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Greek
κάρπος

Aramaic
ܩܒܘܠܐ

Hebrew
פרי

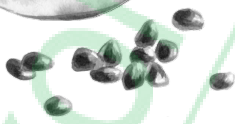
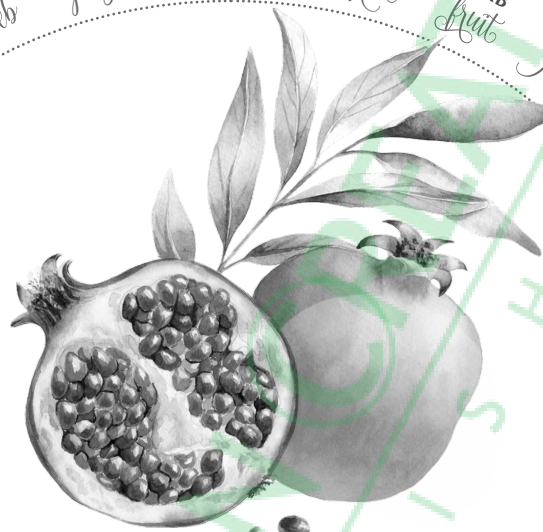
Fruit

NIV

KJV
fruit

DRB
fruit

Latin
fructus



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



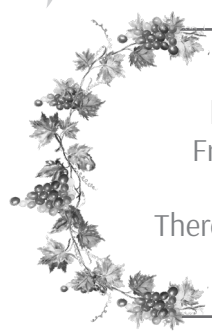
Setting the Scene

SOME OF THE MOST JOYOUS TIMES I've had in my life have been over pizza. It's not the healthiest of foods, of course. Occasionally in our family we've had the urge to have a virtuous 'fruit dinner' and create a huge grazing platter of fresh goodies. Berries are, after all, nature's lollies! It's always amazed us how much more the fruit dinner costs than the pizzas – more than double. There are lots of reasons why this is so, but until fresh produce becomes the easier and more affordable choice, the Health Department's battle to combat obesity will continue to be all uphill.

This is very like our spiritual diet, of course – and you've heard a hundred sermons on 'what to feed your spirit' for optimal health. Perhaps we think that closeness to God comes with such a high cost that it's easier to reach for lifeless, junky, unhealthy options.

It's perfectly true that union with God comes at a high price. However, we're not the ones who paid it! Against all odds, He bought us back for Himself. And when He tells us in James 1:2 NKJV, '*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*' it's not like He hasn't been there. '*For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame*' (Hebrews 12:2 NIV). This aspect of joy is our theme.

If God could be said to have DNA, or core values, then His DNA would be walked out in His interactions with us and with the material universe at large. When He tells us about the fruit of the Spirit, we can



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.

read between the lines: if it's *of the Spirit*, then that must be what the Spirit (and by extension, the Godhead) is like. Therefore, God is not only love; God is also made of joy. He is also the embodiment (or the en-spirit-ment, if you will) of peace, patience, lovingkindness, humility and self-control. These are part of Him, as well as being things He demonstrates.

Please keep in mind that when I make these equations, they are not commutative: **you can't switch them around**. God is joyful, but joy is not God. We don't worship virtues; we worship a three-in-one *Person*, who just happens to hold those virtues. He is multi-dimensional, a vista of many colours and intricacies, but most of all, He is independently and alarmingly *alive and intelligent*. He is the *Living God*.

We don't worship virtues;
we worship the *Living God*.

Note that the New Testament Greek word for fruit, *karpos*, is singular: not nine different fruits assembled on a platter, but the *entirety* of His heart described in nine 'this/that' ways.

Is God a *happy* God? Let us see if we can prove it.



This is the day
that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice
and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24 ESV





Intertwining

*I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;
apart from Me you can do nothing.*

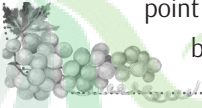
John 15:5 NIV

FOR YEARS — HONESTLY, FOR DECADES — I found John 15:5 baffling. I could never wrap my mind around it. I'd think: 'But what on earth is the difference between the vine and the branches? Is there any? Where does the vine end and the branch begin? Aren't they inseparable?'

I went on being mystified until I learned about covenant. That's when I face-palmed myself, went 'Doh!' and wondered how I could have missed the obvious for so long. The nature of covenant is explained in these verses and was in front of me all the time.

There is no separation between the vine and the branches. I'd actually got that bit, but I hadn't been able to apply the knowledge to what Jesus had said at the Last Supper because I'd missed out on the most basic understanding of covenant. I'm not alone in that knowledge gap. So, I've since discovered, are most other believers. Most people are unaware that the absolutely foundational tenet of covenant is oneness: not the promises and the obligations, but union and communion.

This is why the vine and the branches are such a lovely image of covenant: they are one with each other. There is no point at which the vine ends and the branch begins — because they are, quite simply, inseparable.





Covenant is about oneness. Anything less and it's contract, pact, pledge, agreement, bargain. All too often covenant is taught to us as a transactional exchange – but the image Jesus gave us is one of indissoluble intimacy.

Then He went on to speak of the purpose of this oneness:

*Abide in Me, and I in you.
As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

John 15:4 NJKV

As we abide in the Vine – in Him – we bear fruit.

Today, producers tend to pick fruit well before it's ripe. Tomatoes, for example, are packaged up and shipped off when they're still green so that they won't bruise while they are being transported. Then, to render them red and appealing, they're readied for sale by a spray of carbon dioxide. The fruit is still fine but the flavour... well, it's far from as luscious as it could be. Tomatoes ripened on the vine are so much superior and multi-faceted in flavour.

When Jesus was talking about branches and vines as well as 'abiding in the Vine', He was not only referring to the oneness of covenant but to ripening maturity through remaining in Him. Some believers are 'vine-ripened' and some are 'quick-gassed'.

You can tell the difference by their multi-faceted aspects of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – the flavours of the Fruit of the Spirit.

