



How Fruitful is Your Life?

Psalms 1:3: (NASB) *He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

What is the meaning of life? That is one of those questions that is often asked - both in a serious and well meaning way as well as in a more humorous way... Rather than ask that exact question today, we are asking a more direct question - how fruitful is your life? This is one of those - "oh no, I have to look in the mirror!" moments, where we need to really figure out what we are about. Fortunately, the Bible gives us a lot of guidance as to what kind of fruit we should look for and what kind of results we should avoid. Stay with us as we get up close and personal with our lives - How fruitful is your life?



Questions for consideration:

1. Why fruit?

2. What fruit?

1. Why fruit?

Because it paints an unmistakable picture:

Matthew 3:7-10: (NASB) *⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

John is being forceful and exposing that the Pharisees began to take on a superior attitude. John is telling them not to rest upon the laurels that they were sons of Abraham; rather, bare good fruit - earn the title of "son of Abraham."

Good fruitful trees need sun, water, pruning, weeding and other trees. Bees and pollen reap fruit from the trees. Trees that aren't bearing fruit have drought, weeds, bugs, and pollution. The fruitfulness of a tree is subject to a positive environment as well as a negative environment.



Psalms 1:1-3: (NASB) *¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

This is one of our favorite scriptures because it shows a process:

walk in the counsel of the wicked... walking the wrong way.



stand in the path of sinners...no longer having the opportunity to move forward - just standing in the path of sinners.

in the seat of scoffers...the seat should be in meditation on the Lord instead.

The picture of a fruit tree here is like a man in the right environment.



Observations about a fruitful life:

- Don't follow after the wicked, sinners and scoffers;
- Delight in the law of God;
- This produces a life that is not only well-watered (by receiving that which is good), but is thoroughly bountiful as well. The point of a fruit tree is to bear fruit!

Matthew 12:33-35: (NASB) ³³*"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. ³⁴"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.*

What kind of words are we saying? Ask: What is going into my heart to produce what is coming out of my mouth?



2. What fruit?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

A fruitful life is a very worthwhile life. For the Christian, our fruitfulness/success is defined by this list in Galatians. We want to live to please God and also be fruitful towards our fellow man.

The statement "the fruit of the spirit" signifies a number of things:



This "*fruit is*" compared to the "*works of the flesh*" in verse 19;



Fruit is a result - it is the culmination of whatever tending and care and pruning has been put into the tree;



"Fruit" is singular, implying all of these characteristics that are products of the spirit are needed to come together to develop each individual Christian;



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 bushels!



All of this is great... but what happens when life happens? What happens when things go wrong, when tragedy strikes, when plans don't work out, we lose our jobs, get divorced, when unforeseen events turn the tide - what happens then?

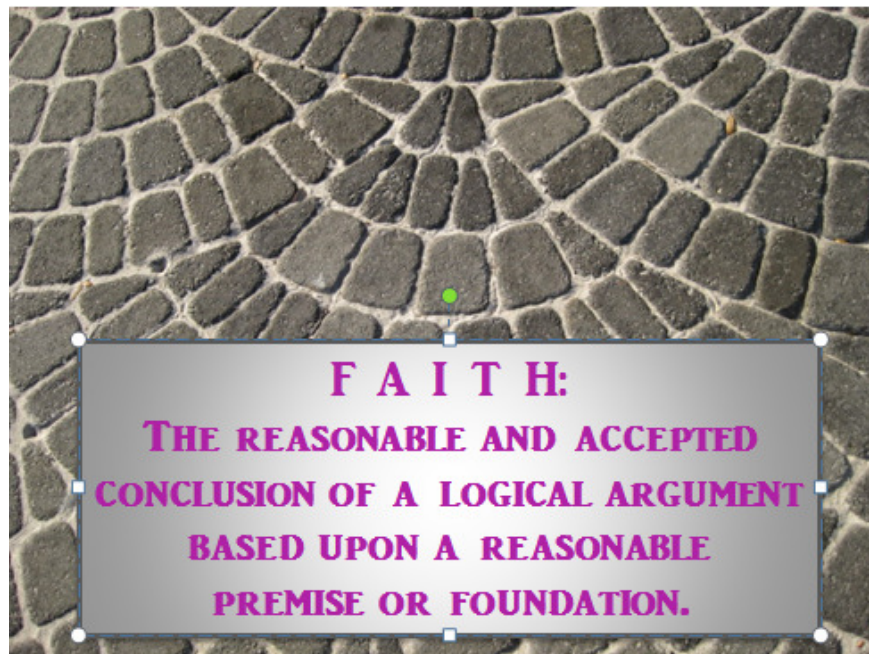
Let's look at an example of a man who had such things happen:

 W. Mitchell, "Life Happens," www.PersonalGrowthCourses.net

When life happens, faith is tested and must play a major role in how we deal with it.

Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) ²*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus is our focus. When life happens, we should immediately focus on Jesus.



James 2:24-26: (NASB) ²⁴*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.* ²⁵*In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?* ²⁶*For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

Faith requires action!

Jude 1:3: (KJV) *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

Earnestly contend for faith in its purest form. That's how we put into practice that which is needed to get us through the tragedies in life.

1 Peter 5:7-9: (NASB) ⁷*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.* ⁸*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* ⁹*But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*



"Take the course opposite to custom and you will almost always do well."

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau



FAITH:
GIVES US PERSPECTIVE TO HANDLE
THINGS BIGGER THAN US.

One other example of great faith: ...this story already in progress...

Daniel 3:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸"But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

They held true to God and their response shows us what faith in action is all about when faced with the difficulties, challenges and decisions of daily life. Daniel's friends were confident God *could* deliver them from the fire; and they still wouldn't budge even if God decided *not* to deliver them. This is an example of faith in action.

If you are a Christian and life happens, FIND FAITH FIRST!



W. Mitchell, "Obstacles are for Success,"
www.PersonalGrowthCourses.net

- Use obstacles to learn a new way to do something;
- You don't need a big tragedy to learn big lessons - we all have big things happen in our lives.

Patience: Patience is also called "longsuffering," which implies you can handle something for an extended period of time.

Luke 21:19: (KJV) *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

There are a lot of different ways to lead a fruitful life - even not as a Christian. Specifically here we are talking about Christian guidelines that should take us to a higher level.

Sometimes when faced with obstacles we need to do this: Ready! Aim!! Fire!!! But instead we do this: Ready! **Fire!!** Aim!!! We forget to take the time to find where we are and where the target is! Sometimes in the anxiety of the moment, we forget to ask God for His will, and then to have the patience to wait on Him for the answer! We just forget. Pause, consider, and then react.



Psalms 27:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* ¹⁴*Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*

1 Peter 4:12-13: (NASB) ¹²*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;* ¹³*but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*

How hard is it to rejoice in difficulty?

Romans 5:1-5: (NASB) ¹*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ²*through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.* ³*And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;* ⁴*and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;* ⁵*and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*



"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb. - Winston Churchill

The glory and the joy is in the climb, and it takes patience.

Self-control:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (NASB) ²⁴*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.* ²⁵*Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* ²⁶*Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;* ²⁷*but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

Self-discipline is critical in being able to accomplish a fruitful Christian life.

2 Peter 1:4-9: (NASB) ⁴*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.* ⁵*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,* ⁶*and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,* ⁷*and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.* ⁸*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁹*For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*

God has given us magnificent and precious promises. We need these to be partakers of the divine nature. We can hold onto these promises to engage our faith and give us the perseverance necessary to get through our lives. It takes



self-control! God doesn't give us promises that feed our flesh, but rather our spirit.

W. Mitchell, "His New Face," www.PersonalGrowthCourses.net

- It's not what happens to you, it's what you do about it..."
- "I had no idea what I looked like..."

