



LEARNING TO BEAR FRUIT

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LEARNING TO BEAR
FRUIT

A study guide
On
How to become
A
Productive Christian

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Principles of Bearing Fruit

As I have been studying the various concepts and scriptures related to bearing fruit, I have become aware of four structures for guiding us in that process. Each of these structures, or principles, provides insight and important guidelines for us to follow if we truly desire to be effective in producing much good fruit.

Grafting Principle - Being restored (Ro 11:17-24)

In this principle we learn of the need to be reconnected to the true source of life. We are what Paul calls “wild olives” (vs 17). Left to ourselves we are limited to what we can produce, if anything. We are dependent on our own root systems and the winds of chance. We are wild, drawing from whatever resources may come along, good or bad. We are without help to develop better fruit if any fruit. We need a better source of nourishment, a better support system.

Status – There is a chance of being productive. But it will require being separated from our root system and grafted into a mature and stronger tree. This grafting provides us with access to life and resources not possible in our former setting. Without grafting we like the wild olive tree in the passage, alone and with no hope of growing and becoming productive on our own.

Process – Grafting is not simple; it involves being cut off from the past and being connected to something totally new. For this to work, one part is removed from its current environment and life,

and placed in a different environment. It requires the help of one who is skilled in the process. The Bible uses the idea of being crucified to the past and resurrected into a new life. Grafting is a drastic step, but essential. It helps us understand the need to completely separate ourselves from what is past, if we are to enjoy the benefits that God has to offer.

Fruit – At this point in the grafting process, there is no fruit being produced. What is being created is the possibility of producing fruit, or much better fruit. In the past, the branch may have produced small, poor quality fruit. Wild trees generally do not produce as well as those that are cultivated and cared for. Grafting opens the door to greater production and a better fruit. Paul uses the term “adoption” (Ro 8:23) as another way of describing this process. Before being grafted, we had no rights, no hope of a fruitful life. We were members of the wrong family, a wild family. Now we have access to the resources of God’s family.

God Factor – While we may desire to become fruitful, until we are connected to the tree we remain as we are, a wild tree. We cannot sever ourselves from our life (our roots) and connect ourselves to God’s family (tree) on our own. Jesus made this possible and calls us all to make a decision that will allow God to act. When we confess and repent, then God cuts us free from our past and connects us to his future. This is the

grafting process. God is the gardener who sees the possibility and takes the necessary action to move us from our wild state into his tree in his garden. The door has been opened to the possibility of producing fruit.

Vine Principle – Being connected to the source (Jn 15)

In this principle we are made aware that we are not the source of producing fruit, nor do we have the ability to improve the quality and quantity of the fruit. We are also alerted to the problem of focus. We tend to be concerned about too many things, many of which are unimportant and detract from our ability to produce. We need to be pruned and focus our life on key areas to be productive. To do this we need someone to guide us, or prune our lives. This means that our dependence is on the gardener, (God), to be effective in the production of fruit.

Status – There is a vine to which the branches are attached. They draw nourishment and life from the vine. In that same way, our life and strength is dependent on this connection to draw needed resources from it and be able to produce fruit. Also if there are too many branches, or old habits, then production is diminished. These are the things of this world that we hang on to or habits that we need to change. We need pruning.

Process – On the vine, the goal is to focus the fruit production in specific locations for more effective results. This involves the complete removal of

unproductive branches and pruning back the growth from the previous year. Likewise, to be effective spiritually we need to become focused, to set aside anything that hinders (He 12:1) or distracts from what we are doing. It means setting aside worldly desires to focus on our relationship with Christ.

We are involved in producing an abundance of fruit which symbolizes the abundance of life that is found in God. When we are truly connected to God, others see the evidence of this connection and learn that it is available for them to experience and enjoy. This fruit flows from the life that is within us and bears fruit that others can see and enjoy.

