

Contents



	Preface	11
	Fruit: Setting the Scene	12
	Farming and Fighting	30
	Love	36
	Love at the Door	82
	Fruit and Fragrance	88
	Prayer: Places to Start	90
	Aligning Three Modern Versions	92
	References, Symbols and Notes	102



Preface



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, and wanted to love and serve God, I had mainly Sunday School songs and my parents' word to go on. They told me He was loving and kind, pure and powerful. I liked to read Bible stories, but they were hard to interpret to my child's mind. I understood metaphor, but I wasn't good at reading between the lines. I remember at fifteen realising that, in my confusion, all I was doing was cobbling together a pile of positive traits and calling it 'the LORD', since I had no real idea of how to nail down who He was. It seemed nebulous, and not quite ... kosher. Who was I to randomly pick or miss these attributes – when God was a real, defined person? Were they accurate to any degree at all, or was I making God over in my own image? What was He *actually like*? Had He given us anything specific to go on?

It was all there in the names of God and in the interactions He has with us, though it took me years and years to get it. I am so relieved to now know that God has given us His own definition of what He's like.

'Who am I?' He says. 'I AM the source. I AM love, and it looks like joy, and peace, and patience and kindness and goodness and faith and gentleness and self-control. Start there.'

—Rebekah



Greek
karpōs

Aramaic
ܩܪܦܘܢܐ

Hebrew
פרי

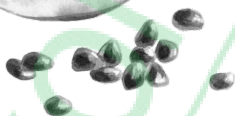
Fruit

NIV

KJV
fruit

DRB
fruit

Latin
fructus



fruit, bough, reward;
fruit (as plucked);
qualities of the heart

Setting the Scene

ALL LIVES HAVE UPS AND DOWNS, sometimes mountainous. The 'downs', while awful to live through, are also opportunities to road-test our relationship with God and level up, which is why James tells us to 'count it all joy' when adversity comes our way. It's a chance to beat our adversary, with the world champion as our partner. I'll get to the 'joy' part presently, but let me tell you what happened during one of my episodes of adversity.

My much-loved mother-in-law was seriously ill with a lingering complaint that her doctor's best advice wasn't shifting. In the end, she had to be admitted to hospital. We are a close but tiny family: my husband and I and our kids; my husband's widowed mother; and his married brother. At the time, I was an anxiety sufferer going into perimenopause, which meant my emotional strain was trebling itself for largely biological reasons, and I was suffering from tennis elbow to boot.

So my mother-in-law went into hospital. My brother-in-law, the mover and shaker in the family, had a joint flareup which meant he couldn't drive. His wife works long and unpredictable hours, some distance away, for a company always hungry for more of her time. And this was the point at which my husband had a health crisis and was also admitted to hospital. I was the only experienced adult on the ground, and I was one-armed and deep in dejection. I panicked.

