

Pulling Weeds

We have begun a study on the Fruit of the Spirit. Promised blessings that come from our connection to the Holy Spirit because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Now you may have noticed that I have not yet started talking about any of the Spiritual Fruit or what it means to experience those blessings.

I could spend an entire sermon on what it means to have Peace with God and the Peace of God and I will. But fruit of the Spirit is not something that we learn to obtain...or something that we are to strive to get...or strive to grow in. We can't grow God's fruit purposefully in our lives...it is the byproduct of something far more important.

Fruit of the Spirit is a lot like being sunburned. When you see someone with a really bad sunburn, you know that they have spent a lot of time exposed to the sun. The Sunburn is the evidence of something else. They didn't stay inside and will themselves to become sunburned. There is only one way they can get sunburned.....they have to be exposed to sunlight.

When you and I see someone with a gentleness that is supernatural.....that is far beyond the gentleness that we can muster on our own....you know one thing. That person has been exposed to Jesus.

So since we started this series....the entire focus thus far has been on our relationship with Christ...not the fruit of the Spirit.

I have repeatedly said that the goal of this study is to make sure that we all understand one central truth.

That we embrace and understand that nothing on this planet is more valuable than our relationship with Jesus Christ. There is nothing we should desire more than to grow in our relationship with Christ.

No amount of money, health, power, fame....nothing is more important or more valuable than what a relationship with Jesus will bring us.

So each week we have been building....understanding why our time alone with Jesus should be the most important thing in our life.

Week 1- The True Impact of Covid 19- Christians have abandoned their post just as the Spiritual War is amping up and many will die Spiritually because of Covid 19 and the consequences are eternal. Many believers are being sifted by difficult times.

Week 2- We learned about the one thing that changes when we spend time with God. The one thing that allows us to not only survive difficult times, but thrive in them...When we are alone with Christ...He changes our perspective. We see what He is doing in the world and we submit to it.

Week 3- We learned that the world is trying to Shrink our God. That when we spend time alone with Jesus we begin to see just how big God is and how small we are. We begin to understand who is on our side and who we can trust.

This week, we look at one last issue before we begin looking specifically at each individual fruit of the Spirit.

We can take our place in the Spiritual Battle that is raging around us, we can gain God's perspective about those events and we can understand just how big our God is....and still not grow Spiritual Fruit effectively. If you are spending a lot of time exposed to Jesus in your quiet time....and you still feel like the fruit of the Spirit is not really growing in your life....there is a problem...a serious problem...and we will address it today. The good news is that you can easily fix it.

Jesus promised those who trust in Him... That they would receive the Holy Spirit... And the Holy Spirit would manifest in their lives.....certain changes That Paul called Spiritual Fruit The Evidence of a life transformed by Jesus Is that His followers would produce in their lives.... Supernatural changes....

Galatians 5:22-24 (ESV) 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

We have said that we want more of these things in our lives Jesus taught us that He grows fruit in us if we abide in Him... But abide is not just spending time with Him It is surrendering your plans for His Desiring what He wants more than what you want. Getting His perspective....and then surrendering to it.

Jesus said anyone who chooses to abide in Him.... Will produce much fruit....it is a promise. But many of us struggle seeing spiritual fruit in our lives We surrender to Jesus...we follow Him....but something gets in the way There are three critical steps that we must take..... To position ourselves to receive more of the Holy Spirit The More we allow the Spirit of God to flow through us The Juicier our fruit...the more love, joy, peace, etc we experience We have talked about the first two steps Today we will look at the third one.

The First and most critical step.... You must have a personal relationship with Jesus You must have come to a moment in your life... Where you confessed that you are sinner.... Trusted what Jesus did on the cross to save you The Spirit of God flows through no one who hasn't surrendered to the Son of God.

The Second step we have discussed.... Spending time in the Sanctuary with Jesus.

Prioritizing our time with Him so we can go to be like Him Surrendering our plans to His...getting His perspective...recognizing that He is Big and worthy of our trust.