Fruit – The vine produces fruit in a bunch or a cluster. Similarly, the list provided by Paul of the fruit of the Spirit defines how the Christian life works. The fruit of the spirit, (containing nine parts but only one bunch), is connected to the same supporting structure (Ga 5:22-23). Peter also gives us a list designed to help in our productivity as Christians (2 Pe 1:5). Other lists are found in James 3:17 and Ephesians 5:9.

God factor – For this type of fruit-bearing to work, we must clearly understand our need to be fully dependent on the gardener, who is God. We are not able to prune ourselves nor do we possess the roots or access to resources that will make it

possible to produce even one good fruit. The production of fruit is dependent on the quality of our relationship to God. God helps us shed what is not needed so we can focus on living in and through God.

The Tree Principle – Finding the depth to live (Luke 13:6-8)

In this principle we are involved in repetitive spiritual reproduction using the same branches, or same resources, to produce a crop year after year. We are aware of our need for constant renewal and connection to adequate sources of water and fertilizer. The more years we are expected to reproduce, the greater the need for these. This is what David meant when he said a wise man is like a tree planted by streams of water (Ps 1:3). This idea is also part of statements made by Jeremiah (Je 17:8) and Ezekiel (Ex 47:12), and is part of the description of the tree of life in Revelation (22:2). Obviously God is that river and the depth and closeness of our relationship to Him is critical to our ability to continue to bear fruit.

Status – There is a tree and that tree is near a river, a source of nutrients. The ability of the tree to be in contact and/or have access to these nutrients is critical. Our spiritual strength is dependent on this and on the care of the gardener to provide what may be lacking when it is needed. We have roots, but they only are effective as they maintain contact with the source of the water and the nutrients. The closer we are to the water supply,

the better the harvest will be. This relationship must be maintained year by year for the harvest to continue to be of good quality.

Process – The act of pruning in a tree has a different focus. It is not to remove branches but to reduce the number. The purpose of this action is to reduce the production of countless small fruit and to focus the process on fewer branches and the production of bigger and better fruit. More is not always better when it comes to trees and the production of fruit. Sometimes it may even be necessary to reduce the number of buds for this same purpose. Here again, in our lives, we cannot do this ourselves, there is the need for a gardener. This has to be done each year, and when done effectively, increases the health and longevity of the tree and its long-term productivity.

God, in the same way, is not looking just for a single harvest, but for a life of productivity. We are not asked to produce a multitude of activities and products. Each of us is given special gifts and tasks, and God seeks to work in us so that we will be productive in those tasks and effective in the use of those gifts, so that we will be able to continue in the production of fruit. He is asking us to put down deep roots; to deepen our relationship with Him so that when struggles come, we will have the depth we need to survive and to still produce fruit. Trees with good resources can survive when branches and vines die.

Fruit – Trees do not produce in bunches, like the vine, they produce individual fruits. The fruit must be picked individually. Productive fruit trees are symbols of peace and prosperity (Ps 52:8). Their fruit becomes the symbol of this blessing being made available to others. A tree can also produce large amounts of fruit and can benefit a large number people. Fortunately, all of the fruit does not ripen at the same time and so there is more time for the fruit to be processed. Further, when the tree is healthy (or our life is healthy) we will be able to produce that which benefits others in the body of Christ. We become mature Christians that God is able to use.

God Factor – For this type of fruit bearing to work we need depth. We need a deeper understanding of God’s truth and a deeper level of relationship with God. The greater the depth and connection we have, the greater the ability to produce and the greater the ability to do so in times of difficulty. This is about walking with God daily and sending our roots down deep in His Word. It is about being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is what sanctification is all about. It is making God the center of and source of our life. This process makes it possible to produce fruit consistently throughout one’s life.

Wheat Principle – Preparing for the harvest (Mt 9:37-38; Mt 13: 3-9)

In this principle, we become aware of the immense potential that can be gained from proper planning and proper cooperation. We learn not only that we have to depend on God but that we need to learn to work together with others. We also learn that there are many outside factors that need to be dealt with beyond just providing water, nutrients and care for the plant. The focus here is to understand how to be part of team and realize we are not alone in the work. It is about making available to others what we have received.

