full, or bring to fullness. The grammar carries the sense of an ongoing action—not merely “get filled once,” but **keep being filled**. Paul isn’t describing a one-time encounter with the Holy Spirit. He’s describing a continuing way of life. We continually choose which influence we will yield to.

DON'T MISS THIS

The Holy Spirit isn’t asking you to manufacture His fruit. He’s inviting you to keep walking with Him until His influence becomes increasingly visible in you.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. What has had the greatest influence on your thoughts, attitudes, and reactions lately?
2. When pressure, frustration, or disappointment hits, what tends to “spill out” of you?
3. Is there an area of your life that the Holy Spirit is inviting you to bring more fully under His influence?

WATER THE SEED

Pay attention today to your reactions, especially the unexpected ones. When something frustrates you, interrupts you, disappoints you, or puts you under pressure, don't just focus on what happened around you. Notice what happened **inside you** . Before reacting, take a moment and pray: **“Holy Spirit, influence my response.”** Then choose to follow His leading rather than your first impulse.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You for giving me Your Holy Spirit. I don't want to simply know about You; I want Your Spirit to influence every part of my life. Show me the voices, pressures, habits, desires, or attitudes that have been shaping me more than You. Forgive me for the times I've allowed my flesh to determine my response. Holy Spirit, fill me again today. Influence my thoughts, my words, my attitudes, my choices, and my reactions. Form the character of Jesus in me until the people around me can see evidence that You are at work in my life.

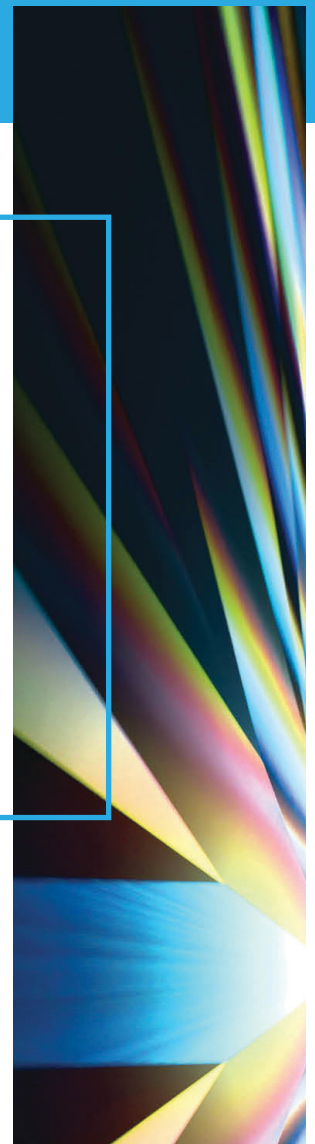
In Jesus' name, Amen.

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THE FRUIT IS COMING.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Day Two: Fruit Reveals Influence

You can't always see what's happening beneath the surface, but eventually what's growing on the inside becomes visible on the outside. Tomorrow we'll look at why fruit is the **receipt** ---visible evidence of the influence shaping our lives.



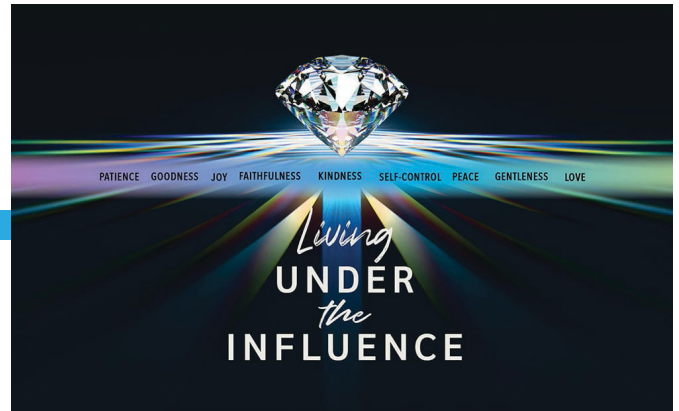
Living Under the Influence

Day 2: Fruit Reveals Influence

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Matthew 7:16 (NLT) “You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.”



TODAY'S SEED

Yesterday we asked the question: What's influencing me? Today we take it one step further.

How can you tell? And Jesus gives us a remarkably simple answer: Look at the fruit. You don't have to dig up an apple tree and inspect its roots to know what's happening beneath the ground. **Eventually the invisible process becomes visible** and fruit tells the story. Which is why throughout this series we've used the phrase: Fruit reveals influence.