The Third Critical Step may be the hardest.... Many here spend a lot of time in the quiet place with Jesus... We surrender to Him and His plans.....for the most part We desire...truly desire to get all that God has for us.. We desperately want more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness etc But truthfully, when we look out over the garden of our lives.... We are frustrated... Because our fruit.....hasn't seemed to grow in years We are stalled spiritually...and must take the third step

The third step?

We have to deal with the weeds that we have allowed into the garden that is our spiritual life Unattended weeds....choke out fruit....every time.

Weeds are a problem My parents use to make me pull weeds in our garden.... I hated pulling weeds....still do. Not only did I hate it....I didn't do it well. I had a hard time even figuring out which ones were weeds. I use to try to get my mom to agree with me... They they were not weeds...just flowers **PHOTO 1**

It never worked...but I tried hard Sometimes though....it was really hard to tell the weeds from the flowers. Often I would pull flowers thinking they were weeds..... And leave weeds thinking they were flowers. When I did pull weeds I was lazy about it. Never really pulling the roots...just getting rid of surface stuff..

Then when I was about 12 years old....

I thought my prayers had been answered George Ballas invented the Weedeater. PHOTO
Not that Weedeater...that is the original....This weedeater....PHOTO

He took a popcorn can and tied some wires to it. Now I could blast weeds....flowers....lots of stuff Without even having to bend over... No root pulling....just complete and total surface destruction. It was the ultimate shortcut for a lazy 12 year old Who really didn't want to pull weeds.... But rather just wanted to hide them or destroy them

They always grew back....and eventually choked out the flowers.... But I would worry about that tomorrow... Today...they were gone. Along with most of the flowers, fruits, and hedges Around our home

Now that I am an adult...I am still not good at pulling weeds. I love gardens... but can't stand gardening.

My first attempt...is to convince others....that what we are seeing is not a weed at all I try to convince others that what they think is a weed Is actually a flower.... Then I don't have to deal with it at all I just need to get some people to agree with me.

If that fails... My preference is to shoot a chemical at them..... Or maybe cover them up with a dark tarp.... Still like to blast them with a weed eater... When I do pull weeds....I tend to settle for pulling just what I can see.

I know that the only way to get rid of weeds.... Is to go deep and pull them out at the roots But that is really hard work... I really want a great garden...I will come up with lots of ideas on how to get rid of my weeds....PHOTO 4 But I am lazy when it comes to weeds I only deal with them on the surface.... Just enough to hide them.... Knowing they will grow back

We tend to approach our sinful nature in the same way When we become aware of the Spiritual weeds in our life... We try almost everything except pulling them out by the roots

We try our best to convince everyone....that the sin they see...is not really a sin But rather a beautiful flower If we can just get enough people to agree with us.... We can keep on sinning....and not have to deal with that weed We will just change to friends who agree with us... We flock to others who have the same weed...but we all pretend it is a flower

Or we shoot chemicals at them....drugs...alcohol...Maybe treating our weeds with weed We use substances to numb the guilt...the shame... Sometimes what we use to kill the weed.... Becomes an even stronger weed...that we cannot kill

Some of us prefer to cover them up....not with a tarp..but.... With denial....or rationalizations.... maybe excuses. maybe by trying to cover our sins with good deeds

Sometimes we blast them...not with a weed eater....but with Religious self righteousness.... Indignation and Arrogance Super spirituality.... You see that sin in my life... We quickly blast it...destroying any surface evidence of that sin. So we can pretend at church.... Yet knowing the root of that sin...is alive and well under the surface

Some of us just pull what we can see.... Making some superficial changes Not as drastic all wiping it out with a weed eater More subtle...more socially acceptable ways of hiding what is on the surface... Yet keeping the root of sin in our lives.

We try behavior modification Rather than trust Jesus we flock to Self Help Gurus We contort ourselves trying to develop enough inner power... To change... But we don't have the power to kill the root of sin in our lives

So we clean up just enough... To make some superficial surface changes.... Just enough to keep others from seeing our weeds Just enough so we can feel good about our weeds

But not really addressing the deeper issues. Not really digging up the roots Because we are powerless to do so. And truthfully....if we were honest....we like our weeds

The truth is...we all would like to have a great garden We want to produce the best fruit...the best flowers.. But real gardeners know...that to produce fruit...you have to actually pull weeds. You have to hate the weeds all the way down to the root. You have to be diligent to root out every bit of those weeds. If you leave any evidence of the weeds...they come back... And choke out the rest of the garden.