Status – In the wheat principle there is no vine or tree that needs to be cared for year after year. There are seeds and land, each of which needs to be taken care of properly for the work to be done successfully. There is the need to protect the field from animals and weeds. Also each year, we take some grain (fruit from the previous harvest) and risk its loss by throwing it into the ground, to grow a new crop. Each plant produces only once and then dies. The cycle of planting and harvesting reoccurs every year. We are to be looking for people to whom we can give the fruit we have produced.

Process – This process is about taking what we have produced and planting it in the lives of others. It is about understanding how to prepare others to receive the seed and about caring for the

seed while it grows. The time for planting wheat is usually quite specific. Too early or too late and there will be no crop. Likewise, the time frame for the harvest is specific. Too early and the grain will not be fully developed. Too late and the grain will fall off the plant and be impossible to harvest. There are specific times for planting and harvesting. However, the benefits of this focused energy are more enduring. Grain is an essential food for an entire year and can last much longer if stored properly.

The amount of work involved in the preparation is intense. Planting is done every year and so the process is repeated over and over. The seeds need to be stored properly or they will be destroyed. We need to plant them at the right time and in the right type of soil. We need to be sure the soil is prepared properly for those seeds. Even after we have planted there is a continuing need to care for the plants if there is to be a harvest. We need to weed the field, deal with insects, and sometimes bring water to maintain the plants.

The seeds are products of the gospel and our relation with God, prepared and sown into the lives of others. In the same way, when sharing the gospel, the process needs to be repeated for every person and every generation. It also requires a clear understanding of who they are and how to

introduce the gospel into their lives. Done in the wrong way, or with a lack of sensitivity to the needs of their life, will result in no results or even a negative result. It is about understanding the context they live in, the problems they face and how to help them receive the message so that they will be able to respond, grow and reproduce.

This takes a great deal of focused effort and also takes a great number of people to complete the harvest process. Jesus indicated this in Matthew 9:38, when he said there were not enough workers for the harvest. Many people needed to be involved, having many different skills, for the harvest to be successfully gathered. To harvest wheat involves many people with many different skills: people to prepare the tools, people to cut the wheat, people to gather it, people to thresh it, and people to prepare food for those who are working, and of course people to direct the work. Planting the gospel in the lives of others involves the same kind of cooperative effort. People who prepare others through teaching, people who share the gospel, people who disciple, people who support the work and so on. The church is described as a body with many parts and abilities, working together. That is what the harvest is about - working together to reach the lost with the fruit of the gospel.

One other key issue in this process is the element of risk. Every year a portion of last year's harvest must be kept and then thrown back into the ground. Until it is placed in the ground the seed appears dead and lifeless. We have to believe in faith that what appears dead will come alive and produce something that brings life to us and others. We have to believe that what we share of the gospel and our relationship with God will bring life to others. We have to be willing to risk ourselves so others will be grafted into the tree.

Fruit – In this principle the focus is on the seeds. Rye, barley, oats and wheat fall into this category. In this situation the value of a harvest is based on how much each seed produces. One seed can produce 30 – 100 more seeds. The better the seed, the preparation, and the harvest process are, the better the yield will be. Also every year some of that fruit must be kept aside for the next year, for replanting, if there is to be another harvest. One seed produces life. That life can then produce more seeds, which provide for maintaining life and providing for future harvests. One life can produce seeds which can grow in the soil of another person's life and produce fruit for today and for the future. When the gospel is planted it produces life in that person's life and through that life produces the seeds for others to hear the gospel. That is how the church lives and grows from generation to generation; each planting his

fruit so that the church will grow and continue to the next generation.

God factor – God wants us to learn to work together, to be a family. He set the example by working together as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to bring about the fruit of our salvation. Producing fruit is also about building a team and working together for the harvest. It is about trusting God and taking risks. It is about dying to self so that God can bring new life to us and life to others. When we do this, the harvest can be incredible. As Jesus said, it could be 30 – 100 times greater than what we planted or risked in the beginning (Mt 13:23). Jesus died on Calvary so that he could reap a harvest of salvation for eternity. God wants to work through us to extend that harvest to all the world.