Paul gives us two dramatically different pictures in Galatians 5. First, he describes what life looks like when the flesh is in control. Then he says, **"But the Holy Spirit produces"** Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control. These aren't nine spiritual merit badges we earn by trying harder. They are **evidence**, the receipt. Remember, a receipt is proof a transaction took place. Peace or patience become the evidence that you've been living under His influence. Kindness doesn't make you spiritual, it reveals that the character of Jesus is being

formed in you. Fruit makes an invisible process visible.

Think about where we've been during this series. Maybe you've discovered you can wait without becoming as frustrated as you once did, Patience! Maybe circumstances haven't changed, but somehow your response to them has, Joy! Or maybe you walked through something that normally would have filled you with anxiety, but there was a steadiness inside you that you couldn't completely explain, that's Peace! Or maybe somebody pushed the right button—or the wrong one, and you didn't respond like the old you would have, that's self-control, gentleness and love for the win!

Don't miss those moments, sometimes we're so focused on the areas where we still need to grow that we forget to recognize the fruit that is already there. You may not be where you want to be yet, but thank God, you're not where you used to be either.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

Paul's wording in Galatians 5 matters. He says **"the fruit of the Spirit."** The Greek word translated fruit is *karpos* (καρπός). And importantly, Paul uses the word **fruit—singular**, not fruits. One fruit with multiple expressions. And the phrase **tou pneumatos** means "of the Spirit"—belonging to, originating from, or produced by the Spirit. Paul isn't primarily giving us a list of nine personality traits we're supposed to manufacture. He's describing what begins appearing when the Holy Spirit is influencing a person's life. This is also why Jesus connects fruit with God's glory, because when people encounter more patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, peace, joy, kindness, self-control, and love in us, it makes Jesus easier to see!

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. Where can you recognize fruit that the Holy Spirit has already produced in your life?
2. Which fruit tends to become most visible when you're under pressure—and which one still needs some growing?
3. When people experience your attitudes, words, and responses, what do they learn about the One influencing you?

WATER THE SEED

Look for evidence of growth today. Instead of only noticing where you fall short, pay attention to a moment when you respond differently than you once would have. Maybe you choose patience instead of frustration. Peace instead of anxiety. Gentleness instead of harshness.

Self-control instead of impulse. When you recognize it, stop and thank God: **"Holy Spirit, thank You for producing that in me. Keep growing Your fruit in my life."** Then look for an opportunity to let that fruit become something another person can experience.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You that You are at work in me even when I can't see everything You are doing. Thank You for every evidence of growth and every place where my life looks more like Jesus than it once did. Holy Spirit, continue producing Your fruit in me. Show me the areas where another influence is still shaping my responses, and help me surrender those places to You. I don't want people simply to see a better version of me. I want them to see Jesus. Let the fruit of my life point beyond me to You, so that You receive the glory.

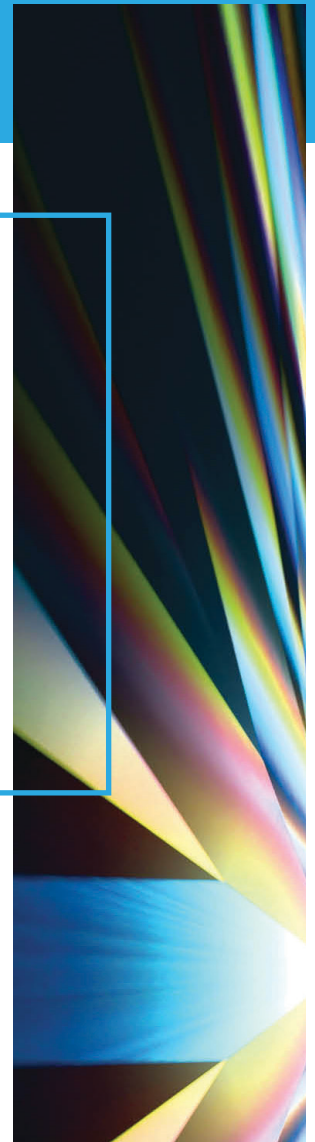
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Three: Stay Connected

Fruit doesn't grow because a branch tries harder. It grows because the branch stays connected to its source. Tomorrow we'll look at Jesus' invitation to **abide**—and why spiritual growth has much more to do with connection than striving.



