

BEARING FRUIT FOR GOD!

John 15:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

[READ TEXT] Repeat **vs.8.** *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit!"* Bearing fruit is what the Christian's discipleship is all about! We may be saints in terms of ethical and moral purity. **And we may even have the Ten Commandments and the names of the Apostles memorized backwards and forwards, we may be able to recite the Sermon on the Mount and scarcely miss a syllable, !", but if we're not bearing fruit we have missed the whole point of the meaning of discipleship!**

The author of the best-selling book How to Make Love to a Woman pleaded guilty to punching his former girlfriend in the face. "We got into a heated argument and for one second I lost control", Michael Morgenstern said of the incident. He agreed to a \$30,000. settlement of a civil lawsuit. His book was on the NY Times best-seller list for several months & in it he urges men to take the lead in their relationships & show sensitivity toward women! Somehow I get the feeling that Mr. Morgenstern is not a very good ambassador for his book on how to show sensitivity toward women!

*And this reminds me of a notice in a church bulletin that Sam Levenson told about a few years ago. "Due to the fact that Brother M., our local banker, has embezzled \$100,000 and been sentenced to 20 years he will not be teaching his usual Bible class this Sunday!" **That'll make you laugh or CRY!** "By this my Father is glorified," said Jesus in our text, "that you bear much fruit!"*

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP ARE APPLAUDED IN THE GOSPELS BY THE SON OF GOD HIMSELF!

- A. The point is made continually about the Lord's disciples being "earthen vessels", the "only links" to many people on the earth, the "instruments of God's righteousness"!
1. The **rich young ruler** was a fine, decent man, who kept all the commandments "from his youth up", **but he wasn't bearing fruit!** **Matt.19:16-22.**
 2. The **priest & Levite** who passed by on the other side of the road, rather than helping the man who'd been beaten & robbed, were men devoted to the Word, devoted to the Law, devoted to moral and spiritual purity! **But they weren't bearing fruit!** **Luke 10:30-37.**
 3. The **rich man** at whose gate sat Lazarus was religious, successful and probably a pillar in the community. But because he'd been blinded to fruits he could have borne for the Lord, like helping the beggar lying at his gate, he ended up in hell! **He hadn't born fruit like the Lord wanted!** **Luke 16:19-31.**
- B. Those in the first century *who answered the Master's call* showed their commitment and allegiance in their fruit bearing!
1. And the dedication they pledged to the Lord often required **GREAT EFFORTS** and **EXTREME SACRIFICES** on their part **to truly be His disciples!**
 2. It has been said that the early church's great harvest of souls was grown on soil fertilized with the blood of Jesus' martyrs!
 - a) Tradition tells us that **James** the brother of Jesus, and **James** the son of Zebedee were killed because of the demands of and to satisfy the cravings of the mobs in Jerusalem!

- b) It is also said that Matthew was slain on a sword in Ethiopia; Philip was hanged in Phrygia; Bartholomew flayed alive in Armenia; Andrew crucified in Archia; Thomas was run through with a lance in East India; Thaddeus was shot to death with arrows; and a cross went up in Persia for Simon the zealot.
- c) In Rome, the old apostle Peter was, supposedly at his own request, crucified head downward -- because he didn't think himself worthy to die in the same position as his Lord! Matthias was beheaded and only John, the other son of Zebedee, escaped a torturous death, and he died a lonely man in exile!
- C. SUCH HEROICS, THOUGH, AREN'T LIMITED TO FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANITY. Many have thrilled to stories of *FAITH* and *PERSEVERANCE* and *DEDICATION* like the example of Martin Niemoller, a conscientious German preacher who wouldn't bow to Adolph Hitler's cronies who tried to break his faith during long stays in a concentration camp!
1. **The commander of the camp was determined to break the hold that Christ had on Martin**, so he placed an outspoken atheist in the cell beside Niemoller & gave permission for the two prisoners to talk. He also arranged for the two prisoners to take their daily half hour walk at the same time & in the same yard.
 2. The atheist was a very intellectual person, skilled in argument. He had been promised all kinds of "favors" if he could make Martin lose his faith! Each prisoner enjoyed presenting his own viewpoint. **THIS LASTED ONLY FOUR DAYS!** On the fifth day the atheist begged Martin to lend him his Bible, a Book that now had assumed new meaning to him! **THAT VERY SAME DAY THE ATHEIST WAS MOVED TO ANOTHER CELL!**

II. EVEN FOR US TODAY, BEARING FRUIT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR ACCEPTABLE DISCIPLESHIP TO JESUS CHRIST!

- A. And a **life well-lived** is STILL a more effective witness than **well-said words ALONE!**
1. **Benjamin Franklin learned that plaster spread in fields would help the grass and grains grow.** His neighbors didn't believe him and even argued so against it that he soon allowed the matter to drop. But when he sowed his grain the next spring, *close by the path where men would walk*, he traced some letters and put plaster in the outlines and then sowed his seed. Soon after, his neighbors were very surprised to see writing in large letters that were greener than all the rest of the field: **"THIS HAS BEEN PLASTERED!"** Franklin didn't need to argue with his neighbors about it anymore, because as the season progressed the testimony became even more evident as the greener lettered areas grew above all the rest with the proclamation: **"THIS HAS BEEN PLASTERED!"**
 2. **NO, not everyone is qualified** to stand and teach in the pulpit, or even to teach a Bible class --- but **EVERYONE** has the **ability to make right decisions** and **live for Jesus Christ**, thus GLORIFYING THE FATHER in heaven! **Matt.5:13-16.**
- B. **"By your fruits shall all men know that you are my disciples"!** But how do we obtain such fruits? How can we live such winning lives?
1. Obviously, fruits are no more important than ROOTS! **Luke 6:43-45-**"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns,

nor do they pick grapes from a riar ush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart!"

2. Our fruits are determined by our roots, which are demonstrated by what comes out of our HEARTS! **Now, REALLY, where is our life rooted?**
 - a) Zig Ziglar, in one of his best selling books, points to a Conn.Mut.Life Ins.Co. study that reveals that people with deep religious convictions are the most productive employees. Here's why:
 - 1) **97% of those who'd made strong spiritual commitments** carried that feeling of conviction & commitment & loyalty to their employers with highly productive results!
 - 2) This parallels a study involving over 22,000 students who qualified for Who's Who in Amer.Schools & Colleges: over 85% of these honor students said their faith in God was extremely important to them!
 - b) C.S.Lewis wrote: "God has designed the human machine to run on Himself [GOD]. He, HIMSELF, is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other! That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy without bothering about religion. God cannot give us happiness & peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing!"

CONCLUSION:

Our fruits are determined by our roots, which are demonstrated by what comes out of our HEARTS! **SOME OF US NEED TO GET BACK TO NOURSHING THOSE ROOTS!** The Green Bay Packers, under Vince Lombardi, were once the best team in professional football! He is said to have been a fanatic for fundamentals! Once, when they lost to a team they should have beaten, Lombardi was furious. When they came together on Monday morning he roared at them: "O.K., we go back to the basics..." Holding a football high enough for all to see, he continued to yell... "Gentlemen, this is a football!"

Now that is really getting back to basics! Maybe we, sometimes, need to hold up our Bibles and say to ourselves: "***THIS IS THE BIBLE!***" Or maybe, "***THIS IS A REGULAR LORD'S DAY ASSEMBLY PERIOD!***" Friends, let's stay with the simple, fundamentals of our faith, so we can truly be living for Christ! **ROOTS AND FRUITS! BOTH ARE ESSENTIAL TO AUTHENTIC AND SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIVING!**