

Have you ever wondered which is the most versatile fruit? Perhaps you have a favourite but which one gives the most opportunity. Strawberries are good, just plain, or in a salad, or soaked in balsamic vinegar and black pepper, or sliced in fresh cream and cold custard but then again cherries are good with meat as well as dessert and apparently Papaya can be used to tenderise meat. So how can we ever decide which is the best fruit?

Or perhaps we're just looking in the wrong place because through Jesus we can enjoy the *fruit of the Spirit*. And why is it that Paul only told us about one fruit? After all, when we read his words he mentions lots of things (love, joy, peace etc.) and when we look around us we know there are many, many fruits. But the fruit of the Spirit is the difference – it is the one fruit – bound by a root so strong that no man could pull it from us. This fruit comes from our love for God and it is this which sets us apart as Christians. God so loved the world that He gave His only son and if we choose to love God unconditionally, if we plough all our faith into Him our reward is the fruit that will make our lives easier, happier, full of joy. So next time you eat your fruit, take a little longer to peel, savour the flavour, enjoy the juice and then, remember the best fruit of all: the fruit of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22 ESV** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

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Who likes holding hands? Maybe it doesn't seem the done thing as we grow up, perhaps it feels a bit weak? But, truthfully, we all do like human contact. We thrive on hugs and cuddles and holding hands (even if we sometimes try to hide it from our friends) and of all these things, holding hands is the most instinctive. Crossing the road, wading through a river, even just walking through town, the urge to reach for another's hand is always there. It's how we protect, give comfort, how we share joy; with little ones or loved ones we don't have to think twice.

This week, on the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, we have heard about her faith in God and we were reminded of her 2002 Christmas speech and the strength she draws from her belief. As she said, with God every day is a new beginning, every morning brings fresh hope. And it's little wonder that holding hands feels so natural, or that we reach out to others to find strength as we approach new or frightening things. After all, God has told us that He is always there; in fact He holds our right hand every day – guiding us and protecting us and giving us strength. So next time you hold someone's hand and feel that burst of strength, remember, it isn't just a token of your own love, it is a reminder of God's true love for us – Our Father, who holds our right hand every single step of our lives. **Isaiah 41:13 ESV** For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."