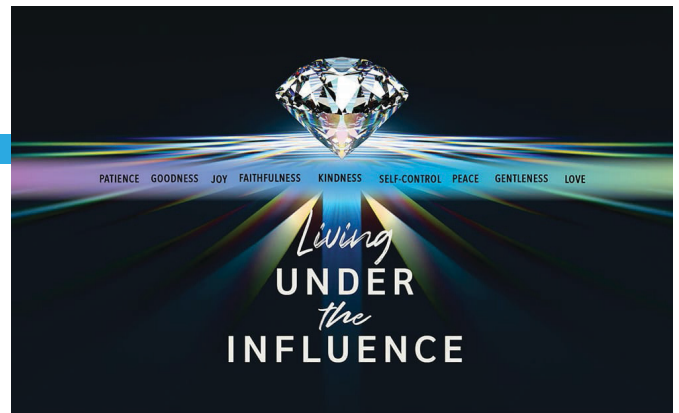
Living Under the Influence

Day 3: Stay Connected

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

John 15:4&5 (NLT) “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

Philippians 2:13 (NLT) “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”



TODAY'S SEED

Have you ever seen a branch lying on the ground underneath a tree and thought, “That branch needs to try harder”? Probably not. Once the branch is disconnected from the tree, everybody knows what is going to happen. It may still look alive for a while. There may even be leaves hanging from it. But something has changed. **It's disconnected from its source.**

Jesus uses that simple picture in John 15 to teach us something incredibly important about spiritual growth. He doesn't tell the branch to **try harder**, He tells the branch to **stay connected**.

Throughout this series we've talked about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And it would be easy to turn that list into nine areas where we need to work harder. Try harder to be patient or have more joy etc, but Jesus gives us a different starting point: Remain in me!

This is so important: Fruit is the result of connection! A branch doesn't grit its teeth and produce an apple. Life

flows into the branch from its source, and eventually what is happening inside becomes visible outside. The same thing happens spiritually. The Holy Spirit is forming the character of Jesus in us. That's why Philippians 2 says: **“God is working in you.”** God starts **IN** and works **OUT**. Our responsibility isn't to manufacture the fruit, our responsibility is to create the conditions where the Holy Spirit can continue His work. We stay connected by spending time in God's Word, prayer, worship, stay planted in the House of God. Listen when the Holy Spirit corrects us, and obey when He leads us. Everything points back to Jesus

Then slowly, sometimes almost imperceptibly, something begins changing and you discover you don't react the way you used to. You forgive faster. You trust more. You respond more gently. You have peace in a place where you once would have panicked. That's fruit! And the encouraging part is you don't have to make the fruit grow, you have to stay connected to the One who produces it.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

The word Jesus repeatedly uses in John 15 is *menō* (μένω), translated “remain” or “abide.” It means **to remain, stay, continue, dwell, or make one's home somewhere**. Jesus isn't describing an occasional visit, He's describing a continuing relationship. There is also something important in Jesus' statement that those who remain in Him will produce **“much fruit.”**

DON'T MISS THIS

The goal is “much fruit”, but remember the order: Connection before production.”

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. When you recognize an area where you need to grow, is your first instinct usually to try harder or to draw closer to Jesus?
2. What practices consistently help you remain connected to Jesus and sensitive to the Holy Spirit?
3. Is there something currently distracting, crowding, or pulling you away from the connection you need?

WATER THE SEED

Choose one intentional way to strengthen your connection with Jesus today. Don't over complicate it. Do the first 15, 5 minutes of prayer, bible reading and worship. Maybe take a walk and pray. Pause during the day and simply say: **"Jesus, I want to remain connected to You. Holy Spirit, continue Your work in me."** Then resist the urge to measure whether you "felt" something. Branches don't inspect themselves every five minutes looking for fruit. **Stay connected, and trust the process.**

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You that You never asked me to transform myself. Thank You that You are working in me, giving me both the desire and the power to become more like Jesus. Forgive me for the times I've substituted striving for abiding and tried to manufacture what only Your Spirit can produce. Jesus, teach me to remain in You. Help me stay connected through Your Word, prayer, worship, obedience, and relationship with Your people. Remove the things that continually pull my attention and affection away from You. Holy Spirit, keep working beneath the surface until Your work in me becomes visible through me. I trust You with the process.

