

How to Produce Divine Fruit

Jesus explicitly described what happens when His disciples fail to bear fruit. But in calling us to abide in Him—like branches to a vine—He also revealed the keys to yielding the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

It might surprise you to learn that receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit doesn't automatically result in the fruit of the Spirit being formed in our lives. One who has yielded his life more fully to the Holy Spirit in receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit will obviously have the divine enabling to develop more fruit, much fruit and fruit that remains. But how much fruit we bear has to do with how closely we abide in Christ.

Because fruit-bearing is a direct result of abiding in Christ, this means there are deeply spiritual and fruitful Christians who have never displayed evidence of having received the Pentecostal experience of Holy Spirit baptism. On the other hand, it is sadly true that there are Spirit-baptized Christians who have not developed the fruit of the Spirit to any degree in their lives through consciously abiding in Christ. Both cases prove the reality that fruitfulness is not a result of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit but is a result of abiding in Christ.

It remains, then, that the key to the quantity and quality of fruitfulness in our lives is abiding in Christ, the Vine, in obedience to His commands. Let's explore this abiding principle together.

We Bear Fruit by Abiding

Perry Brewster makes this observation regarding fruit-bearing Christians in his book *Pentecostal Doctrine*: "Our likeness to Christ is definitely not something applied from without, as a cosmetic transformation produced by a formula of some

religious make-up department. It is a genuine likeness produced by an intimate relationship with Him. Christ's own analogy of the vine and the branches upholds this (John 15:1). The branches are not merely vinelike; they are a part of the vine. Likewise the fruit does not merely resemble grapes, but possesses their inherent structure and taste."

Fruitfulness is the principal purpose for the existence of a tree. Jesus taught His disciples that fruitfulness was His purpose for them as well. He told them, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). In this great teaching, Jesus called Himself "the true vine" and His Father "the vinedresser" (v. 1). He called the disciples "branches" (v. 5) and told them to abide in Him so they could bring forth fruit (v. 4). He warned them, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He [the Father] takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (v. 2).

Jesus cursed the fig tree because it did not bring forth fruit, and in the morning the disciples found the tree had died (Matt. 21:18-20). Does He not have the right to expect to find fruit on His tree of life in His garden? Thus, fruitfulness is a result of a relationship that is carefully cultivated. Jesus taught His disciples they could only be fruitful by learning to abide in Him.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

It is no accident that the Word calls the third Person of the Godhead the *Holy Spirit*. Holiness characterizes His divine nature. One of the supreme mandates of the Holy Spirit is to impart the holiness of God to us, to change us from glory to glory, giving us His divine nature and His character. As the Spirit works in each believer, He develops within us His character, which is identified by the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 describes this fruit as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Ephesians 5:9 says the “fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.” And Romans 6:22 says, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”

I used to think the fruit of the Spirit was produced just like the gifts are: by the Holy Spirit. But then I realized it is not the Spirit Himself who bears the fruit but the Christ-life within us that produces the fruit of godly character in us. The Holy Spirit produces the Christ-life in us as we obey Him, causing the holiness and divine nature of our Lord Jesus to be manifest through us.

The fruit of the Spirit, then, is the true character of the Christian life that replaces the self-life, or *old man*, as the Scriptures label our sin nature. It is the fruit of the Tree of Life, Christ, who lives in the garden of our spirits.

Fruit Can Be Seen

The more one abides in Christ—and is therefore filled with the Holy Spirit—the greater the manifestation of the Spirit’s fruit in that person’s life and work. Only when a believer is full of the Holy Spirit, continually yielding to Him, can he exhibit the full fruition of Christian virtues.

When Christ is formed in the believer through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, true Christlike character will be as natural a result as pears growing on a pear tree. The fruit of the Spirit is produced automatically when we are yielded to the Holy Spirit and walking in obedience to Him.

Spirit-filled men and women can be distinguished by their fruit in the same way that a carnal person can be identified by fleshly works. If we are abiding in Christ, the fruit of the Spirit will be manifest in our lives; it cannot be hidden.

So also are the works of the flesh manifest in one who is not abiding in Christ. A carnal person is one who is not governed by the indwelling Spirit of God. This egocentric, self-centered life manifests the works of the flesh, while a Christ-centered life will manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

Works of the Flesh vs. Fruit of the Spirit

The principle of fruit-bearing is literally a *life* principle. Life develops from a life source; it cannot be manufactured. Fruit is not made; it grows as the requirements of the life principle are met. Therefore, fruit is born in our lives as we are connected to our life source, which is Christ.

In contrast, the works of the flesh as described in the Scriptures are a negative result of human effort without the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:19-23 describes the striking contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

The early 20th-century Methodist minister Samuel Chadwick referred to this passage in his book *The Way to Pentecost*: "Work belongs to the workshop; fruit belongs to the garden. One comes from the ingenuity of the factory; the other is the silent growth of an abounding life. The factory operates with dead stuff; the garden cultivates a living force to their appointed end. Works are always in the realm of dead things. Every building is built out of dead material ... Fruit does not come of man's labor. It requires his diligence, but it is neither his invention nor his product. He does not make the flowers. No skill of his brings the golden harvest of the fields or the lush fruit of the trees. When man has done all he can do, then God begins and life proceeds. Fruit is God's work. The phrase 'fruit of the Spirit' assigns the graces of the Christian character to their proper source. They are not of man's producing."

