

“Wouldn’t you know it! I was praying this morning about more of the fruit of the Spirit showing up in my life. This is how God works: Kristin’s book has been on my desk for weeks. I ‘just happened’ to grab it during a moment when I was trying to catch my breath during a super-busy day. BAM! I couldn’t put it down! The right book at the right time! The other stuff can wait. *Deep Roots, Good Fruit* is filled with Scripture-saturated encouragement. Kristin has a gift for pairing observation with inspiration. She makes me want to be more like Jesus. Thanks Kristin!”

Kurt Goff, Host, Kurt and Kate Mornings, Moody Radio

“If Kristin Couch had only helped me to better understand the fruit of the Spirit, I would be grateful. But this book does far more; through brilliant storytelling, Couch makes the Spirit’s fruit smellable, tasteable, and alluringly beautiful.”

Scott Hubbard, Editor, Desiring God (desiringgod.org)

“It is one of God’s greatest promises and one of our foremost encouragements: that he is changing us from the inside out. By the work of his Spirit, he is transforming us so we bear fruit—fruit that displays the goodness and grace of our Savior. That is the subject of this book, which has been written by one of my favorite authors. And as Kristin does on her blog and elsewhere, she not only writes what is true, but she writes it beautifully and compellingly.”

Tim Challies, Author, Seasons of Sorrow

“*Deep Roots, Good Fruit* puts what matters most into plain sight through vivid storytelling. You will walk away feeling encouraged, inspired and convicted, and ultimately desiring to be more like Christ through the power of his Spirit.”

Lyndsay Keith, Host, Centerpoint, TBN

“Kristin Couch’s book is a wonderful resource to emphasize the necessity of the Spirit’s work in believers’ lives. More than just teaching about the fruit of the Spirit, Kristin has given us real-life examples of what that looks like in everyday life. I highly recommend it.”

Pastor Bryant Crane, Church Planter, George, South Africa

"*Deep Roots, Good Fruit* is like medicine for a dry and weary soul. When Kristin writes, it is like a brush on canvas that makes you see so vividly what she intends. How she uses her own stories to paint the picture of what the precious Holy Spirit has given to us through the fruit of the Spirit is certainly encouraging and simply refreshing."

Brian McDougall, Executive Pastor, Idlewild Baptist Church, Lutz, Florida

"In a world where 'spiritual amnesia' has infiltrated our hearts and minds, *Deep Roots, Good Fruit* brings us back to the truth of God's word and the reminder that the Holy Spirit is willing and available to us at any moment of need to give us the desire, power, and ability to accomplish his will. I highly recommend this book to anyone who needs encouragement and the reminder of God's love and care for us. *Deep Roots, Good Fruit* was a huge encouragement to me as it focused on the fruit of the Spirit. Several words came to mind as I read this. *Biblical*: it never strayed from the truth. *Authentic*: it's obvious these were not just words on a page but life-changing words from someone who has experienced them. *Encouraging*: from beginning to end—and a reminder of the power of the Spirit to change and transform lives, including mine. Thank you, Kristin, for your transparency and authenticity in *Deep Roots, Good Fruit*."

John Myers, Director of Ministry Advancement, Strategic Renewal

"Growth in godliness is slow, and it's easy to become discouraged. In this beautifully written book, Kristin Couch skilfully weaves story and Scripture together to show how God's Spirit works, gently and patiently, through the day-to-day, seemingly insignificant experiences of life to grow good fruit in his people. Her invitation to slow down and notice this transforming work in your own life will encourage you and fuel your desire to grow more like Jesus."

*Carolyn Lacey, Author, Say the Right Thing and
Extraordinary Hospitality (for Ordinary People)*



*Deep
Roots*

*Good
Fruit*

Seeing the
Fruit of the
Spirit through
Story & Scripture

*Kristin
Elizabeth
Couch*

Deep Roots, Good Fruit
© Kristin Elizabeth Couch, 2024.

Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Kristin Elizabeth Couch has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

ISBN: 9781802541090 | JOB-007698 | Printed in Turkey

Design by Drew McCall

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:2

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:4-5

*For my godly husband, Jon, and our beloved children:
Caleb, Jacob, Marcus, and Lauren.*

*As our family tree flourishes through marriage, I am
happy to also dedicate my words to Natalia, Taryn,
and Alexander.*

*And for CJ, our first grandchild, who prizes trucks
and good books.*

*You are a gift, my sweet boy. May you grow up into
Christ, with deep roots bearing good fruit.*

CONTENTS

Introduction: <i>Under New Ownership</i>	9
1. Love: <i>A Heart That Gives</i>	15
2. Joy: <i>Holding onto Jesus</i>	27
3. Peace: <i>The Calm in the Storm</i>	41
4. Patience: <i>The Secret Ingredient</i>	57
5. Kindness: <i>A Place of Refuge</i>	71
6. Goodness: <i>Uprightness of Heart and Life</i>	85
7. Faithfulness: <i>Fidelity to the Finish Line</i>	101
8. Gentleness: <i>Humble Strength</i>	115
9. Self-Control: <i>A Passionate Restraint</i>	131
Reflection Questions	147

INTRODUCTION

Under New Ownership

When my husband and I first glimpsed the house that would become our new home, we instantly fell in love. There it sat: resplendent, perched at the end of a long driveway, with a luscious lawn stretching before it. It was clear that spring rains had recently been at work: waves of verdant grass sloped endlessly over the front yard.

Once inside the house, we ambled through every nook with our realtor. Opening cupboards and closets, we gazed at each room from varied angles, as our imaginations soared. We pictured our grown children and grandchildren in *this* room and *that* room—visions of delightfully boisterous holiday dinners, the fireplace roaring on those dark and frigid winter evenings.

By the time we stepped off the front steps and into the front yard, I had splendid notions swirling in my head. It was then that I noticed my husband quietly studying the lawn.

He turned to me.

“This isn’t grass at all, only bright weeds.”

Weeds that were multiplying by the day, as it turned out, filling much of the yard. The previous owners had opted to forego yard maintenance—other than occasionally running a lawn mower over the invasive undergrowth. While it looked both tamed and vibrant from a distance, at close range it was obvious that the yard was diseased.

We purchased this lovely home anyway. And once we had signed on the dotted line and the keys were ours, we grabbed our work gloves and rolled up our sleeves. We quickly discovered that ridding weeds with the hope of growing a healthy yard is a slow, costly labor. But we were determined to transform that yard into everything we knew it could become.



Several years have elapsed, and the front lawn has been transformed. Plush, thick grass is now abounding. As our grandson runs barefoot, I am grateful for the new health of our yard, gently soft and inviting.

Weeds still pop up occasionally, and my husband plucks them up by the roots. We do so for the love of our property, our family, and our neighbors. As the yard’s health continues to flourish, it is a pleasure to invite others to enjoy it with us, or to sit out there alone in the sunshine with a good book. A lush, green lawn is a splendid gift to enjoy.

It’s a wonder what a change of ownership can do.



One of the most encouraging ideas of the New Testament is that God wants to work a similar transformation in us. When we become Christians, our souls come under new ownership. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). And now it's as though God dons his gloves, rolls up his sleeves, and gets to work, restoring life and beauty to the home he has set his love upon.

And how does he do this?

Through the Holy Spirit.

But who is he? There is an air of mystery surrounding our triune, three-in-one God. Our finite minds cannot begin to fathom how God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, yet one God. Often, it is our love for the Holy Spirit that is most neglected, and our understanding of him sadly remains hazy .

Yet the Holy Spirit is God, first introduced to us all the way back in Genesis 1:

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

(Genesis 1:2)

The same Spirit who brought creation to life now dwells within the heart of every Christ-follower: “Do you not know,” writes the apostle Paul to the wayward Christians of Corinth, “that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Our triune God has chosen to make us his dwelling place. Think of it—our Holy God is now living and breathing within our feeble frames. What an immeasurable gift!

Yet perhaps, as you open up this book, you're feeling as I often do: discouraged by your lack of progress in bearing spiritual fruit, overwhelmed by your persistent sin struggles, or grieved by the sense of spiritual apathy that creeps on you as God seems distant.

I assure you that God is not distant, but present, and working on your behalf. It is my prayer, as you travel through the pages of this book, that your affection for the Holy Spirit will deepen and flourish as he first grows, then ripens, his fruit within you. He is your Teacher, Comforter, Leader, and Guide—your God who resides within you, growing you in sanctification and making you more like Jesus.

Your sinful, weed-infested yard is under new ownership. The tangled, shabby growth has been replaced by good soil, nourishing the fruit trees in your yard—tiny trees that, given time, will grow tall and sturdy, and produce bright and healthy fruit that brings glory to God. As Jesus said, “By this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8).

So what exactly does a fruitful life look like? The apostle Paul handed the church of Galatia a stunning list of godly traits meant to dance and sparkle within the lives of believers:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Do not misunderstand: this is not a checklist of traits to drum up with the hopes of receiving heavenly merit. Rather, these traits are the identifying characteristics of a Christian, produced by the Holy Spirit. They give credence to our conversion. And often they are right there, slowly growing, if we have eyes to see them.