Joy: Joy is found on the inside and works its way out rather than the other way around.

Gentleness:

James 1:19-24: (NASB) ¹⁹*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;* ²⁰*for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* ²¹*Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.* ²²*But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.* ²³*For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;* ²⁴*for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.*

Gentleness is a way to combat our feelings of frustration. We want to put our lives in perspective. Sometimes we see around us the Gospel being diluted with social favorites rather than spiritual fervor. Joy and gentleness are good ways to deal with this and lead by example.

W. Mitchell, "I am Responsible," www.PersonalGrowthCourses.net

- You have a lot to look forward to if you keep looking forward;
- A lot of people have their scars on the inside and are walking around in mental wheelchairs;
- If I spend my life looking for the villain for somebody to blame for what happened to me, then I'm always waiting for somebody to make the good stuff happen too.

Kindness: Kindness is defined as moral excellence, integrity.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34: (KJV) ³³*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.* ³⁴*Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

Ephesians 4:32: *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*



"I expect to pass through this life but once. If there is any kindness or any good thing I can do to my fellow-beings, let me do it now. I shall not pass this way again."
- William Penn




Colossians 3:12-13: (NASB) ¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Goodness:

Ephesians 5:8-13: (NASB) ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

What a positive impact if we can have on those around us if we can walk in goodness, righteousness and truth! We have to learn what is pleasing to God.

Romans 15:13-14: (NASB) ¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

 The Dash, by Linda Ellis, <http://www.lindaellis.net/>

Peace: It is a challenge to live in peace:

John 14:27: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Remember, this was the night before he was tortured and crucified.

Romans 5:1-5: (NASB) ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Philippians 4:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



Look to Jesus for strength and know that we can get through these experiences. We have the tools to live fruitfully in a difficult environment.

John 13:17: (KJV) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.


"Peace Like a River," Veggie Tales

"When we are unable to find tranquility within ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere."
- La Rochefoucauld, François VI





Love: The selfless and charitable kind that gives without thought of giving back.

John 15:12-13: (ASV) ¹²*This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.* ¹³*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

John 21:15-17: (NRSV) ¹⁵*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."* ¹⁶*A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."* ¹⁷*He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

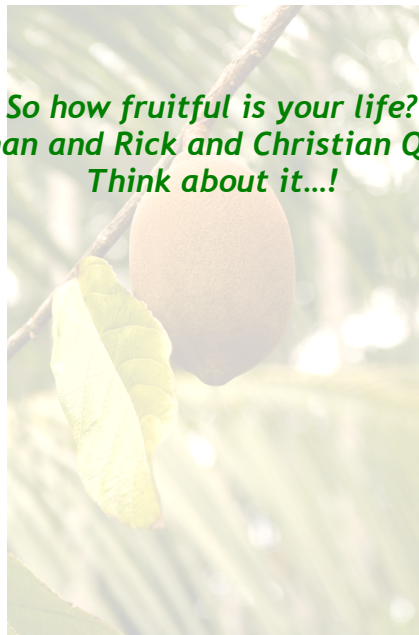
Too often we settle for the brotherly, give-and-take kind of love. That's good, but we as Christians are to rise above to a higher kind of selfless love.



" Will someone else's life be
brighter tomorrow because of
what you have done today?"
- William Arthur Ward

This quote underlines the necessity of us leading a fruitful life right now. Let's look at our lives and look at the fruit of the Spirit for guidelines for us to be Christians in the fullest sense.

*So how fruitful is your life?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*





For Your Continued Study:

We ran out of time! Here are additional Scriptures for your consideration:

The challenge of living in joy:

James 1:2-4: (NASB) ²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4: (NASB) ¹Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ²that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

Seeing trial and challenge in the context of the big picture:

Hebrews 12:2-3: (KJV) ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

A final text on joy:

Nehemiah 8:10: (NASB) ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Love:

Philippians 1:9-11: (NASB) ⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Romans 12:9-21: (NASB) ⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰"But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.