The Scriptures clearly teach the life principle involved in bearing fruit. The flesh can produce nothing but evil works,

while the Holy Spirit produces Christ-life fruit. The former requires self-effort and results in death; the latter requires obedience to the Holy Spirit and produces life and peace.

Not Our Work

Suppose we were to ask a branch on a grapevine, “How do you grow luscious fruit?” If the branch could talk, it probably would say, “I don’t know. I don’t grow any of it; I just bear it. If you cut me away from this vine, I will just wither away and become useless.”

Just as without the vine the branch can produce nothing, so it is in our Christian lives. If we strain to work to produce the fruit of the Spirit ourselves, we will find ourselves fruitless and frustrated. But if we abide in Christ, maintaining a close, obedient, dependent relationship with Him, the Holy Spirit can work in us, creating and producing the fruit of the Spirit.

This doesn’t mean we instantly become mature, bearing all the fruit of the Spirit fully and immediately. Even after fruit appears on the tree, it takes time—during which the elements of wind and rain and even storms bring the fruit to maturity. This desired maturity is impossible without our continually abiding in the Vine.

Producing Fruit

How, then, does the Holy Spirit work in our lives to produce the fruit of a Christ-life character? Allow me to highlight at least five ways.

- 1. Through God’s Word.** The psalmist described the “blessed man” as a tree planted by the river of water that yields its fruit in its season (Ps. 1:3). He declares of this fruitful life that “his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (v. 2). The place we give the Word of God in our lives will determine our degree of

fruitfulness.

For example, I knew a woman who was a faithful reader of the Word, and her life evidenced it by the fruit she was bearing. But for some reason she neglected her study of the Word for three or four days, and she began to be irritable and impatient. Her little 4-year-old daughter observed her mother's reactions for a day and then said to her, "Mother, why don't you get into the Word?" That 4-year-old understood this principle of abiding in the Word better than most of us. As we learn to abide in the true Vine, His life flows into us, producing the fruit of the Spirit to the Father's glory and to the blessing of others.

2. Through meditation. David doesn't say this blessed man simply reads the Word. He meditates on it as well. The word *selah*, found throughout the Psalms, means "to meditate, to stop and think about what has been said." A word picture of *selah* is the cow chewing her cud after eating to assimilate all she has swallowed.

As we read and meditate on the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit can convince us of sin that needs to be purged and can direct us to God's standard of holiness and righteousness for our lives. Apart from applying the Word of God, there can be no lasting spiritual growth and no fruit-bearing in our lives.

3. Through spiritual disciplines. Jesus said that abiding in Him was a prerequisite for bearing fruit; therefore we need to give ourselves to spiritual disciplines in our lives that will help cultivate this abiding relationship. These disciplines include not only giving ourselves to searching the Word of God, but also hearing the Word via anointed preaching, as well as spending much time in prayer and worship in the Spirit. These help us feed our inner man on Christ's life and help grace us in our relationship with Him. Fellowship with other believers is also an important

spiritual discipline because it allows us to commune with Christ and to participate in His life indirectly through each other.

4. Through obedience. *Obedience* is almost an obsolete word in Christendom. We hear much about faith but so little about obedience. But Jesus said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (John 15:10).

The secret to abiding in Christ is to believe in our spirits, obey in our souls and yield our flesh to the power of the Holy Spirit. This abiding obedience involves every aspect of our person. Obedience brings maturity and develops the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

5. Through pruning. If we do not abide in Christ, we cannot bear fruit and, according to Jesus' teaching, such believers will be cast away (v. 6). If a branch does bear fruit, the requirement made of the fruitless branch is that it endure pruning. Listen again to Jesus' words: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He [the Father] takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (v. 2).

Leaves and foliage can be very beautiful. In the spring I can look out in the yard and the trees are verdant, luscious and lively. However, it is only by pruning that such foliage continues to flourish. The primary purpose of pruning a branch is to remove the wood that produced fruit in the last season in order to force the vine to grow new wood that will produce new fruit in this new season. God does not perpetuate the old; He prunes to force new growth.

If we have experienced some pruning in our lives, it is not because God is mad at us or that there is necessarily sin in our lives. It is that the Father is pleased we are bearing fruit, and He knows that to increase the quality and quantity of that fruit, we need to be pruned.

Abiding in the Vine

If abiding is the primary condition God sets before us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, then why do we seek to be fruitful in other ways? Why is it that the simplicity of God's way is always the way that seems so difficult for the flesh? It is, according to the Scriptures, because our spirits and our flesh are at war. Our flesh opposes the desire of the Holy Spirit to make us holy because it does not want to die.

Yet as we cultivate a fruitful relationship in Christ by spending time reading and meditating on God's Word and in prayer, the Holy Spirit continually reveals truth to us. Then, as we walk in obedience to that truth instead of obeying our fleshly desires, the Holy Spirit transforms us and we begin to bring forth His fruit by the power of the Spirit.

Every believer must have an unbroken relationship with Christ sustained by obedience. In unwavering faith in what Christ has done, we must acknowledge Him as the Vine and His Father as the "Husbandman," the divine Pruner.

God has preordained, foreordained and predestined us to bear fruit. As we consciously and continuously fellowship—abide—with our Lord, we will become fruit-bearing trees. Let us therefore be diligent to yield to the Holy Spirit, obey His commands and walk in His will so we may be fruitful.

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Fuchsia Pickett explains how to tap into God's divine purpose for your life at