I want to invite you today.... Down into the spiritual dirt of your life To pull the weeds of your sinful nature So the Spirit of God can grow the Fruit of the Spirit abundantly in your life If you want juicy fruit....you must first pull weeds.

How is your spiritual garden? **PHOTO**

You look out over your garden...your life....and maybe it is not pretty. Perhaps it is a part of your life... Or maybe the whole thing... You just don't like what you see. You believe that there is potential there...but right now...it's far from a reality. We are not the person we want to be... Things have really turned into a mess. We keep saying things are going to change...that we are going to do something differently

This was the year.... the year that you were going to grow more love... maybe more joy...more kindness. This is the year that changes were coming. You prayed for God's help...you feel like you planted some seeds but nothing has really changed....in fact it is that way every year.

You are no different..this year from last...or the one before...or the one before that. Year after year....you struggle with the same issues....and with what seems like not results...

What is the problem? Most likely...you have not done the hard work of pulling the spiritual weeds of your sinful nature. We have asked God to grow fruit...Spiritual Fruit. In a garden overgrown with weeds Our flesh...our sinful desires There has been a battle raging inside of you Between your sinful nature...your flesh And you Spiritual nature....the Holy Spirit

Let's look closer at Galatians 5 Paul starts off by telling us why we are not the person we want to be. He says...Here is why you do what you don't want to do...

Galatians 5:17 (ESV) 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

The desires of the flesh are in conflict with the desires of the Spirit You don't do the things you want to do because.... In the garden that is your spiritual life... There are weeds that are growing...weeds of the flesh. These weeds are in conflict with growing the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul tells us that we have two opposing things growing in our lives. There is a battle constantly going on in the life of a believer between the Sinful Nature and the Spirit of God. And as long as we continue to water the weeds of the flesh... Fruit is going to get choked out. Even the smallest weed...if left unattended...eventually chokes out the fruit.

We see this a lot as pastors.... Man says "I don't love my wife anymore? We have fallen out of love....no intimacy...no bond. There is no attraction....she feels the same way I have asked God to grow this love. Asked God to grow in my heart a love for her. But it is just not happening....just not there.. He seems really sincere... He would like to love his wife...it would be great for the kids and family.. He wants a great marriage and relationship...to be close once again.. But it is just not there. He is frustrated....why isn't God doing this for him?

You explore a little deeper. You discover that in the same garden where he is asking God to grow the fruit of love for his wife and family. He is watering the weeds of lust. **PHOTO KEEP UP** He is watering the weeds of lust every day.

He is secretly addicted to pornography. Adding water. Flirtatious with that new secretary. More water. Living out fantasies about his secretary. Harmless right? more water. Taking Secretary out for her birthday lunch... Harmless right? Nice Gesture right? more water. Going to that secretary....female perspective on his marriage. Drowning with water.

And at the same time asking God to grow intimacy in his marriage. The well watered lust in his life...is choking out the fruit in his marriage. He really wants to grow a good marriage.... But he refuses to pull the weeds of lust. The lust gets his attention...his resources...his time...his energy. The Love for his wife...is starving....ignored..and stagnant. What you water grows...what you don't stagnates **TAKE IMAGE DOWN**

You absolutely have to destroy weeds at their root. We can't just walk into the garden and plant seeds.... First we must get down into the dirt.... And do the hard work of pulling weeds. But most are not willing to do so... Because pulling weeds means repenting.

You have to first acknowledge that the weed is indeed a weed. This may be the hardest step. That flower...that secretary looks beautiful. You are on the moral edge....but deceive yourself to believe you haven't sinned. Maybe even got your buddies to agree with you....well not you church buddies...you probably need to stay away from them...didn't like the music or pastor at that church anyway.

You have to own the fact that you are watering it... That it is only by your choice that you have allowed it to grow in your life. You have to acknowledge to God.... That you have desired for that weed to grow. More than you have desired for His fruit to grow. You have to get honest with God...

