

Anne Graham Lotz: How You Can Bear Fruit for the Kingdom

Note: This is an edited transcript of a recent devotional message Anne gave to her staff at AnGeL Ministries after her breast cancer surgery and one week before her first chemo infusion.

My aim in ministry is not ministry. My aim is to bring God glory and to bear much fruit. In John 15, verse eight says, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

So if my purpose is to glorify God, then I can do that. If I'm traveling, I can do that. From on a platform, I can do that. If I'm in the pulpit, I can do that. If I'm doing an interview, I can do that. If I'm on a chemo bed, I can do that. My purpose is to bring Him glory, but in order to bear much fruit, to bring him even more glory, then it requires several things.

[My husband] Danny had apple trees and pear trees and fig trees. He didn't have any grapevines, but if he did—well, none of those things try hard to bear fruit. But fruit bearing, you just have to be whatever kind of tree it is, or what kind of vine it is, and then meet certain conditions and the fruit comes. The vine or the tree doesn't try hard, and it's not trying to pop the fruit out. It is who it is, and then it meets the conditions, and the fruit comes.

So the same thing is true with us. You don't have to try hard to bear fruit. You don't have to try to push it out, you pop it out, you just meet the conditions.

You Must Have a Connection to the Vine

The first condition is that you have a connection to the vine. And in chapter 15, verses four and five, He says, "remain in

me, as I also remain in you.” And “remain” is to abide or stick around. “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.”

In the storm—we’re going to lose some branches. The branch can lie there; it’s just going to die—there’ll be no fruit at all. But the branch has to be connected to the vine, and it’s an organic connection; it’s not organizational. So it’s not belonging to church; it’s not belonging to a ministry. It’s not doing Christian activities; it’s not having devotions. The connection has to be organic, which is why Jesus said, “You must be born again.”

And that’s the only way you can get connected to the vine, where you come by faith, which I did when I was 8 or 9 years of age—told Jesus I was sorry for my sin, asked Him to forgive me, come into my heart. and I was born again, received His Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the sap in the vine. Once I had that connection, then I’m organically attached, and the sap has access directly into my life. So to bear fruit, you must be connected to the vine.

You Must Be Cultivated

Second, you have to be cultivated, and cultivation requires pruning. Not long after my surgery, I decided we had to cut down my rosebushes, so my daughter and I went out, and I would clip and she would pull, I would clip and she would pull, and we cut them down. But the purpose of pruning, as I understand it, is when you do that, you’re forcing the connection between the branch and the vine to be enlarged so that more sap can get through. And when more sap comes through in the branch, that’s when you have more roses, you have more grapes, you have more apples, because the strength is focused in that part of the branch.

So pruning is necessary if you want more fruit than what you're getting. Last year, in February, I had the landscapers prune my rose bushes down to the nub. Now they just sawed it right down. And those rose bushes that went from one foot. They were probably six feet tall, and they were covered with blooms all spring, all summer. And so sometimes, God has to prune you back to what I call the nub, in order to produce much fruit.

And so pruning can be a hospital bed; pruning can be a loss of a job; pruning can be anything that's a cutaway. Pruning can be breast cancer, and the chemo treatments and the radiation that follows. And I feel like this is what God is showing me, that he's pruning me, and the gardener knows what he's doing. He knows exactly how to prune your plant. He knows exactly what to cut out, what to clip back, in order to make you as productive as your life can be, which is what you want because that's what brings Him glory. So you need to be cultivated.

You Must Be Cleansed

And the third thing is that you need to be cleansed. Plants as you know, get blight and disease. And sometimes they have to be cut back and cut out for that reason. For you and me, I think this has to do with confession of sin, and keeping short accounts and making sure that the sap of the Holy Spirit flow is unhindered through the branch. I give the illustration when we're growing up, there's a big bend in the driveway going up to the house, and the spring was beside the road. And that spring just flowed across the road. But in the wintertime, that water across the road would freeze and create a hazard. So Mother put a pipe in the spring, and a bucket under the pipe so that the water flowed through the pipe into the bucket and then down beside the road. And so it didn't go across the road, and the ice hazard was removed.

Once in a while, the water would start flowing across the road again, and we would see that the pipe had gotten clogged up.

