



**The Fruit of the Spirit in
 Biblical Counseling: Love**

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The fruit of the Spirit

• ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 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. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 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. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-25 (ESV)

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Observations

- We have two options:
 - Walk in the Spirit with the result that the fruit of the Spirit will form and grow in us.
 - Gratify the desires of the flesh with the resulting sinful behavior.
- Gratifying the desires of the flesh produces a chaotic and destructive array of behaviors.
- Walking in the Spirit forms a unified and ordered life portraying the character of Christ.

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Understanding love (ἀγάπη) from a biblical perspective. 1 John 4:7-21

- The person and work of Jesus defines love.
 - Jesus came to do what needed to be done in order for us to become what God created us to be.
 - The propitiation for our sins: Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus perfectly provided the total remedy for our sins.
 - Jesus reveals that God’s love originates within Himself and then extends toward those upon whom He chooses to set His affection.

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Understanding love (ἀγάπη) from a biblical perspective. 1 John 4:7-21

- Our ability to love comes from the fact that God loves us.
- Expressing God’s love toward people is evidence that we have experienced God’s love for us.

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Understanding love (ἀγάπη) from a biblical perspective.

- Love finds expression in action that contributes to the benefit of the person loved. Ephesians 5:25-27
- Love is formed by the Spirit of God as we walk in the Spirit—a focus of devotion and obedience to God. Galatians 5:22

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The anatomy of love.

- ⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸ Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (ESV)

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Love in the life of the counselor

- How do I understand God's love for me at this moment?
- Am I walking in the Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit is being formed within me?

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Love in the life of the counselor

- Am I expressing and communicating ἀγάπη to the person I am counseling?
 - Do I easily grow weary at the lack of progress or failures of the counselee?
 - Am I smug in my self-righteousness?
 - Do I approach the counseling setting with a judgmental or superior attitude?
 - Do I tend to counsel out of my experience rather than depending on the Word of God to bring about heart change?

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Love in the life of the counselor

- Am I expressing and communicating ἀγάπη to the person I am counseling?
 - Am I resentful and therefore critical of others because they are seeming to have more success than I in working with others?
 - Do I secretly envy the sinful lifestyle that has been described to me in the counseling setting?
 - Do I rejoice when the truth of scripture brings conviction to my heart?
 - Do I place artificial limits on where I will go with God or where I will lead my counselee to go with Him?

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Love in the counseling session

- The basis of all our attitudes and actions are to be governed by these two commandments: ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37-39 (ESV)

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Love in the counseling session

- The clear teaching of 1 John 4:7-21 is that our ability to love both God and others comes from God's love that He has expressed to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- This makes a real and growing relationship with God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ an indispensable starting point for working with a counselee.

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Love in the counseling session

- Sinful choices and/or traumatic events obscure an accurate view of God's love. This will necessitate effective instruction that will bring them into alignment with God's revelation about His love.
 - Two widely believed myths about God's love:
 - I have done something that disqualifies me from God's love. (consider Luke 15:11-32)
 - If God loves me this thing or these series of events would not have happened. (see Judges 6:12-13; John 11:1-44; 17:24)

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Love in the counseling session

- When one comes to a real and personal encounter with Jesus Christ, he or she will then begin to grasp God's love. Romans 8:31-39
- Leading a counselee into an obedient walk with God will result in the fruit of the Spirit being formed in his or her life.

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Ministry flowing from ἀγάπη in the counseling setting protects from excesses and abuses.

- ¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (ESV)

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