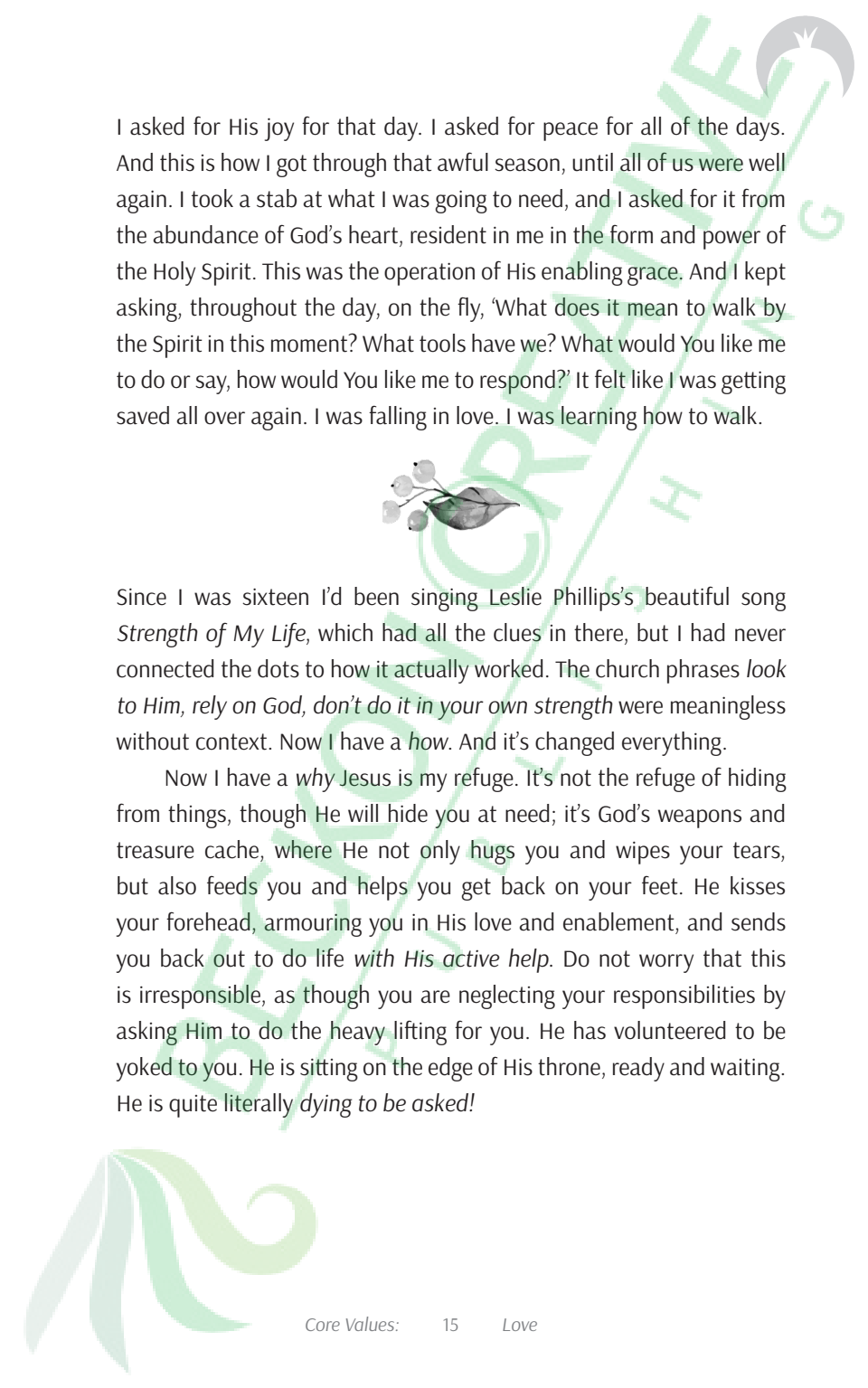


After flapping about unproductively for a bit, I remembered the two key lessons God had been working into me over the past year or so: to make Jesus my refuge, and to walk by the Spirit. So I went to Him. ‘Lord,’ I said, ‘I am the only adult left standing; everyone needs me, and I’m in bad shape. I have *nothing*. You’re going to have to do something. I just don’t have it.’ I paused and listened. I was being heard. I remembered a key revelation that had lately come to light.

‘Lord,’ I said, ‘right now I need Your self-control. Could You lend me that? Could You be my self-control, today? And maybe my peace?’

Calm came. I did the Next Thing. Then I did the Thing After That. I won’t tell you I was joyful and serene; but I was no longer panicked. I could feel the Holy Spirit helping me. I knew He was with me, because I knew that ‘in the natural’ I would be distraught, scatterbrained and stressed to the nines. Our church was also praying for us all, which undoubtedly helped. The very fact of being able to deal, being okay in the midst of this situation, told me I was being carried. It was wondrous, because I had never prayed this particular prayer before. I had prayed ‘desperation’ prayers, of course: ‘Lord, help!’ But I had never drawn directly on His character this way. I had been putting my faith in His abilities, not His nature. I can’t say whether His response to this tiny piece of faith *in His heart* is an experience that’s just between Him and me; but I can confidently say that you could ask Him if this is an approach that would suit *your* relationship with Him. He never minds being consulted; quite the reverse!

