



Introduction

In the world of plants and trees, fruit is the natural product of normal living. Fruit is the thing that makes a plant valuable. And every plant that has a fruit bearing nature should bear fruit.

Fruit is the evidence of health. A healthy plant will produce lots of fruit. And, plants do not need to labor to produce fruit. Fruit happens. It is the natural result of life.

Christians bear fruit of a spiritual kind. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer results in fruit. It is the natural by-product of the Spirit's presence.

This study will explore the nature of the fruit the Holy Spirit will produce in your life and the steps one must follow to become fruitful.

The Nature of Spiritual Fruit

Paul describes the nature of the fruit that God will bring about in your life as follows.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

- Underline the one from whom the fruit comes.
- Why do you think there is no law against these qualities?

Peter uses a similar list to explain how we can be kept from being unfruitful.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8

- Comparing this passage with Galatians 5:22, draw a circle around those qualities which are identified by both passages.
- The word **unproductive** is translated as **unfruitful** in some English translations. So practicing these qualities will enhance fruitfulness.

Plants do not "work" at bearing fruit. There is no straining or labor involved.

Notice that the word **fruit** in verse 22 is singular and not plural. Though we can look at the various virtues separately, they together comprise one fruit.

Notice that the list in 2 Peter places the emphasis of your effort, while the Galatians passages make those qualities an effortless result of the Holy Spirit in your life. Spiritual fruit is really the combination of both: you must make the effort, and the Holy Spirit will impart these qualities.

The Necessity of Abiding

Jesus used an analogy to indicate an essential prerequisite for bearing fruit.

⁴ 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. ⁵ "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. (NASV)

John 15:4-5

- Underline in verse 4 the thing the branch must do to bear fruit.
- Circle in verse 5 who the vine represents
- Circle in verse 5 who the branch represents.
- Underline what the branch must do to be fruitful.
- *Abide means "to live in" or "to continue in the presence of". Abiding in Jesus means staying close to Him, living you life in His presence.*

John made it clear how we can abide in Jesus.

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 3:24

- Circle the action we need to take to live in (abide in) Jesus.
- Underline how we know He lives in us.

Obeying His commands is the key way that we can be sure we are abiding in Him.

The Nourishment of God's Word

David used another analogy to explain an ingredient of fruitful living. In describing a man who is blessed, David first shares some things the man does not do (verse 1 not shown) and then he shares the things he does do.

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psalms 1:2-3

- Circle the thing the blessed man delights in.
- Underline in verse 2, what he does with God's law (for us, God's Word).
- *Notice in verse 3 the analogy to the tree. The two results are green leaves and seasonal fruit. David likens that to prosperity.*

This passage teaches that delighting in God's law and meditating on God's word will result in fruitful, prosperous living. Meditation on God's Word leads to doing God's Word. And doing what God says results in fruit.



Obedient living is discussed in the vDRC study entitled "The Obedient Disciple" in the Basics Study section of the vDRC website.

Two tools that can help you make God's word a part of your life are found in the Tools section of the vDRC website. In the Tools related to God's Word, look for Keys to Applying God's Word and Keys to Meditation.

The Requirement of Faith

Jeremiah uses a similar analogy to describe a third ingredient for fruitful living.

⁵ This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶ He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. 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."

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Fill in the following chart based upon the two types of men Jeremiah describes.

The Man who Trust in Man	The Man who Trust in the LORD
Depends upon the flesh for strength	
	Like a tree by water, root by stream
Will not see prosperity	
	Green leaves in drought
Dwells in a salt land alone	

God delights in faith. It pleases Him when we live by faith. That's why faith is an essential ingredient for fruitful living.

Obstacles to Fruitful Living

Jesus told a parable describing four different kinds of soil and how each one handles seed that is sown in it. His story sheds light on the things that keep God's Word from bearing fruit in our life.

³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, **some fell along the path**, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ **Some fell on rocky places**, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ **Other seed fell among thorns**, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still **other seed fell on good soil**. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

Mark 4:3-8

- Underline the result of the seed being sown in each of the four types of soil.
- Circle the soil that produced abundant fruit.

