

Living a Fruitful Life

Keys to a fruitful life, #1

Intro: In our lesson last week we looked at why it is important for each of us to live fruitful lives. We learned six reasons to be fruitful:

- To demonstrate true repentance
- To escape the judgment of God
- To avoid losing the privileges of divine sonship
- To fulfill the purpose of salvation
- To prove that we are true disciples
- To bring glory to God

Surely all of us are here because we want to do these things. But how is such a life possible? What does the Scripture teach us about how to be fruitful? Let's consider three keys to a fruitful life.

A fruitful life requires God's creative power, not merely man's self-exertion.

Fruitfulness is not merely the result of people "trying to be better," though we should try to do that. It is the result of God's power working in us.

Isaiah, using the pictures of the physical creation, spoke of the new creation of God.

Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, and righteousness spring up with it. I, the Lord, have created it. (Is. 45:8)

God "rains" down from heaven His righteousness. But the earth (human beings) must "open up" and let God's "salvation" produce its fruit of righteousness.

If fruit-bearing were the result of our efforts alone, then we would be glorified. The Scriptures affirms that bearing fruit is the result of our cooperative effort with God; without Him, we can produce nothing. And so God deserves the glory. Without Him fruitfulness can't happen! But with Him you'll see what Paul said about the Phillippians:

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)

A fruitful life requires death to self.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn. 12:24)

Jesus spoke these words shortly before his death. They hinted again at what Jesus had been saying to His disciples for quite a while. He was going to be crucified and rise again the third day and as a result bring many to Himself. He would bear fruit by way of His own death!

But Jesus' way of expressing this is important. He uses a simple illustration every person can understand. A single seed by itself will never bear fruit until it is first planted in the ground. Yet this very process of planting causes the seed to radically transform its appearance, so that it even seems to disappear

or “die”. From inside, a tiny embryotic plant emerges, using the seed’s body itself as nourishment for the newly forming plant. The seed itself must “die” in order for the plant to emerge from it. And when that plant has matured it produces its fruit and inside its fruit are many more seeds.

What would be true of Christ would also be true for those who professed to follow Him. Our fruitfulness would also depend upon our death. Notice how Jesus applied that truth to his disciples.

He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. (John 12:25)

By immutable law, fruitbearing takes place when we “die,” when we instead of holding on to the life we have, surrender our life to God so that He can mold us and give us the eternal life He gives.

A fruitful life requires abiding in Jesus Christ.

If the Scriptures stress that we cannot be fruitful by ourselves, it likewise stresses that the way to fruitfulness is to “abide in Christ”. John 15 is the most complete discussion of fruit-bearing in NT.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:1-8)

This text put together so much of what we need to see about fruit-bearing. Jesus stresses the importance of recognizing that fruit-bearing is the result of God’s creative power—“*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser (v. 1); “apart from me you can do nothing.”* However Jesus emphasizes another important concept—“abide.” (6 times)

The word “abide” conveys commitment or permanence—to stay or remain with Christ. It means that we do not visit Him occasionally, but that we are settled down and dwell with Him.

It means that we keep an ongoing connection with Him, and He with us. The word “abide” conveys the idea of relying upon Christ for what we need in order to bear fruit. It means that we see Him as the source of the life that we have and the fruit that we bear.

Paul’s words to the Philippicians could have originated from the very words of Jesus Himself.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having

been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

Conclusion: Now let's summarize what we have learned so far! Bearing fruit is not the product of human effort. It is impossible without the help of God. The creation around us shows us what He can do if we will get out of the way and let him work. We want to be in charge; but we cannot be fruitful until we let go and let God have control. We must be willing to give up our sin and come to Christ for His forgiveness; and we must be committed to stay with him all the way, knowing that it is only through His provision that we can live and bear fruit. The day we walk away from Him is the day we start to die again.

The Hebrew writer put it this way:

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

Would this be a good description of the person that you are right now? Are you trying to do it all on your own, and failing? Come to Jesus and abide with Him and you'll see real change for the better!