So I invite you to see firsthand the fruit of the Holy Spirit blossoming in these quiet stories from my ordinary life, and reflect on how he is working in yours. I like to imagine myself as a treasure hunter, turning over stories from my past, and sifting through life's mundane moments for marks of the divine. The Spirit's work appears in the margins—in life's crevices with common people.

May this book encourage you to view your days and stories through the lens of Scripture. God is always working and he is always good. Trust him and watch your spiritual fruit gradually flourish. Just as our healthy lawn took years to become vibrant, growing grass, so it is with spiritual fruit—it takes time and attention to mature.

So come along with me as we explore *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* through story and God's word. (You'll also find reflection questions for each chapter at the end of the book.) My hope is that as you meditate on these attributes, you will long for them more deeply, pray for them more fervently, and catch increasing glimpses of them in your own life and the lives of believers you love.

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

ONE

Love: A Heart that Gives

*“For God so loved the world that he gave...”
(John 3:16)*

One warm summer’s day, when I was nine, our family drove to the city to meet relatives and their friends for a festival. I skipped along the crowded sidewalk, eager to meet a certain little boy, Joel, whom I had heard so much about.

As we approached our meeting place, my parents admonished me: *Be polite and don’t stare! Remember that he looks different from everyone else.*

I was ill-prepared.



A handful of years earlier, on a crisp September morning, a father leaned out the car window, smiling as

he paid the toll-booth fee. His young family was excited to embark on a much-needed vacation.

Without warning, a semi-trailer truck barreled full speed into the back of their car, which burst into flames. They scrambled out of the vehicle, dazed and burned—except for their handsome blond-headed toddler, Joel, who remained strapped to his car seat, tethered inside the inferno.

A stranger, who had witnessed the entire horror, heard the baby's screams and with no thought for his own welfare reached inside the burning vehicle and yanked the little boy and his car seat out of the blaze.

Joel had melted into the plastic. He was now charred beyond recognition, and was nearly dead. Skin dripped off of his tiny body and pooled beneath him as everyone waited for medics to arrive.

To the astonishment of doctors and nurses, Joel lived. They had never seen a case this dire end in *life*.



As we approached Joel and his father, waiting for us in the middle of the bustling festival, my heart sank. Joel's father held him high, perched tall upon his shoulders. This little fellow peered from a face utterly marred beyond any former recognition. He had suffered third-degree burns on over 85% of his body. After his fingers had fallen off, surgeons created a lobster-like claw-hand. Skin grafts had created a mask-like appearance about his face. His mouth was stretched tight and shaped in a perfectly surprised "O"—the size of a Cheerio.

I looked away, mindful not to stare. Even as I did so, children passed by in the crowd, pointing, jeering, and uttering cruelties quite impossible to ignore. One boy even shrieked: *He looks like a monkey!* The boy's parents gaped at Joel before they hushed their child and moved along with the surging crowd, offering no apology.

It was agonizing to watch.

Joel's father smiled broadly at my brother and me, nonplussed. "This is Joel," he said. I waved and then blushed, realizing that he could not wave back.

"Joel loves when people say 'hi!'" he encouraged. And then, "Wow! It's hot! Let's find an ice-cream stand."

So we did. I followed behind this small fellow perched so high upon his father's shoulders, overhearing snippets of sentences from father to son, "Such a gorgeous day," and, "God made the sun and clouds and trees."

His words were gentle and kind.

This giant of a man, literally and figuratively, swelled with untamed love for his boy. He was utterly undeterred by the stares of strangers. Their curiosity and insults could not chink his armor.

I studied this father's sturdiness in those few hours we spent together. Never once did he retort, glare, or turn sour. He loved not only Joel but others, including my brother and me. Joel's father had eyes to see that my brother and I were like Joel—hot and hungry little people, longing for some sweet, cold ice cream.

We soon happened upon a soft-serve stand and ordered.

I was curious—how could this little boy eat?

His father eased him down from his shoulders, gently placing him in a stroller. And then, taking the top of the

ice cream into his own mouth he created a thin, pencil-shaped tip to the soft-serve, placing the sliver into Joel's tiny, eager mouth.

