

In Mark 7, Jesus cut straight to the heart of the Pharisee's accusations. They, the Pharisees, distinguished themselves by strict observance of the traditional and written law, and felt they exemplified superior sanctity. Jesus was also addressed by some of the "teachers of the law." The whole lot was missing the point, so Christ simply said they were worshipping God in vain – that they might know the law in their heads, but it wasn't changing them or leading them where it's supposed to – a true love in their hearts for God and others. **SLIDE** Compare for me if you will the Evils that come from within that defile a person and the Fruit of God's Holy Spirit. (online)

Evils inside that defile

Fruit of God's Holy Spirit

Sexual Immorality	LOVE (always seeks the welfare of others)
Envy	JOY (gladness and delight in what we have that leads to hope and trust)
Murder	PEACE (not anger, a steadfastness from knowing we are loved by God)
Theft & Greed	PATIENCE (accepting our humble station; bearing our lack & burdens)
Arrogance	KINDNESS (generously expressing compassion for others)
Malice	GOODNESS (wishing and acting toward moral health for others)
Adultery & Deceit	FAITHFULNESS (not chasing after the wind, but reliably seeking God)
Lewdness & Slander	GENTLENESS (not assertive and crass, but meek and selfless)
Folly	SELF-CONTROL (Those of us with the indwelling Holy Spirit have the strength to say "no" to our sinful desires, and "yes" to the Spirit)

Paul used "fruit" to help us understand the product of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. The fruit of the Spirit is produced by the Holy Spirit, not by the Christian. The Greek word is singular, showing that "fruit" is a unified whole, not independent characteristics. As we grow, all the characteristics of Christ will be manifested in our lives. Yet, like physical fruit needs time to grow, the fruit of the Spirit will not ripen in our lives overnight. Like a successful gardener must battle against weeds to enjoy the sweet fruit they desire, we must constantly work to rid our lives of the "weeds" of our old sin natures that want to choke out the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the power we need to reject those old sinful desires. We can say "no" to sin and accept the "way out" God faithfully provides (1 Corinthians 10:13) by following the Holy Spirit's leading. As we give the Spirit more control of our lives, the Spirit begins to do in and through us what only the Spirit can do - to shape us and grow us to look like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Since God's goal for all His children is for us to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29), the Holy Spirit constantly works to rid our lives of the "acts of the sinful nature" (Gal 5:19) and display His fruit instead. Therefore, the presence of the "fruit of the Spirit" is evidence that our character is becoming more like Christ's.

SLIDE The Spirit hadn't quite yet been sent, so Jesus referred the Pharisees and teachers of the law to Isaiah's words. Jesus had been teaching the greatest commandment are to love God and love your neighbor, that "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:40). I'm glad Jesus shared this because at least one Pharisee (Nicodemus) believed!

There had to be so many, though, that thought just doing right, or the letter of the law, was what God wanted and missed the boat. When we pursue things, even right things, very often do so while not having compassion for others, and gentleness in our words and ways - That time-consuming hard stuff gets let go of in favor of more quickly and efficiently getting that crown, or that supposed superiority. That is not at all what God wants.

SLIDE We can get a glimpse of God's reasoning in Deuteronomy chapter 4, where Moses challenges the people to "keep the commands of the Lord your God." They were reminded of God's good deeds and of his destructive corrections. **(bullet point)** They were "shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other." (4:35)

But why else, **well, 4:6** says observing the laws of God "will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.""

Verse 7 says it will show the other nations how close God is to the Israelites.

And verse 8 these laws are better than any laws of any other nation.

SLIDE The kicker is in verse 9. Moses then warned first to them to "watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live take the commands of God" Then to teach **them** to your children and your grandchildren. Israel was not to play the hypocritical game of "do what I say and not what I do" with their children. Instead, they were to take heed themselves first, then instruct their children. And what are they to teach – not just the law – the things that God had done in their lives!! An amazing witness to others inspires them to love God and their neighbors.

Conclusion SLIDE: What then are we to do today?

Going to church every Sunday and attempting NOT breaking the 10 Commandments is merely a good start. Daily Bible reading and prayers – are only as good as the effort you put into them.

Choosing to honor these things AND loving God, telling the stories of what God has done in your life, AND showing love to others by using/employing the fruit of the Spirit.