

Living a Fruitful Life The Fruit of Wholesome Speech

Intro: Peter in 2 Pet. 1 shows us the kind of fruit that comes from those who have a true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. He tells us that they will display in their lives the fruit of godly character; and he shows us the spiritual qualities that make us fruitful.

But how are these inward fruits manifest in everyday life? One way is through our speech. Let's take look for a moment at three interesting proverbs from Solomon. As a wise king and judge of Israel, he had no doubt seen the damage that inappropriate speech could cause as well as the blessing of proper speaking. His scribes recorded three proverbs about fruitful speech.

Three Proverbs

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man's hands will return to him. (Prov. 12:14)

From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence. (Prov. 13:2)

With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the product of his lips. (Prov. 18:20)

But what is Solomon affirming in these statements?

Our words become like trees planted which have the power to produce beautiful fruit. Of course, Solomon was speaking about the righteous in these cases. By our words we may bring healing and life to others. (But we should remember his words also imply the opposite. By our words we may also bring pain and destruction.)

What we say may have as much impact upon others as what we do. (cf. the contrast in the first proverb between "words" and "deeds.")

Words are not a substitute for deeds; but even our words can have great power to influence and affect others.

How we speak to others returns to us (cf. proverb 3). It is as if the trees that we planted produce fruit from which we too may eat and be satisfied. What we say to others impacts the way they treat us. Truly what goes around may also come around.

Three fruit trees we need to plant

The tree of honest praise and appreciation

Solomon recognized the danger of insincere compliments or flattery. He often spoke about it. Perhaps no would have been more vulnerable to such treatment than a powerful and wealthy man like him. Everyone wanted to get on his good side; but Solomon knew how the flatterer worked. All his praise was for his own benefit and advancement. He warned about such people:

A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps. (Prov. 29:5)

In contrast is the person who seeks nothing for himself; but only to build up another through his words. And a sincere compliment can truly put the wind in the sails of others.

It can't be merely by accident that all of Paul's letters but one begin with a word of thanksgiving or praise. Even if were a cultural feature of letters (and it was), it reveals Paul desire to show appreciation.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)

The tree of loving reproof or instruction

Too many people sow seeds of criticism that offer nothing constructive. It is not only that they are unhappy with others; they hope they can use their mistakes as a way of gaining advantage over them. That the motive the gossip, slanderer, the sideline critic. We should note that the Bible doesn't teach us to accept anything and everything; but it offers a much better solution that criticism, gossip and slander. It teaches us to share the truth with others and even to reprove those in error so that they may improve.

Those who preach are encouraged to plant trees of instruction and reproof.

preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (2 Tim. 4:2)

All Christians are instructed to speak the truth in love: *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, (Eph. 4:15)*

Paul commended the Romans saying:

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. (Rom. 15:14)

The tree of sincere consolation and support

We're living in a world of pain; and people are hurting every day.

They need someone to show an interest in them, to care about their problems. Every day we need to plant trees of consolation.

Imagine the pain of those early Christians who thought that their loved ones had passed away before the fulfillment of all that they had invested themselves in by faith. Paul had to explain to them that their departed loved ones had not missed the inheritance God had promised; but that Christ would bring them along at his second coming:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thes. 4:16-18)

Likewise today people need a word of comfort. They need a sympathetic ear, a listening ear, and a word of consolation.

Those who are environmentally conscious may appreciate those who plant trees. But how much should those who are concerned about the spiritual environment appreciate those who plant “trees” that produce godly fruit.

Conclusion: By letting our godly character be manifested in our speech everyday we have great potential to change the world around us. When we plant trees unselfishly, the interesting thing is we may also be satisfied by the fruit that is produced. The fruit of words may also return to us and satisfy us as well.