So the spring, once again, was running across the road. And Mother would take a stick, and she'd run it through the pipe, and out would come a little pebble or a salamander or rotted leaf, and it would clear it, but then the water would start to flow again. It would fill up the bucket and go down beside the road.

If our lives are like the pipe, and the Holy Spirit is like the water that comes through, the living water, then sometimes there can be a blockage. And it can be a little hard pebble of unforgiveness or bitterness. It can be a slippery salamander of something that is nasty that we shouldn't be involved in, but we sort of indulge ourselves in. It can be a rotted leaf, something from the past, a memory, but you take the stick of the cross, you run it through, you bring that to the Lord, and you confess it and ask Him to remove it and to cleanse you. Because whatever it is is not worth the blockage of the Holy Spirit, because the blockage of the Holy Spirit is going to cost you the fruit and diminish the glory of God that you're seeking to give Him.

So just make sure that you are cleansed, and I know you're forgiven if you've been to the cross, but that's different than being cleansed every day so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be filled with the Spirit," that's a command, and the Holy Spirit is there, but we block His filling through those sins in our lives that we need to confess and remove. And then when we do that coupled with the cultivation, then the sap is full and free and available to bear much fruit.

There Must Be Communication

The fourth condition is communication. And this is one that isn't quite obvious; it should be, but so obvious that we miss it. But in John 15:7, he says, "If you remain in me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

So I think, *Well, Lord, ask what I wish? A new car: a new house, a new spouse. Or God, how about just delivering me from the situation I'm in? You know, if You say I could ask for anything and You'll give it to me, then I want You to take this away.*

But that's not what He's saying. I think He's saying, "if you remain in me and my words, if you ask me for more fruit, I'll give it to you." So once we're connected to the vine, once we're being cultivated, once we've made sure we're cleansed, then ask for much fruit, and He will give it to us.

And so that's what I'm doing. I can tell you: I know I'm connected to the vine. I know I'm being cultivated. I know he's pruning back, and I know I'll do my best to be cleansed and filled with the Spirit. And then I'm going to ask. And I have asked, I'm asking you all to ask with me that not only I will bear much fruit, but this ministry, in a way that we don't know right now.

I will tell you this. This is so interesting, the timing. You know, my book, *Just Give Me Jesus* came out when we started the revivals. I did not plan that; people thought it was such a clever marketing trick. I never planned that, I wrote that book, and then we started the revivals and named them the same. It helped the revivals, and it helped launch the book. It was No. 1 on the best-seller list for how many weeks. So now I'm writing a book on the Holy Spirit, and that should come out in October, which is when I finish all these treatments.

I'm just wondering if the Lord is just going to set me aside for a year. I have a lot of people interested in praying. I have a book launch, where I come out for the first time publicly and share some of this, but put the focus on who the Holy Spirit is. He's Jesus in us, and He can give you peace in the middle of the storm; He can give you much eternal fruit when you're all pruned back.

I believe God's timing is just perfect. When you look at things from His perspective, I think we have much fruit to come; and in the meantime, He'll give us things, whether it's the blogs that we write or the videos that we do, or other things that God gives us a privilege doing. There will be opportunities to serve Him in such a way that brings Him glory. And that's our aim. ... the aim is to bring Him glory, and we do it through those avenues. ... Our main purpose is to bring Him glory, and in order for that to be possible, we have to be connected to the vine; we have to be cultivated; we have to be cleansed; and we have to communicate with Him that our heart's desire is that He will be glorified in our lives and in our ministry.

So let me just pray and seal that. *So Lord Jesus, we thank You so much that the Father is the gardener, and we thank You for that. We thank You that You are the vine, and we are attached to You. We thank you for the dear Holy Spirit, the sap that flows in and through us because of all that you've done, and thank you that we're connected. Thank you for the cultivation, Lord, and I can honestly say it hurts to be pruned back, but Lord, we want it. It feels good to hurt in that way because we are very expectant that we're going to have much to come from this and You're going to be even more glorified so we look forward to seeing what You're doing.*

So we thank You for the promise that when we abide in You and Your words abide in us that we can ask whatever we want, Lord, in your name, and you'll grant it. So we're asking that you would give us much fruit that we might bring you more glory, and we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. {eo}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, *The Daniel Prayer*.

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