The expectation of the farmer was that seed planted would yield mature plants with fruit. Any seed that does not produce fruit is useless to the farmer.

Jesus goes on to explain the parable.

¹⁴ *The farmer sows the word.* ¹⁵ *Some people are like **seed along the path**, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.* ¹⁶ *Others, like **seed sown on rocky places**, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.* ¹⁷ *But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.* ¹⁸ *Still others, like **seed sown among thorns**, hear the word;* ¹⁹ *but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.* ²⁰ *Others, like **seed sown on good soil**, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."*

Mark 4:14-20

- Circle what the seed symbolizes in verse 14.
- The soils in this story represent four different kinds of people.

Fill out the following table based upon the information contained in the two passages above:

Mark 4:3-8		Mark 4:14-20	
Type of Soil	Effect on seeds	Spiritual Parallel	Spiritual Result
Hard path	Eaten by birds		
Rocky Soil		They have no roots	
Soil With thorns			Choke the word and make it unfruitful
Good Soil		Hear the word and accept it	

Each type of soil represents a type of person. Each type of person responds to God's Word in different ways.

Jesus is teaching that the fruit you bring forth identifies your type of soil.

No normal person wants to be an unfruitful kind of soil. What hindrances are there in your life that keeps you from being the good soil?

Times of Pruning

Pruning is the act of removing parts of the plant so that the remaining plant will produce more fruit. God practices pruning in the lives of His children,

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.*

John 15:1-2

- Circle the one who is the gardener.
- Underline the action the gardener takes with the unfruitful branches.
- Circle the action he takes with those branches that are fruitful.

Pruning has the appearance of being hurtful to the plant. So it is with God's pruning. When we go through His pruning process, He takes away so that that more can come. Is God involved in pruning your life?

While it may not seem so at the time, the effect of pruning will be increased fruit bearing.

One of the ways God prunes is by his Fatherly acts of discipline.

¹⁰ Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:10-11

- Under line the reason God disciplines us.
- In verse 10, circle the result of God's discipline.
- In verse 11, underline the two results that discipline produces.
- The word "**harvest**", relates to the gathering of fruit. In this case the fruit is peace and righteousness.

God disciplines those He loves. He does it for our good so that we can be like Him. If you are experiencing God's discipline it should serve to reassure you that God loves you like a son.

Recognizing Fruit

John the Baptist warned some who came to him concerning the type of fruit that was needed in their life.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 3:7-10

- In verse 8, underline the type of fruit that was needed.
- Underline the action that will be take toward a tree that does not bear good fruit.

Can you think of a kind of fruit that is in keeping with repentance?

Jesus issued a similar caution to His followers:

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:15-20

- Circle the way you can recognize false prophets.
- Underline the kind of fruit a good tree produces.
- Draw a frame around the kind of fruit a bad tree produces

Notice that the outward appearance of the false prophets is harmless, like a sheep. So, you cannot evaluate the outward fruit of their lives. It is the inner qualities that require careful scrutiny.

Many cult members have an outward appearance of righteousness, but inwardly are lacking in virtue.

Those who want to follow and serve Jesus will obviously want to bear the kind of fruit that He calls good.

Summary

The Holy Spirit is the source of fruitful living. He will bring about characteristics of godliness in each Christian's life. *Can you list the words describing the fruit God wants to bring about in your life?*

There are three keys to fruitful living

- Abiding in Christ
- Meditating on God's Word
- Living by Faith

Do you have a need to improve one or more of these areas of your life?

There are four Kinds of soil

- The Hard Path
- The Rocky Soil
- The Soil with Weeds
- The Good Soil

What kind of soil are you? What kind do you want to be?

Every plant gets pruned.

Has God been pruning you lately? Have you thanked Him for His discipline in your life?

You will know the tree by it's fruit.

Is God pleased with the fruit in your life?

Application

What has God spoken to you about in this study?

What do you think your need is?

What is it that God wants you to do?

How are you going to check-up on yourself?

**Be doers of the Word
and not hearers only,
deceiving yourself**

James 1:22