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## What is the Fruit of Your Life?

**Matthew 12:33:** (NASB) *Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.*

We all have heard analogies regarding fruit... "That was a fruitful trip." "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." "What a fruitcake!" "We are hoping the experience bears fruit." "Please, with a cherry on top!" "He went bananas!" "One bad apple spoils the whole bunch!" You get the idea! Fruit gives us a sensible and understandable way to define life - and it's tasty too! Not surprisingly, fruit is a centerpiece of New Testament teaching, so let's take a look!

First of all, it's all about fruit!

**John 15:1-2:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.*

What does this really mean? It has the meaning of "taking up," and not "taking away."

**Removes:** (KJV = "taketh away") Strong's #142 *airw airo ah'-ee-ro 1) to raise up, elevate, lift up 1a) to raise from the ground, take up: stones 2) to take upon one's self and carry what has been raised up, to bear 3) to bear away what has been raised, carry off*

**A couple of examples:**

**Matthew 15:37:** *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they **took up <142>** of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.*

**Matthew 16:24:** *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and **take up <142>** his cross, and follow me.*

Perhaps the idea of this is not *removal* but instead *revival*. After all, the text is talking about branches *in* Jesus.

(Source: *The Secrets of the Vine*, Bruce Wilkinson, a vinedresser) Page 34: New branches have a natural tendency to trail down and grow along the ground. But they don't bear fruit down there. When branches grow along the ground the leaves get coated in dust. When it rains they get muddied and mildewed. The branch becomes sick and useless. ...These branches are much too valuable to cut off. We go through the vineyard with a bucket of water looking for these branches. We lift them up and wash them off. Then we wrap them around the trellis or tie them up. Pretty soon they're thriving.

The vinedresser literally picks them up and cleans them off. Perhaps that is what Jesus is telling us - the branches that do not bear fruit are lifted up so that they can be cleaned and bear fruit.

**FIRST LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: TO BE IN CHRIST IS TO BE WILLING TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF YOUR GROWTH - TO DEFY GRAVITY FOR THE SAKE OF SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS!**

**John 15:3:** (NASB) *you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

Typically we look to the earthly ambitions and tendencies, but we need to look up - heavenward - to see what the Lord requires of us and how we can please Him.

**Ephesians 4:13-15:** (NASB) *<sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ,***

**Shouldn't being fruitful be easier once we are in Christ?**

**Galatians 5:13-17:** Jesus is the greatest symbol of love for our fellow man that ever lived. Why would we bite and devour one another if we are Christians? So many of us fail to act Christ-like. Just because we are in Christ and called to freedom does not mean we are exempt from the desires and choices of the flesh. "Being fruitful in Christ" is making the daily choice to put our own will away and put on the will of Christ.

Our fruit has to really be developed - we can't just hang it on the outside like an ornament and pretend to be religious so we can look good. That is not what the Lord is looking for.

**Galatians 5:19-21:** The fact that we are informed of all these things warns us of their possibilities in our lives. Some of these “fruits” of darkness seem far less ominous than others. For example, *disputes* and *envy* do not seem as bad as *immorality* and *idolatry*, yet all can keep us out of the kingdom. We have to watch for the little insidious things as well as the obvious.

**SECOND LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS IS AN “ALL IN” ENDEAVOR. WE CANNOT “CHERRY PICK” THE WORKS OF DARKNESS THAT “AREN’T SO BAD” AND EXPECT TO BE FRUITFUL!**

**Now, onto the business of the specifics of spiritual fruit!** Galatians 5:22-26: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.*



**Observations about the statement the fruit of the Spirit:**

- This fruit is compared to *the deeds of the flesh* in Galatians 5:19.
- Fruit is a *result*. It is the culmination of whatever tending, care and pruning has been put into the tree. It is not where you start but is the harvest. What has my life produced to this point?
- “Fruit” is singular, implying all of these characteristics which are products of the spirit are needed to come together to develop each individual Christian. If your spirit is fruitful, you will have all nine fruits described.
- For the true Christian, this fruit is a direct result of the power of God working in your life and through your circumstances.
- *Against such there is no law* implies an invitation to produce this fruit in bushes!

**THIRD LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS IS A SINGLE MINDED OBJECTIVE - ONE FRUIT WITH MANY ASPECTS.**

Tracking our growth comes through being able to acknowledge, observe and measure the many aspects of Christian fruit.

 **The head is the source, *How to Prune Grape Vines, Oregon State University***

- *So, we have the head area here. This is where we want our canes that we keep to originate from to keep the form. If we picked one of these canes down here to lie down, we have this area that's not being utilized. The objective is to fill the linear footage of the wire so there's a bud every four inches in an ideal world. If we lay this one down here, we have this area where there are potentially no buds and we're not using it.*

Even though the person speaking is talking about the pruning of literal vines, he emphasizes the head is the source! What a great metaphor Jesus provided for us. If we grow out of Christ, we are growing in the right place! We can be pruned and our lives are branches bearing lots of fruit. Position yourself to be receptive to God's pruning. In a real grapevine, the branches have to be horizontal to the ground in order to produce fruit. It is not the way they would naturally grow. The lesson for us is humility.