And this is how he proceeded to share the entire cone with his boy. It singed my memory—the most majestic act of love that I have ever seen. Patient and joyful, he laughed as Joel consumed the delicious dessert, little by little. He praised his son, speaking serene words that solidified a gloriously normal activity. The moment was intimate and poignant—a sacrifice of time, done in the knowledge that this son of his would likely never be able to give back in conventional ways.

Yet even as he did so, Joel's father engaged us in conversation, asking about our lives. How much easier it would have been for him to focus on Joel or even himself! Yet by continually focusing on others, he gave his disabled son not just an ice cream, but a model of Christ-like love.

If I close my eyes now, I can picture my little girl-self mentally comparing the differences between this father's affections and those with which I was most familiar, a tender scale within my small hands. I felt a distinct pang—a longing for more. A wishful desire for everyday conversation about God, for surging displays of both affection and purpose, for the tenderness of this father-child relationship.

I actually felt more sorrow for the bratty boy who had behaved atrociously, calling Joel a monkey, than I did for this little disfigured Joel. If anything, it was Joel to be envied, with such a father lifting him heavenward, high above the broken fray. This father was giving of himself,

moment by moment, mouthful by mouthful, day by day. I watched, transfixed.

Such love seemed ethereal.



The word *love* seems elusive, difficult to define, doesn't it? It is challenging to disentangle culture's version of love from that of our heavenly Father.

The world often associates love with something to be taken. It is equated with a strong feeling, a passing emotion, a whim: grabbing what you desperately desire. Pair that with our flippant overuse of the word, and no wonder we have misplaced the keys to truth.

I love this sandwich.

I love autumn.

I love your haircut.

I love God.

How confusing it is to use *love* to express fondness for anything and everything. We must begin afresh. With God's word.

1 John 4:7-8 states:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God is the perfect Author of love, its Creator! It starts at the very center of his being. "God is love" because God is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existing

forever in self-giving relationships of love; delighting in one another from before the beginning of time. Before anything else came into existence—before any star or planet, before any amoeba or maple tree, owl or chipmunk, before one second of human history had passed—God *loved*.

This is a love God could have kept to himself. And yet he didn't.

First, he made us. We are people fashioned in his image. Think of it! Creatures of dust and rib, loved by God himself.

And then, he saved us. John 3:16 tells us:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

God gave what was most precious—the life of his Son. Our heavenly Father not only gifts us with breath in our lungs but true spiritual life in our hearts, in order that we might live in his presence for all of eternity. It cost him everything, and yet he did not waver, because of his gracious, expansive love for us, his children by faith. Love *gives sacrificially*, and always for the good of others.

And yet what makes God's love all the more astonishing is who he chooses to bestow it on. God loved "the world"—a world in rebellion against him.

This is what I know: Joel's father loved his boy in a way that made my heart long for such tender, sacrificial love. He was an unattractive little boy: scarred, burned, disfigured, and yet beautiful and precious in his father's eyes.

Isn't that the perfect picture?

We are neither lovely nor flawless, but fallen human beings with sins and scars and shame. Yet in Christ, we are cherished, loved, and kept for eternity—lifted high and held secure, like a child upon a father’s shoulders. Our name is etched in the book of life. Nothing can take away his love for us. What more could we ever need?

I longed to be loved like Joel was, and the truth of it is, *I am*. And by faith in Christ, so are you.

As we press into such thoughts, lingering there, it is clear to see how such generosity gifted by God naturally results in an overflow of love for others, just as Joel’s father modeled for our family. He was free to love sacrificially, because he knew that he was loved by God in this same way. As John goes on to say in his first letter:

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:10-11)

May we be joyful imitators, mirroring the love of our heavenly Father through sacrificial giving in small, daily measures.



How do we arrive at the extraordinary heart-posture of Joel’s father, which displayed the unmistakable imprint of such godly love? May I suggest that we begin afresh, in this moment called *today*.

It bears repeating: love is not based upon a feeling. Pastor John MacArthur defines love as “a determined

act of the will, which always results in determined acts of self-giving. Love is the willing, joyful desire to put the welfare of others above our own” (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13). Our emotions are natural and a good gift from God, but they are not meant to rule over our will. When God told Israel to love him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5), he was instructing them to love him fully, with every fiber of their being.

When my husband and I were raising our four children, the day to day training fell to me, as my husband was working to provide for our family. There were many days when affection for my children sprang naturally from my heart. But there were other times when I simply did not feel like serving them, disciplining them, and placing my children’s needs before my own. It did not matter. I had committed myself to loving my precious children sacrificially, my life for their lives. This settled conviction then served to steer my emotions. I made many mistakes, as a sinful woman, but it was that act of the will that brought my emotions limping into eventual submission. Very often, feelings of love follow where acts of love lead.