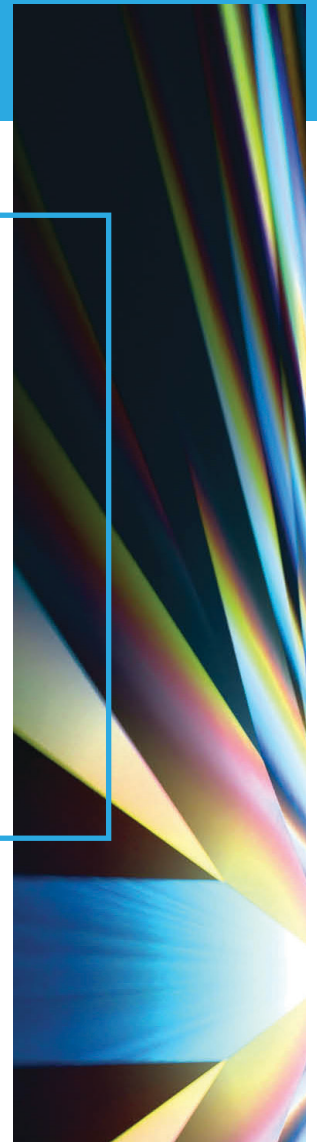
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Four: More Than Fruit

Fruit doesn't exist simply for the benefit of the branch that produced it. Tomorrow we'll discover that what God produces in us is intended to become something He can use **through us** —because there's more than fruit.



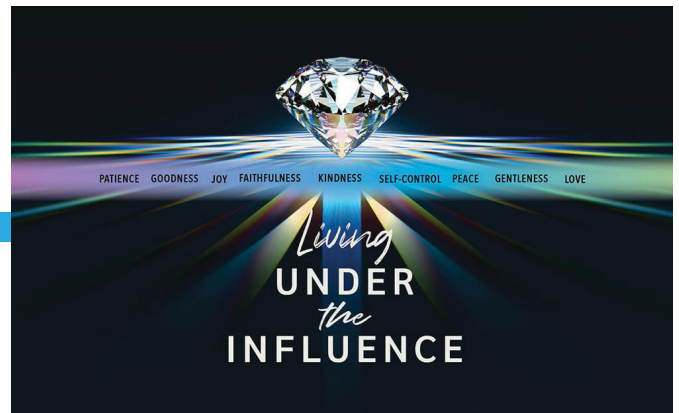
Living Under the Influence

Day 4: More Than Fruit

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

John 15:8 (NKJV) “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Matthew 5:16 (NLT) “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”



TODAY'S SEED

For the past several weeks we've talked a lot about fruit.

Patience. Goodness. Joy. Faithfulness. Kindness. Self-control. Peace. Gentleness. Love.

We've asked:

What's growing in me?

We've learned that fruit reveals influence. We've learned that fruit doesn't come from trying harder but from staying connected to Jesus. And we've learned that the Holy Spirit is continually forming the character of Jesus in us. But there's another question we haven't asked very often:

WHAT IS FRUIT FOR?

Think about an apple tree. An apple grows **on** the tree, but the apple isn't primarily **for** the tree. The tree doesn't eat its own fruit.

Fruit grows on the tree so that something beyond the tree can benefit from what has been produced. Maybe there's something there for us. The patience God has grown in you isn't only for you. Somebody around you needs to experience it. The peace God has produced in you isn't only so you can feel better. Somebody walking through chaos may need to encounter the peace of Jesus through you. The kindness God has formed in you isn't merely making you a nicer person. Somebody needs to

experience God's kindness through the way you treat them. The gentleness God has grown in you may change the way you speak to someone who is hurting. The self-control God has produced may change the atmosphere in your home. And the love God is forming in you may become someone's clearest picture of what Jesus is really like.

THE FRUIT GOD PRODUCES IN ME IS MEANT TO REVEAL JESUS THROUGH ME.

That's why Jesus connects fruit with the glory of the Father. He says, **"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit."** Fruit doesn't ultimately point to the branch. Fruit points back to its source. When people encounter something different in us—peace when there should be panic, patience when there should be frustration, kindness when harshness would be easier, love when someone doesn't deserve it—they are seeing evidence of Someone working beneath the surface.