Let's take a deeper look at Love, Joy, Peace and Patience/Longsuffering:

The selfless (“agape”) love: What effect should it have on our daily life?

Love makes us honorable: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Love gives meaning to our giving: 1 Corinthians 13:3

Love is patient, kind, not envious and is humble: 1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is always appropriate, unselfish, understanding and unassuming: 1 Corinthians 13:5

Love takes no pleasure in sin, rather its pleasure is in truth: 1 Corinthians 13:6

Love is faithful: 1 Corinthians 13:7

Love never fails: 1 Corinthians 13:8

Love is the highest form of Christian expression: John 15:12-13:

One of the secrets of love is its purpose - to help us embrace the Gospel and become like Christ! Philippians 1:9-11: If you aren't focusing on this as a Christian, where is your focus? We are to be engaged for the benefit of others.

Romans 12:9: (NASB) *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*

**FOURTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: TO BE SPIRITUALLY FRUITFUL IS TO BE ENGAGED FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS, DRIVEN BY THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF LOVE AND SALVATION.**

**Joy:** Strong's #5479, chara (khar-ah'); cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight

**The proclamation of joy:** Luke 2:6-14: (KJV) <sup>6</sup>And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. <sup>7</sup>And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

**Cause for personal joy...** <sup>8</sup>And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. <sup>10</sup>And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great **joy <5479>**, which shall be to all people. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

**Cause for joy throughout the world and heaven!** <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, <sup>14</sup>Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

**The challenge of living in joy:** Nehemiah 8:6-10: Sometimes it becomes challenging to find joy when our own actions have been contrary to that which is right. Get up and find that directional motivation that keeps you moving forward. <sup>10</sup>Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

**The joy of Jesus applied:** John 15:11: These things have I spoken unto you, that my **joy <5479>** might remain in you, and that your **joy <5479>** might be full.

John 17:13: And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my **joy <5479>** fulfilled in themselves.

**The challenge of living in joy:** James 1:2-4: (NRSV) <sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, **consider it nothing but joy**, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; <sup>4</sup>and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

**FIFTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: TO BE SPIRITUALLY FRUITFUL IS TO DEVELOP THE PRINCIPLE OF JOY THE GOSPEL BRINGS, EVEN WHEN THE OUTSIDE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE CONTRARY.**

## LOVE + JOY = PEACE

**Peace:** Strong's #1515, eirene; peace (literally or figuratively); by implication, prosperity

**True peace always originates with God:** Luke 2:14: This describes the end result of Jesus being born.

Colossians 3:14-17: Once clothed with love, we have all things in harmony, which can only bring joy! So, what does this combination produce...? <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, (peace is the byproduct of developing love and joy) to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



To let the peace of God rule is to accept it as a gift and not as something we develop. We develop love from within, we develop joy from within, but we accept God’s peace through Jesus from above.

**The challenge of living in peace:** John 14:27: *Peace <1515> I leave with you, my peace <1515> I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

Are we willing to accept the peace of Jesus, especially when our lives are tumultuous?

We have to be willing to be pruned. God is the master at pulling things away from us we really do not need so that our lives can produce what we *do* need.

Romans 5:1-5: Accepting this peace creates a foundation for accepting whatever may come our way. Peace is internally accepting that God will overrule for our eternal best benefit. Regardless of your circumstances, your life is now focused on something higher than your surroundings. Philippians 4:4-7

**SIXTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: TO BE SPIRITUALLY FRUITFUL IS TO ACCEPT THE LEVELING AND PROTECTING POWER OF GOD’S PEACE THROUGH JESUS INTO OUR HEARTS AS IT BECOMES MANIFEST THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE AND JOY AS A RESULT OF THE GOSPEL.**

If we don’t show what we know, we probably aren’t growing! Christian fruitfulness comes as a positive result of pruning and not because we are so good.

**The pattern of the longsuffering (patience) of God:** Romans 9:20-24: God’s longsuffering is for the purpose of showing the world His love and plan. **The pattern of the longsuffering of Jesus:** Hebrews 5:7-10: Jesus’ longsuffering was for the purpose of fulfilling God’s love and plan for the world of mankind. Luke 21:19: Our longsuffering is for the purpose of shaping our characters into a Christ-like format. Psalms 27:13-14: We would despair if we did not believe that producing fruit was for our eternal good and the eternal salvation of the world. 1 Peter 1:6-9: **Longsuffering from our perspective:** *<sup>8</sup>and though you have not seen him, you love him, and though you do not see him now, but believe in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup>obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

On what do we focus? If we focus on the peace of God and what we are learning through the trials, then the trial becomes the external thing happening around us while on the inside it is the peace of God and fruitfulness. It is like being in the water but not getting wet!

James 1:4: (NASB) *And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

More fruit to come another day!

*So, what is the fruit of your life?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki!) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*