If we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit, he is already making us more like Christ, and stirring in us a longing to love others well.

So consider the day ahead. How could you start giving yourself away for the good of others in some small way—tender givings that may yield a large impact? Often we daydream of grand, sweeping gestures to amaze others. Yet it is often small kindnesses that most clearly herald love.

I know someone who randomly surprises his coworkers with their favorite coffee orders and a box of bagels each month. He does not have extra money, but chooses to cheerfully go without certain comforts in order to bless others, understanding that everything he has truly belongs to God. His joy is in the giving, as he stewards resources with eternity in mind.

It could be as simple as emptying the dishwasher without being asked, or raking leaves for a neighbor. Or graciously listening to the lonely and long-winded storyteller at church whom no one else will patiently engage with.

As we do these things over and over again, little by little, day by day, we learn to love others as God loves us.



Think about a time when you felt deeply loved. I would venture to say it involved someone going out of their way to perform a kindness, something which went above the humdrum pattern of normal life. It probably cost that individual something to love you well: time, money, or their own personal preferences.

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:18)

My husband is a pastor—a servant. I watch him give and give and give some more. Sadly, pastors are often taken for granted, serving as a means to someone's end. Many forget that pastors are *real* people.

Recently, we were invited to a church person's home for dinner, a family we did not know well. Upon entering, I

was enveloped by the fine aroma of chicken pasta. Our host had set the table pretty as classical music swirled in the background. The husband beckoned us inside, as his wife placed the finishing touches on our feast.

Soon we sat down and prayed a blessing. The food was delicious. Later, we were presented with dessert: a tall berry trifle, layered in a lovely glass bowl. The whipped cream pudding mixture, bedded with cake and berries, was tasty. This entire feast had certainly taken our hosts hours to prepare. We were simply the grateful recipients.

This act of hospitality was not performed out of drudgery, but love. It wasn't flashy but their sacrifice of time and money and tender attention to detail produced a welcoming sense of beauty and belonging. We felt honored and cared for. We felt cherished.

I'm reminded of another dinner party, retold for us in Mark 14, where a woman poured out her costly perfume upon Jesus' head. Others grew huffy at such wasted extravagance, murmuring that she should have sold the expensive oil and given her earnings to the poor. They scolded her for such carelessness.

But Jesus? He told them to leave her alone and praised her for this sacrifice of beauty:

She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. (Mark 14:8)

Do you see the importance of Jesus Christ's perspective?

She has done what she could. None of us can meet the needs of everyone, nor are we called to. But it is too easy to become frozen, paralyzed by the urgent necessities of others. We feel discouraged because we cannot possibly

do everything that we want to for the people around us; we are not able to love as we feel that we ought.

This passage in Mark serves to offer a helpful path for each one of us. Look around at what you already possess, and use it to bless another, sacrificially giving in small, beautiful measures to the glory of God. Just do what you can. Others might not notice our efforts, but Jesus does, and he gladly affirms them. We are proving our faithfulness to him as we love in dear ways. In love he sacrificed for us; in love for him we sacrifice for others.

Pause and study the landscape of your ordinary life through an eternal perspective, asking the Holy Spirit to infuse you with holy love.

We can each love in some way, doing what we can, giving what we have.



That scorching summer day, Joel's father was facing the reality of another round of painful surgery for his dear son. He could have slumped inward, staying tucked away in their hotel room, feeling sorry for himself.

I am grateful he did not. Facing the relentless, gaping crowds, he proudly carried his only son toward the fray, searching out an ice-cream stand while inviting us into natural conversation.

I witnessed the age-old love of God that day, as Joel ate his ice cream, bit by bit, aided by a loving father who gave and gave and gave some more. May we do likewise.

God might not orchestrate our personal circumstances to include a traumatic injury. Perhaps he is calling you to

slender opportunities to love others well, such as buying an extra box of granola bars, and handing them out to homeless people on your way to work. Or sacrificing a few hours each week to serve in the church nursery, loving children by teaching them about Jesus, even though you do not really want to. Or maybe he is prompting you to awaken a little earlier each morning to pray for your family, your neighbors, and your church. You will forfeit sleep, or the late-night news the night before. Love gives sacrificially.

Genuine love always requires loss. Sacrificial love is just that—personal loss turned to another’s gain. God sees and treasures such heartfelt sacrifice, however small it is in the world’s eyes.

And may that be our highest aim—to please God, who modeled the greatest sacrifice from a place of love:

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)