

Bearing Fruit for Jesus

Being Fruitful

“I am the Vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” John 15:5

Fruit characterizes the life of Christians. The Apostle Paul tells us what that fruit is: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit will be evident in the lives of Christians as a natural outcome of Christ’s living in us.

Jesus said, “If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). It is interesting to note that Jesus did not say, “You should bear fruit.” He stated that when we abide in him, it follows naturally that we will bear fruit. We are the branches, and we must stay firmly connected to the Vine in order to be mature and fruitful. Jesus calls each of us to abide in him.

Only as Christ lives in us are we enabled to bear the fruit of his character.

Christ left the task of spreading the Gospel to his apostles, a small number, but, empowered by the Holy Spirit, a virtual army. Through the ages, we, Christ’s disciples, strengthened by Word and Sacrament, have continued to be fruitful as we persist in carrying out the purpose for which we remain on this earth.

Abiding in Christ, we minister to the needs of others as Jesus, the Vine, did during his life on earth. We feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, entertain the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the prisoner (Matthew 25:37-39), all in the name of Christ.

Through prayer and study of his Word, we seek to discover God’s perfect will for us, and we ask, as the Apostle Paul did, that God would “. . . fill [us] with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . . in order that [we] may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work . . .” (Colossians 1:9-10).



God Blesses Us with Talents and Abilities

God has created us in his image (Genesis 1:26). He has given us tremendous talents. We are given intelligence, organization skills, creativity, decision-making powers, problem-solving capabilities, leadership abilities, and mechanical abilities, etc. God has given us labor so that we can use our God-given talents and provide for our needs. “The Lord God took [Adam] and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). Work is part of God’s master plan for all people. Through our work, we not only take care of our needs, we receive fulfillment and growth as well as the joy of accomplishment.

Have you ever stopped to consider the differences in people? There are thousands of occupations in today’s world, each requiring special talents. There are needs for carpenters, cooks, mechanics, tailors, pastors, teachers, farmers, servers, students, police officers, etc. The important thing to note here, however, is that, for every need, God has given to someone the ability to fulfill that need. Some people are able to take apart engines of cars, while others hardly know where to add the oil. Some can build houses, while others can barely nail boards together.

Some women sew fashionable clothes for their family and buy their bread at the store, while others cook and

bake beyond compare but don't even own a sewing machine. God has made us all unique. Along with all of our talents and abilities, God adds to them our desire and ability to work.

As Christians, we need to remember that our talents and abilities have come from God.

Working Together to Accomplish More

To build and edify his Church, God gives each believer at least one spiritual gift. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul wrote, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." We are limited in what we can do as individuals, but, working together, we can accomplish great things.

In verses 7-11 we read, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

In essence, we are one body made up of many parts. In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul refers to the human body which is made up of many important parts. The eyes, ears, hands, legs, and arms work together, each performing its necessary role in the body. All are essential and necessary to form one body.

In an entirely different way of illustrating the importance of individuals working together to carry out the Lord's work, we could consider how cranes are used at construction sites to lift tremendous loads with cables that are no bigger than garden hoses. The cable has so much strength because it is made up of individual strands. These strands are twisted together giving it incredible strength. In the same way, God gives his Church incredible ability because he binds us all together. Our individual spiritual gifts are combined with the gifts of others.

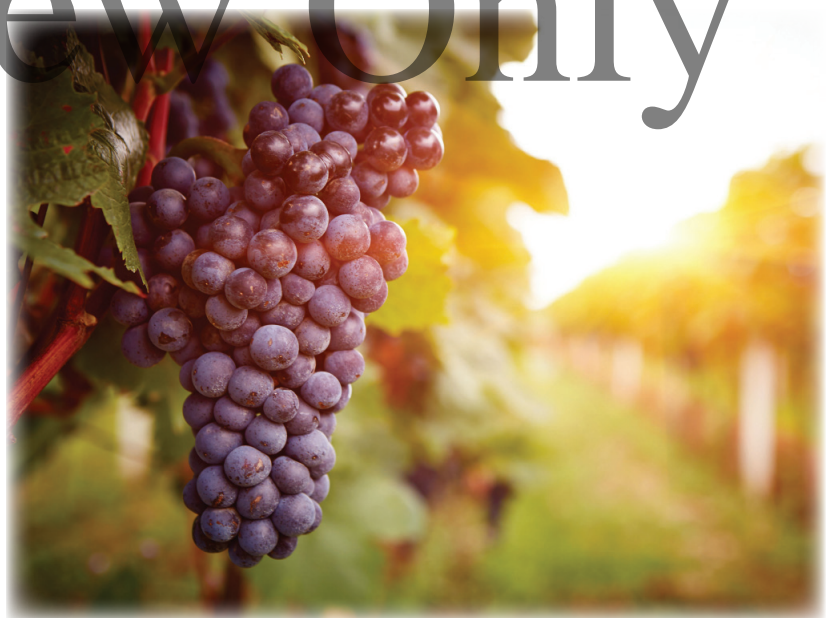
Stewardship Recipe

"You shall open your hands wide to your brother, and to your needy in the land." Deut. 15:11

In addition to faith, add brotherly kindness, love, self-control, knowledge and goodness to create a recipe for stewardship.

Be Creative

The Scriptures call each of us to a deeper awareness of the wonders of God's blessings, the gifts that he has showered on us in so great an abundance, and to the challenge to use those gifts and talents creatively and responsibly.



You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit...
John 15: 16