No longer satisfied with spraying chemicals on it...hoping to numb the pain...shame...and guilt. No longer satisfied with trying to cover it up...with rationalizations and excuses. Unwilling to deal with it just on the surface....by pretending to pull the weed. Or zap it like a weed eater with your arrogance or Religious self-righteousness.

Repentance is when you hate the weed so much...that you want every bit of it...root and all out of your life. You commit to no longer doing anything that helps the weed grow..... And doing everything you can to focus on creating the best soil.... To grow spiritual fruit...good fruit.

But many are not willing to take those deeper soul steps. We want spiritual fruit.... BUT we also want to keep watering the weeds of our sinful nature. Paul says it this way..

Galatians 5:17 (ESV) The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

The path to fruit...involves the process of removing weeds....root and all.

So once we decide that we truly hate the weeds in our lives....Truly hate what they are choking out....are ready to get dirty...to dig into the dark ugliness of our lives....and pull the root of the problem out once and for all.....How do we do it?

The first thing we must do.... Is to stop calling weed a flower... Stop denying the truth We see weeds in our lives but we think they are harmless Often the weed that will destroy our life.... Looks like a flower. It looks beautiful...even harmless It can be hard to tell the difference between a flower and a weed, The good news is that we don't have to decide.

If God says it is a weed...it is a weed...our opinion doesn't matter. Currently our leaders are considering a bill that threatens Spiritual Liberty and freedom in our nation. If you want to understand why our church is making some drastic changes to prepare for the future...Learn about the Equality Act and its impact on churches.

The Equality Act...in fact the entire LGBT, sexual identity, sexual rights agenda is based on legislating that what God say is true and what God says is a sin...Is very soon going to be illegal. Human opinion is being legislated as superior to God's Truth and stating God's truth will soon be a crime.

Often the weeds.. that if left unaddressed... will destroy our lives Start out looking harmless, perhaps beautiful, even enticing. It can be hard to tell the difference between a flower and a weed So if we have these weeds in our lives..... If these weeds are going to choke out the spiritual fruit in our lives... How do we make sure that a weed is actually a weed?

Fortunately Paul describes weeds for us.

We have been in Galatians Paul described to us the spiritual fruit of.... Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness Gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self control But just before Paul gave us the fruit of the Spirit... He gave us a list of weeds that we need to pull and destroy from the roots. Lets look at the verses immediately prior to what we have been studying.

Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV) 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

The works of the Flesh....the weeds are evident. Often we want to see spiritual fruit in our lives.... But we have not addressed the weeds in our garden. You and I can't grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives Until we are willing to pull the Spiritual weeds Of the sinful nature.... So two opposing forces rage within our bodies...

It is sort of like this.... Every year they run my favorite race...it is not the NYC or Boston Marathon...It is race of opposing forces battling in your body... North Carolina State's Krispy Kreme Challenge **(Photo 1)** In Raleigh North Carolina

It started in 2004 with 12 participants Last year they had 7500 runners They run from the Campus at NCSU to a Krispy Kreme Donut Shop 2 miles away... Then they must eat one dozen Krispy Kreme Donuts... And then run back to the campus... All in less than one hour.

What started as a college dare.... Has spread to other universities Including Florida State and the University of Kentucky. Proceeds go to a local hospital charity. Running and Krispy Kreme Donuts 2 opposite forces battling inside the body.

Let's say we get a personal trainer... They design a running program to help us lose weight We are committed to running every day...we want those results But we have a secret...that we didn't tell the trainer. Imagine if we decided that every time we ran... We were going to stop and get some donuts. We are committed to running and the benefits it brings to us..lets say weight loss But we can't pass by the flashing light and the Donuts.

Would it make sense if after a few weeks of our donut running program if we were frustrated that we have not lost weight? We begin to blame our trainer for not getting us the promised results?

That's not fair right? Yet that is exactly what we do in our spiritual lives We put in some spiritual effort....we are here after all...attending services We do our spiritual workout once a week... But each day we are watering weeds We get frustrated with our lack of spiritual growth.... I have really been trying...really working on growing spiritually I have really tried to be more loving...more joyful...have more self control And that may very well be true..... But you are watering weeds....