That's exactly what Jesus says in Matthew 5. People see something happening through our lives' **and our Father gets the glory.** So maybe the goal was never simply: **Jesus IN me.** Maybe Jesus in me was always intended to become: **JESUS THROUGH ME.**

BENEATH THE SURFACE

In John 15:8, Jesus says the Father is "glorified" when we bear much fruit. The Greek word is *doxazō* (δοξάζω), meaning to glorify, honor, magnify, or cause someone's greatness to be recognized. When we bear much fruit, meaning our lives cause His greatness to be recognized. Fruit is never meant to make us look impressive; it reveals the Source behind a changed life. Beyond showing what God has already done, fruit carries seed inside it for what could happen next. Today's fruit contains tomorrow's seed, ensuring what God produces in us carries a future far beyond us.

THERE'S MORE THAN FRUIT. THERE'S A FUTURE IN THE FRUIT.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. Which fruit of the Spirit has God grown most noticeably in you during this series?
2. Who around you could benefit from experiencing that fruit through you?
3. What changes when you begin seeing spiritual growth not simply as something God is doing for you, but as something He wants to do through you?

WATER THE SEED

Choose one fruit of the Spirit that you've seen God growing in your life and intentionally **give it away today**.

If God has grown patience in you, be patient with someone who needs it.

If He has given you peace, encourage someone who is anxious.

If He has grown kindness, do something intentionally kind.

If He has taught you faithfulness, show up for someone.

If He has grown love, move toward someone who needs to experience it.

Don't just admire the fruit. **Let somebody taste it.**

Before you do, pray: **"Holy Spirit, take what You've produced in me and use it to reveal Jesus through me."**

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You for every way You have been working in me. Thank You for the patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, joy, and love Your Spirit is producing in my life. But I don't want Your work to stop with me. Take what You have produced in me and use it to reveal Jesus through me. Help me recognize the people in my world who need to experience the fruit You have grown in my life. Let my words, attitudes, choices, and actions point beyond me to You. May my life bear much fruit so that You receive the glory.

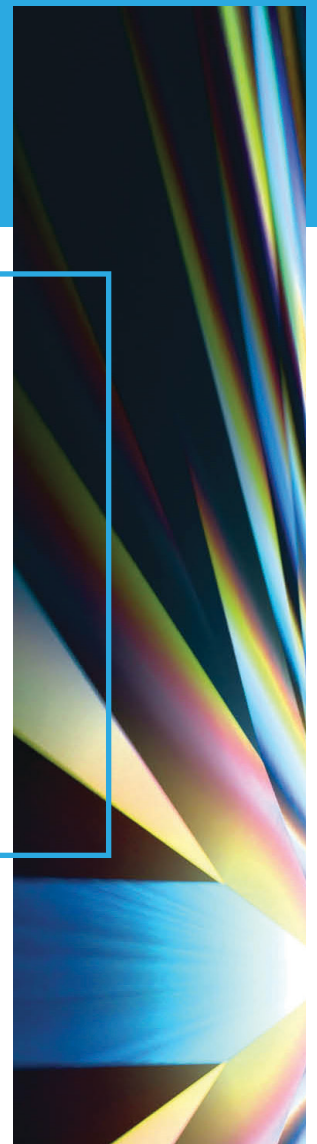
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Five: A Life That Looks Like Jesus

We've spent weeks studying the fruit of the Spirit, but the goal was never simply to learn nine definitions. Tomorrow we'll bring the entire journey together and ask one final question: **What does a life truly under the influence of the Holy Spirit look like?**



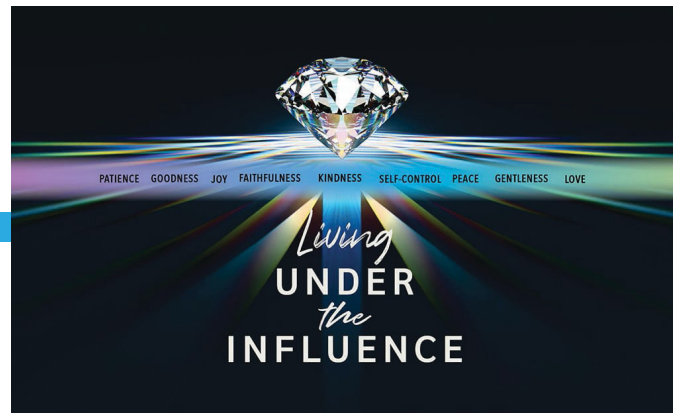
Living Under the Influence

Day 5: A Life That Looks Like Jesus

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22D23 (NLT) “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

John 15:8 (NKJV) “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”



TODAY'S SEED

Nine weeks, nine fruit. Patience, goodness. Joy, faithfulness, kindness, self-control, peace, gentleness, love. As we finish this journey I want to remind you that the **goal was never to complete a series about fruit**, the goal is transformation! When Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit, he isn't giving us nine spiritual merit badges to collect.

