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Live By The Fruit

So many believers think that Christianity is simply going from being bad to being good. And while that is a great start, there is so much more available to you. Christianity is actually moving from living in death to living in life. In your first birth, you were breathing, but your existence was rooted in a source of darkness and death. But in your second birth, you were born from life—the very life of God. Your old nature of sin was quickened into a nature of righteousness.

This new nature of light is like a seed. Not only is it your source of Godly life, but it also has the potential to form Christ in you. Just as a seed can grow into a giant fruit tree, your new nature can grow the characteristics of Jesus in your inner man. This is not automatic; it is a process called transformation. The life of God that is now in you can bring forth in you the very same life it brought forth in Jesus when He walked on the earth as a man.

So many believers spend their lives attempting to reshape their outer man to act like Jesus instead of pouring into their inner man and actually becoming like Jesus. The modern church has embraced this path from the pulpit by preaching how we need to love like Jesus, without sharing how to accomplish that incredible commandment. So many of us have shared our love in the name of Jesus but missed out on the path available to each believer to develop the same love that Jesus walked in every day of His adult life. Acting like Jesus is not enough to win the world over.

If you are like me, you've tried confessing that you could be who the Bible said you are. You've tried identifying with Christ, and you've even acted out putting on the armor of God each morning, piece by piece. All those practices helped me, but they were unable to complete my ability to become like Christ. Faith alone is the only way to salvation, but if you want to carry the attributes of Jesus, you must become them through transformation.

My family was at a lake resort for a vacation, and in the evenings, they held special events for the guests. One night, there was an Elvis impersonator putting on a show, so Christy and I took the kids to watch. He was great. He sang the songs, danced, and even handed out scarves to the ladies. He was shorter than the real Elvis but had his sideburns grown out, so he had the look. Our children were impressed and enjoyed the show as much as we did. The next day, the resort offered a guided tour around the lake on one of their boats. "Daddy, I think Elvis is driving our boat," my kids whispered in my ear partway around the lake. And sure enough, it was the same guy. It turns out his main job was overseeing the maintenance of the resort, while his side gig was performing as Elvis once a week.

If we only act like Jesus, then eventually those around us will figure us out. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* The many different types of fruit mentioned here are talking about the same emotions and attitudes that Jesus had on this earth. They are available to us only as fruit from the new

nature of Christ in you. They do not come by faith alone, nor can they come by effort. They only come forward the same way fruit shows up on a mature tree.

The clear call is to live life from the fruit of the spirit. Too many of us have been living the Christian life by striving and working hard in our own strength, depending on the flesh. We are called instead to live from this fruit of the spirit. This is what God wants for our lives: to be able to live each day and minister to others from the fruit of Christ. Fruit does not come automatically from the seed; it only comes forth effortlessly from a mature tree. We cannot produce this fruit by our own striving or by trying harder in the flesh. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself. It must abide in the vine. Jesus said in John 15 that without Him, we can do nothing.

As we abide in Christ, the fruit comes forth. Transformation takes place as we begin to live from the fruit of the spirit rather than from the good works of the flesh. Why are we, the church, still striving and living from the works of the flesh? When there is a path to live from the fruit of the spirit. We are invited to stop striving in our own strength, to live from the fruit that comes from the spirit freely.

The same spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in you. As Christ is formed in you, you will live from this place. Your past has no power to limit you. Your struggles cannot overpower you because you are no longer the source of your own life. You can have as much of God as you want. The final question is, "How can I build the tree of Christ in me?" Paul gives us the answer in Galatians 6:7-9: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."*

Sow into your spirit (inner man), and the fruit of Christ will come forth. Spend time praying in tongues, worshiping, and in the Word of God. Don't lose heart, trust that this process works for you.