So here is the question for you and me. What gets watered in the garden that is your spiritual life? Let's look at Paul's list a bit closer...

Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV) 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

The first 3 have to do with sexual sins...sexual weeds. Sexual Immorality....anything outside of marriage between a man and a woman Impurity...lust or impure thinking..in your mind and heart Sensuality....just doing whatever feels good. Living for this pleasure.

Paul says these are deadly weeds.... But our culture says....they are beautiful flowers. Two consenting adults If it feels good doesn't harm anyone else They are just computer images God says they are weeds and need to be destroyed in our lives. Our culture says they are flowers and they are ok....doing no harm God's perspective or the world's perspective? Fruit or weeds?

He continues.... **Galatians 5:19-20 (ESV) 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery**

"Idolatry and sorcery" or witchcraft This idea of putting anyone or anything ahead of God in your life Your career...a possession... a false god will choke out the fruit of your spirit. Trusting a human to provide wisdom through palm readings, horoscopes, tarot cards..... all weeds that need to be removed from our lives. Culture promotes witchcraft... Spiritual advisors Contacting the dead... fascination with ghosts and the occult God says they are weeds and need to be killed.

Our culture says they are flowers and they are ok....doing no harm God's perspective or the world's perspective? Fruit or weeds? These first things deal with our relationship with God.. Then he goes into a list about our relationships with each other

Galatians 5:19-20 (ESV) 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,

Relational weeds...strife...jealousy...anger...rivalries.... Dissensions and divisions. God says they are weeds and need to be removed from our lives Our culture says they are ok...normal parts of human relationships God's view or the world's view? fruit or weeds?

Then the list goes on.... **Galatians 5:21 (ESV) 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.**

Paul lists...drunkenness, orgies... Things that are really out of control.. Wild weeds if you will God says they are weeds that must be removed from our lives Our culture says...just a drink...just adults having fun.. God's perspective or the world's perspective? Fruit or weeds?

Then **"and things like these"**

Paul is essentially saying here... Whatever you are thinking right now....it is on that list too. If you are glad he missed one of your favorites....he didn't It is on the list too. This is a partial list of common weeds in our garden These weeds have to get pulled out of your spiritual life But you can't do it.... You see you don't have the power to pull weeds..... You also don't have the power to grow fruit of the Spirit.

Let me make this critical point.... When it comes to pulling weeds or growing spiritual fruit, the power to do it comes only from the Holy Spirit.

In your own power....you will never effectively pull weeds... And you will never effectively grow juicy spiritual fruit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit.... That enables these things.

Please don't miss this. So many of us who grew up in church have heard this preached.... "Grow fruit...pull weeds. " Be good...don't be bad Do these good things...don't do these bad things. So we really worked at it... We tried to grow fruit...we tried to be good We tried to pull weeds...we tried not to be bad

But our spiritual walk has been this cycle.... Of failure and frustration If we grow up in this religion approach, eventually... We just get wiped out by guilt and failure. Many walk away from the faith.... Because they believe they have failed... but in reality they have been expected to do something that they just don't have the power to do.

It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit.... That pulling weeds and growing fruit can happen. Trying to do this without using the power of the Spirit... Will crash your spiritual journey... You will either walk away.... Or you will fake it... Pretending you have a beautiful garden. But in reality the whole thing is a mess. So you show people only a part of your garden... The rest is under a tarp.

There is only one way to pull weeds and grow fruit. Look at how Paul describes it...

Galatians 5:16 (ESV) 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Live by the Spirit....and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The ONLY way to pull weeds and grow fruit....is to Live by the Spirit.

