

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

“Principles of Fruitfulness”

Introduction-

With regard to the fruit of the Spirit, we have explained the first part of the equation, that being that by His fruit we may know Him.

The second part of the equation is us. How does His fruit affect us and how do we grow it in our lives? Before we can move on to each aspect (or type of fruit, if you like) of the fruit of the Spirit, we need to be sure we have a solid foundation laid with regard to fruitfulness. Understanding the principles of fruitfulness will better enable us to know what our responsibilities are when we begin to talk of love, joy, peace, etc. These principles of fruitfulness would apply to all the fruit in particular.

We are going to a funnel approach to this subject of fruitfulness. This means that we will look at the wide scope, the law of the harvest; begin to narrow down a bit as we discuss maintaining good ground; and get to the point of the matter as we look at the law of the fruit.

I. The Law of the Harvest

1. You (Always) Reap WHAT You Sow. [Gal 6:7-8]

Gal 6:7-8

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. NKJV

We are endeavoring to sow to the Spirit. This is why we need to understand sowing and reaping. Now, though it is true that we reap what we sow, this principle needs some amplification and explanation.

A. The crop does not look like the seed. 1 Cor 15:36-38

1 Cor 15:36-38

36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. NIV

i. It must die to give life.

John 12:24-25

24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. NIV

ii. The body born does not look like the seed.

The fruit of the Spirit you sow will not necessarily look like that which you reap. In other words, a small act of kindness one day may land you major mercies on another day.

iii. Each seed is given its own body.

B. Sin will change the outcome of the seed.

i. Thorns and thistles – Gen 3:17-18

Gen 3:17-18

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.
18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. NIV

ii. Sow wheat and reap thorns – Jer 12:13

Jer 12:13 NIV

They will sow wheat but reap thorns; they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. So bear the shame of your harvest because of the LORD's fierce anger."

iii. Good vine turned to wild vine – Jer 2:21

Jer 2:21

Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? NKJV

Sin will cause the seed still in the ground to be warped by a curse. In this instance, we don't reap what we sow. Sin causes us to reap the opposite of what we sow!

C. Relationship changes our nature. Rom 11:17, 24

Rom 11:17, 24

17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,
24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! NIV

Just as sin can warp good seed, so can grafting change our wild nature!

2. You Always Reap AFTER You Sow. [Gal 6:9]

Gal 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. NIV

A. The farmer waits patiently for the harvest. James 5:7

James 5:7 NIV

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

B. It is a process that unfolds with time. Mark 4:26-29

Mark 4:26-29 NIV

26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.

27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

C. It is a process that requires tending. 1 Cor 3:6-9

1 Cor 3:6-9

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. NIV

God in His grace has allowed us to be part of the process. We are to plant and water (and pull weeds, for that matter), but we must remember that it is God who causes it to grow.

GOLDBERG AND THE TICKET – We must plant to reap.

3. You Always Reap MORE Than You Sow. [Mark 4:8]

Mark 4:8

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." NIV

II. Maintaining Good Ground – Matt 13:18-23 [Mark 4:13]

Mark 4:13

Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? NIV

The parable of the sower is a foundational parable giving us insight into many other parables. If we don't understand it, we will be hard pressed to understand any of them.

Matt 13:18-23 NIV

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

- 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.
- 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.
- 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.
- 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

1. We Need to Understand – vs. 18-19

A. Learning from the Master – Luke 24:13-32

Luke 24:13-32

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;

16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;

21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning

23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.

24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther.

29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" NIV

B. An opened mind – Luke 24:40-45

Luke 24:40-45

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. NIV

C. He is the Teacher – Matt 23:10; John 14:26

Matt 23:10

Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. NIV

John 14:26

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. NIV

2. We Must Be Rooted to Be Fruited – vs. 20-21

A. Root below, fruit above – 2 Kings 19:30

2 Kings 19:30 NIV

Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above.

B. Root needs to be holy – Rom 11:16

Rom 11:16

If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. NIV

As disciples of Christ, we need to tend to the root of things. A holy root produces a holy crop. Conversely, if your root is bitter, so will your fruit be bitter.

3. We Must Avoid Worldliness – vs. 22-23 [Rom 12:2]

Rom 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. NIV

A. Thorns of worry – Luke 22:44; Matt 27:29-30

Luke 22:44

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. NIV

Matt 27:29-30 NIV

29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

B. The thorn of trusting riches – 1 Tim 6:17-18

1 Tim 6:17-18

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. NIV

C. The thorn of pleasure – James 4:1-4

James 4:1-4

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. NIV

III. The Law of the Fruit

1. Fruitfulness Is Based on Covenant Relationship.

Lev 26:3-5 NIV

3 "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands,

4 I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit.

5 Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

Deut 11:16-19

16 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.

17 Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you.

18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. NIV

Jer 17:7-8

7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." NIV

John 15:1-5

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. NIV

2. Fruit Is for Food. [Ezk 47:12]

Ezek 47:12

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." NIV

A. For the nations – Rev 21:24; 22:1-2

Rev 21:24

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. NIV

Rev 22:1-2

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. NIV

B. For His house – Mal 3:10

Mal 3:10 NIV

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

We, as the church of Jesus Christ, are the house of God. There should be meat, food to eat, in God's house. This not only means that we should have a supply for the

orphan and the widow. It also means that there should be fruit in our lives others may eat of.

C. Must be eaten in proper season – Lev 19:23-25

Lev 19:23-25

23 "When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten.

24 In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD.

25 But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God. NIV

We are often guilty of eating the fruit of new Christians instead of allowing them to mature. We must let the tree mature and the fruit ripen.

3. Fruit Has Seed within Itself. [Gen 1:12]

Gen 1:12

And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. NKJV

A. Seed of the ground and fruit of the tree – Lev 27:30

Lev 27:30

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's. It is holy to the LORD. NKJV

Seed of the land = evangelism.

Fruit of the trees = discipleship.

Conclusion-

As we study the fruit of the Spirit, we need to look at our development as disciples as a growing fruit tree, not a wheat field. There is a world of difference between orchards and fields, grains and fruits. Trees take time to bear. Trees need tending and pruning. One tree in a lifetime can give many harvests. Olive trees and grape vines are two kinds of fruit trees that are known to bear for centuries. Fruit is usually gathered by hand, one piece at a time. God has ordained us to bear fruit. We are going to look at the fruit He wants us to bear.