

How to Keep Hard Times From Destroying Your Intimacy With Jesus

The Bible talks about bearing good fruit and how that is God's purpose for our lives. For example, in John 15:5 (AMP), Jesus says, "I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing."

And Psalm 1:3 says that the person who follows God's ways is "like a tree firmly planted [and fed] by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season; Its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers [and comes to maturity]."

When we understand what it means to bear good fruit, then we can fulfill our destiny as ambassadors of Christ in this world (2 Cor. 5:20). There are two ways this happens: by working with the Holy Spirit to develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23) and by displaying that fruit as we help others.

The Fruit of Real Christianity

Many people want the "fruit" of more money, more opportunities in their career, more material possessions or to be more well known. But this kind of fruit is not what they are really hungering for, because it won't fulfill them or make them permanently happy and peaceful.

We need to go deeper than that! The good fruit God wants us to have in our lives is peace, joy and mental and emotional stability when the storms of life come. And the Bible teaches that we can grow to the point where we are so deeply planted

in the love of Christ that when the storms of life come, we still bear good fruit! (See Ps. 1:1-3 and Eph. 3:16-19.)

The real fruit of Christianity is seen in your life when you can bear good fruit when hard times come—and we all have difficulties in life. It may be an unexpected illness, the stress of financial debt, or being betrayed by someone you thought you could trust. God wants us to be peaceful under pressure and have a good attitude in the midst of pain because when others see us behaving differently, they'll want to know why we can be that way and want to have what we have, too!

What a Real Christian Lives Like

Colossians 3:12-15 gives us a detailed list of genuine, acceptable Christian behavior, and it should be our goal to live this way every day. Verse 12 says that “as God’s own chosen people, who are holy [set apart, sanctified for His purpose] and well-beloved [by God Himself],” we should “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience [which has the power to endure whatever injustice or unpleasantness comes, with good temper.”

Now, I want to say here that we can’t just live this way in our own strength, without God. I remember when I would decide in the morning: “I’m going to be nice to everyone today!” and I succeeded while I was home alone. But when the people came home, that’s when I had trouble with my attitude.

I had to pray for God to help me put on the right attitude and mindset so I could treat others with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, “which has the power to endure whatever injustice or unpleasantness comes, with good temper” (2 Cor. 3:12b). I had to put my faith in God to give me His grace—His strength to do what I could never do in my own effort—believing that He would do it because of who I am in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, 21).

Reaching the Goal

These verses in Colossians should be our No. 1 goal as believers in Christ. As new creations in Christ, saved by faith, we have a desire to do good things. And as we grow in our relationship with Him, we learn new ways to act and respond to others.

I know from personal experience that this is not always easy. It won't always feel good to obey God, and you may have to sacrifice something to do it. It can seem unfair, but when we choose to trust God and do what He tells us to do no matter how we feel about it, what we think about it or what others think we should do, then we'll have the amazing life Jesus died for us to have!

We don't have to settle for anything less than God's best for us. Make a decision today to trust God to change you and help you do what's right in every situation. Remember John 15:16b, which says He has chosen you and "appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting" at all times of your life!