When I got to bed that night, I had some idea of what the next day was going to hold. I knew that I was going to face another day when my own ravenous needs would have to be set aside. So I asked for love. I asked Him to lend me His love, to let His love flow to me and through me next day, regardless of my reserves. I had a feeling that by the following day I would be sorely in need of joy, so while I was there,

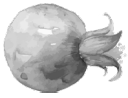


I asked for His joy for that day. I asked for peace for all of the days. And this is how I got through that awful season, until all of us were well again. I took a stab at what I was going to need, and I asked for it from the abundance of God's heart, resident in me in the form and power of the Holy Spirit. This was the operation of His enabling grace. And I kept asking, throughout the day, on the fly, 'What does it mean to walk by the Spirit in this moment? What tools have we? What would You like me to do or say, how would You like me to respond?' It felt like I was getting saved all over again. I was falling in love. I was learning how to walk.



Since I was sixteen I'd been singing Leslie Phillips's beautiful song *Strength of My Life*, which had all the clues in there, but I had never connected the dots to how it actually worked. The church phrases *look to Him, rely on God, don't do it in your own strength* were meaningless without context. Now I have a *how*. And it's changed everything.

Now I have a *why* Jesus is my refuge. It's not the refuge of hiding from things, though He will hide you at need; it's God's weapons and treasure cache, where He not only hugs you and wipes your tears, but also feeds you and helps you get back on your feet. He kisses your forehead, armouring you in His love and enablement, and sends you back out to do life *with His active help*. Do not worry that this is irresponsible, as though you are neglecting your responsibilities by asking Him to do the heavy lifting for you. He has volunteered to be yoked to you. He is sitting on the edge of His throne, ready and waiting. He is quite literally *dying to be asked!*



The Fruit Metaphor

OVER THE YEARS WE'VE COME to talk glibly about the *fruit of the Spirit* mentioned in Galatians 5:22–23. It's acquired a whole swag of associations, mostly to do with our own self-progress and the Gold Standard we're supposed to reach. It's been used as a club, no doubt, as much as a goad. As a child in the '70s, I mainly associated it with Candle's wonderful play, *The Music Machine*, and the Scripture in Song tape my parents used to play us as we fell asleep at night. More and more, lately, I've found the passage inspiring as an adult. (If you need a refresher, you'll find the verses at the end of this book, in three modern versions.)

'Fruit' is something produced by a plant. The kind of fruit depends on the kind of plant. Already you may be doing what I did for so long – looking inward, cringing, as you imagine yourself to be a stunted weed that just won't thrive. We get really hung up on trying to squeeze fruit out of our lives (let alone 'fruit that remains'), and feel quite condemned if it just doesn't seem to be happening. That's not my purpose here. We need to get our eyes off ourselves. I say that not to chastise, but because there is such an exciting truth to behold in its place! I have spent my entire adult life anxiously scanning my soul for flaws: negative fruit, you might say. Believe me, the more you look into your soul for things that do not measure up to the image of God, the more you will find.



DNA is an acronym
for deoxyribonucleic acid.
You can easily see DEO
at the beginning of this term:

Deo, Latin for God.

He is written into the fabric of all of us.
In the beginning – even of us! – was the Word ...



Don't be downhearted, however. We are not called to be our own judge. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:4 that, while he keeps his conscience clear, he doesn't bother judging himself – that's God's job. It means that the only one who has licence to scrutinise us for failures is the One who has committed to loving us forever. Don't look at your imperfections and despair. Look instead at the perfections of Christ, who is perfect in our place. Look, and fall in love.

Fruit grows automatically according to the DNA of the plant. It doesn't think; it doesn't strive; it doesn't decide what sort of fruit it will be; it doesn't decide when it will fruit or how quickly it will ripen. Certain conditions help – light, water, temperature, soil, minerals, pruning, bees and butterflies, support, environment, weather, pest protection, mowing, and yes, fertiliser. But the most important thing is that fruit happens because the DNA of the plant decrees it should be so, from the seed to the sprout to the sapling to the tree to the blossom to the fruit, and 'round again. None of these components look like each other, but they all carry the same genetic information. And so it is with us: we don't look like God, and some of the time we don't smell like Him either, but we nevertheless bear His imprint.



The fruit **of** the Spirit can only be produced **by** God's Holy Spirit. Fruit is produced in accordance with the DNA of its plant.

Therefore, the fruit **of the Spirit** embodies the DNA of God's heart.

Those of us who have the Holy Spirit of God living in us have incorporated (or been incorporated by) a whole and holy Person. I once saw this illustrated by a tissue in a glass of water. The tissue was in the water, and was not the water, but the water was also in the tissue.