We must acknowledge weeds.... We must agree with God about the weeds that need to be pulled.... Maybe you have a room in your heart.... that you have tried to keep hidden...from God...from others...even yourself. You know that there is ugliness in there that must be cleaned up You have never trusted anyone enough to let them see that room

But now you have surrendered to Jesus...and He wants to pull that weed Our job is to open the door....the Holy Spirit pulls the weed We have to surrender our desires to His... We have to trust Him enough....to open the door to that room

As we prioritize our time with Jesus. We begin to surrender our desires to His. We trust His judgment...not ours.. We believe His perspective....so ours changes. During that process....the Holy Spirit begins to flow through us... The presence of the Holy Spirit more powerful in our lives.... Begins to transform us from the inside out.

We don't consciously pull weeds....or will ourselves to change.. As the Holy Spirit moves through our rooms of sin... We begin to be transformed.... We aren't doing it....it is happening within us.

The Holy Spirit changes our desires... We no longer desire the weeds that for so long controlled us.... We stop watering them... and they die... With weeds out of the way....there is more room for the Spirit of God. Rooms once filled with the ugliness of our sin. Are now transformed by Jesus... And become storage rooms of love, joy, peace....

From the inside out...as the Spirit fills us...the fruit begins to become more evident. Weeds disappear....Fruit Grows....you don't do it....the Holy Spirit does it... You just surrender....and allow it

Yet some of us...try to go back and water old weeds. We prioritize other things ahead of Jesus

Earlier in the book of Galatians...Paul says this... **Galatians 3:3-4 (ESV) 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

Paul is frustrated with them.... You started out connected to Jesus....the Spirit flowing through you. What happened to you...why did you start watering weeds? Why are you trying to do these things yourself? You are struggling in your own efforts... Why are you walking in the flesh....and ignoring the Spirit?

Have you ever seen someone walking through the airport Carrying all sorts of baggage.....weighed down by everything they are carrying? **Baggage Photo** They look frustrated....exhausted....and defeated. Yet right next to them...is someone who has put their bags down.... Stopped moving from their own efforts... Not struggling at all. They chose to use the moving sidewalks...

Sidewalk Photo (Keep up until next slide) Their burden is light....they are not walking or working at all... And yet they are moving toward their destination Being propelled by a power that is not their own. Getting to their destination..faster..easier...and with more joy. Walking in the Spirit is like that....

Walking in the Spirit.... You no longer have to carry all your baggage.....you set those things down for good. You can relax and enjoy the journey.... Because you are no longer in control. You trust the power that is moving you.... More than you trust your own power. You arrive at your destination...without much effort at all.

Walking in the flesh.. Is saying no to the moving sidewalk.... Carrying your baggage and doing everything through your own effort. You think you are in control.... But the baggage you will not let go of.... Is actually controlling you. Struggling with every step....exhausted...frustrated....life in the flesh.

So many of us are carrying our baggage... Watering our weeds.....because we refuse to let go of them. We are carrying baggage that God never intended for us to carry... So Paul says....whether you are growing fruit or pulling weeds...it must be done... Through the power of the Holy Spirit. Live by the Power of the Holy Spirit...

Great Sermon message right? The key to growing Spiritually Good Fruit....Live by the Power of the Holy Spirit? Sounds good....particularly if said with a lot of emotion... You get in the car....say man that was a good sermon... I am going to Live in the Spirit... Perfect....yep...that is what I need to do Then it hits....

How do I do that? If the key to producing juicy fruit is to live in the Spirit... What am I to do?

I am glad that you asked. Let me give you a few ideas of how we can position ourselves... To receive and embrace all that the Spirit has for us.

Living by the Spirit **requires continual awareness and a constant prayer** We must have a continual awareness of the Spirit And constantly in prayer with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 (ESV) 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

The image behind the words "keeping in step" Is to take a long journey with someone... and to keep in stride with them...step by step.. The idea of marching...left..right..left...right... The key is to stay focused. Once you look up...or look away...your strides are off.

Keeping in step with the Spirit.... Is living in constant awareness of and in prayer with the Holy Spirit. Spirit fill me with your power today.

This is not what we are use to... We are use to coming to church once each week And then walking wherever we want during the week. Paul says...this is not even a daily thing to do.... It is a moment to moment....step by step...journey with the Holy Spirit.

Bill Bright called this "Spiritual Breathing" Pulling weeds the moment you are aware of them. Breathing out....exhaling..any sin in your life.... The moment you are aware of it. Exhale your sins....inhale the grace of God.