He's describing what begins to happen when ordinary people increasingly live under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We become more patient, goodness becomes visible, joy becomes deeper than our circumstances. We become faithful and kindness changes how we treat people.

Self-control changes how we respond, peace steadies us, gentleness changes our accent, attitude, and actions, and love becomes the current flowing through it all. Put all of that together and what do you get?

A LIFE THAT LOOKS MORE LIKE JESUS. That's what the Holy Spirit has been doing all along. God isn't trying to create a slightly improved version of you. He's forming Christ in you, but transformation usually doesn't happen all

at once. Fruit grows slowly. Then suddenly it shows up in places where we don't recognize it until life puts us under pressure and suddenly we realize: **I didn't respond the way I used to.** That's fruit! That's evidence that something real has been happening inside you.

Throughout this series we've said: Fruit reveals influence. So maybe the best way to finish isn't by asking whether you've mastered all nine fruit. Maybe the better question is: Does my life look more like Jesus than it did before? Am I loving people differently, or responding differently? Am I learning to carry strength with gentleness? Is my joy becoming less dependent on what happens around me? If the answer is yes, even imperfectly, thank God, the fruit IS growing.

But Jesus says something else about fruit in John 15. He doesn't merely say He wants fruit, His desire is, much fruit! So we're not finished, there is still more growing to do. That means more surrender, more abiding, more transformation and more Jesus.

Maybe there's even more than fruit!

BENEATH THE SURFACE

Paul uses the Greek word **karpos** (καρπός) for fruit in Galatians 5. Importantly, it is singular. **Fruit**, not fruits. Paul isn't describing nine disconnected qualities. He is describing the character produced by one Source—the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus says in John 15:8 that when we bear much fruit, the Father is **glorified**. The Greek word is **doxazō** (δοξάζω) —to glorify, honor, magnify, or cause someone's greatness to be recognized. That gives us the destination of the entire series. Fruit isn't about making us look better, fruit makes Jesus more visible!

DON'T MISS THIS

The evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence isn't simply that I know more about Jesus. It's that my life increasingly looks like Jesus.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. Looking back over the nine fruit, where can you most clearly see evidence that the Holy Spirit has been changing you?
2. Which fruit still exposes an area where you need to remain more fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit?
3. If the people closest to you were asked whether your life looks more like Jesus than it did a year ago, what changes would you hope they would identify?

WATER THE SEED

Take a few minutes today and look back rather than immediately looking at where you still need to improve. Thank God specifically for the fruit He has already produced, and then name it. **"Thank You that You've given me peace in an area that once controlled me."** Then ask one simple question: Holy Spirit what do you want to grow next? Be careful not to turn the answer into a self-improvement project. We create the conditions, stay connected, stay surrendered, stay under His influence and let Him produce the fruit.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You for everything You have taught me throughout this journey. Thank You that You haven't left me to change myself. Your Holy Spirit is continually working in me, forming the character of Jesus in my life. Thank You for every place where there is already evidence of growth. And in the places where I still have a long way to go, help me stay connected to the Vine and trust Your process. I surrender every part of my life again to Your influence. Produce much fruit in me—not so people will be impressed with me, but so they will see Jesus and You will be glorified. Let my life become visible evidence that Jesus lives here.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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THE FRUIT IS GROWING—AND THERE'S MORE THAN FRUIT.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next Sunday: There's More Than Fruit (And the Great Joy get together)

God never intended fruit to be the end of the story. **The fruit of yesterday contains the seed for tomorrow.** What God has planted, grown, and produced in us is meant to become seed for what He wants to do next—through our lives, through our church, and in our world. For months we've been asking, **"What's God producing in me?"** Now we're going to ask another question: **What is fruit for?**

Fruit is evidence that something has been planted, grown, and transformed. But when you look