But this does not feel natural to us... What is natural to us...is to live in the flesh... We are going to have to live in the moment... Allowing the Holy Spirit to live in us... So that what at first seems unnatural....doing things God's way Becomes natural to us.

Living by the Spirit requires filtered thinking. Paul says in Romans ... The battleground in your thought life. What you feed your mind with water either your weeds or your fruit.

Romans 8:4-8 (ESV) 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

What we allow our mind to think about will feed one of these two. If your garden is full of weeds and lacks fruit... My first question to you...is what are you thinking about? What are you feeding your mind?

Let's try something and see how you do: Let's start with some ads.... Like a Good Neighbor..... You are in good hands with..... You deserve a.....break today Try Song lyrics I know it is onlyRock and Roll but I like it The Long andwinding road Rainy days and Mondays.....always get me down. All my ex's live in.....Texas Try Movies... I'll be.....back You had me at.....hello Houston.....we have a problem May the force.....be with you

Now try these..... Blessed are the pure in heart....for they shall see God. In Him was life and the life was..... the light of men A new command I give you.....that you love one another And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us....and we have seen His Glory

Two desires are competing... The one you feed will dominate. It matters what you expose your mind to. TV Shows, books you read, movies you watch, music you listen to... Time alone in the Scriptures....praying...memorizing....processing with God Which one are you feeding...which one are you starving?

Keep a diary of your thought life Living by the Spirit.... Means time alone with Jesus in the Sanctuary Developing deep Spiritual roots Watering your relationship with Him Starving anything that gets in the way of that relationship

Watering your Spiritual Thought Garden is critical particularly in our nation today. Our government is no longer just trying to regulate what you can do....they are no longer just regulating what you can say....They are trying to regulate what you are allowed to think. I never thought I would see this in America. Thought police, cancel culture, erasing any human idea that does not align with the government's predetermined agenda.

I really miss the America I knew and loved. The end is coming much faster than I ever imagined. Believers really need to be at their posts and deeply connected to the Holy Spirit. The truth is being redefined right now in our midst. Almost every news story is the same....Deny God's Truth and Embrace Ours....or else.

Living by the Spirit means dying to yourself

Galatians 5:24 (ESV) 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Living by the Spirit means dying to myself We must die daily. Every day we have to make a conscious decision to die to ourselves.. And live by the Spirit. Pulling a few weeds each day.... Making sure the garden is prepared. Tending to it constantly

Today God....empty me of me...and fill me with you. Paul in Colossians says...

Colossians 3:5 (ESV) 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you

You must allow the Holy Spirit to kill your weeds

Too often we want to dress up our weeds and make them presentable. So we can keep the pleasure they bring us... and still try to grow fruit. But Paul says...you have to let the Holy Spirit's power in you...kill it.

The more we die to ourselves...the more room we leave to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit does not mean that..... The believer gets more of the Holy Spirit....but rather... That the Holy Spirit gets more of the believer.

My Prayer for this series.... Is that you will not try to make more fruit in your life.. But rather that you will connect to the source of that fruit...

Next week...we begin looking at Love As we reflect on the last few weeks... Let's prepare our hearts for that journey I want to invite you to spend time with God at the altar

Maybe your time at the altar with God.... Is surrendering your life to Him for the very first time Maybe you need to commit to desire Him above anything else in your life... Perhaps admit that you don't know what you don't know... And you need His perspective

Perhaps confess that you have tried to keep God in a box So you can control Him... And still be your own god

Maybe you need to confess to Him.... That what you have called a flower...is a weed That you have been struggling through your own power... and just can't root it out of your life.. You know you have been watering the weeds Rather than your relationship with God Hiding that room in your heart....that no one sees You need to trust Jesus and open that door of your heart for Him

Maybe you realize you have been carrying baggage Overwhelmed but not willing to let go. and it is time to surrender your struggle and your stuff and Live by the Spirit... Powered not by your efforts but by the Spirit

Choose to live in the Spirit Walking in step and constantly praying Filtered thinking... Dying to yourself Whatever you need to do...do it with God now.