To be effective in producing fruit, we need to understand each of the above processes. It is important, if we are to grow as individuals, help others to grow, and be involved in God's mission. We need to understand and apply all four principles to our life. Jesus said we are to produce fruit, much fruit. Fruit that will last for eternity as the lost are saved and they are restored to the eternal family of God. Producing fruit starts when we are grafted into the tree and ends when that action is repeated in the lives of others so that they too will be received into the family of God and bear fruit.

The following 16 study guides are designed to help you explore each of the above focuses on fruit-bearing and what it means to become a productive member of the kingdom of God.

Principle One - Grafting

Lesson One – Status – the need for and result of grafting.

Key Passage – Read Romans 11:13-26; Ephesians 2:11-13; and Colossians 2:13-15. These scriptures are the background to understanding our past and the work of grafting us back into the family of God.

In the following scriptures are definitions of key words that describe our condition before being grafted. Paul calls this state as wild and separated from God. These terms and the descriptions help us understand what it means to live in a wild state and not in union with God.

Read each and write a description of how you were before you became a Christian. Explain your understanding of the term and what it means to you.

Dead – Ephesians 2:1-5

Lost – Luke 19:10

Separated – Ephesians 4:17-19

Excluded – Ephesians 2:12

Alienated – Colossians 1:21

Condemned – John 3:18; Romans 5:16

The Bible tells us the cost of our desire to be wild is incredible. It also involves a debt we cannot pay and involves a task we cannot perform without God's help. God chose to pay the debt and help us return to him. The following terms describe what is involved in being grafted back into God. Write a description of what these terms mean and how they have changed your life.

Salvation – Luke 1:77; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:9

Redemption – Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14

Reconciliation – Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Adoption – Romans 8:23; 9:4; Ephesians 1:5

This process of moving from our past to the present involves several key processes. There is a change in the source of our life and that is to have definite affects on who we are and the quality of our life. Study the words and look at the scriptures. Share how you have experienced each of this and what changes should happen in your ability to receive life and so produce fruit.

Renewal – Colossians 3:10; Titus 3:5-7

Rebirth – John 3:3-5

Transformation – Rom 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17;
Ephesians 4:22-24

Grafting in has changed your status from lost to found,
dead to alive, alienated to adopted. Can you think of other
ways in which the restoration of your relationship with
God has changed your life?

Principle One – Grafting

Lesson Two – Process

Key Passages – Read Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10

These scriptures discuss what is involved in being removed from the world (or our past life) and being joined with Christ.

Leaving behind the past to receive God’s future is a process. It involves knowing why we were separated from God and confessing our actions. It involves understanding what has been controlling our life and turning control over to God. Scriptures refer to this as “putting off the old man and putting on the new.” Read the following scriptures and describe what you need to leave behind or change to put on the new life offered by God.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

2 Corinthians 10:2

1 John 2:15-16

1 Corinthians 2:10-14

James 4:4

Putting off the old and putting on the new involves three important steps that we must take. We must confess what we have done in the past, then we must repent or choose to change our chose of who we will serve, and finally we must be willing to submit to the authority and action of God in our life. Study the following scriptures and answer the questions.

Confess – Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 9:13; 1 John 1:9

Why is it important to confess our sin and our allegiance to the world?

Repent – Acts 3:19; 16:20; 2 Cor4inthians 7:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:25 What is involved when one repents?

Submit – James 4:1, 7; 1 John 5:1-5

What does it mean to submit to God's control?

The Bible calls this process of being grafted into as being crucified to self and born again in the Spirit. We are to leave behind what we have been, completely cut off, so that we can be joined to Christ. In this way we receive abundant life. Read the following scriptures and describe what you receive as a result of being grafted into the body of Christ.

Romans 6:22

2 Corinthians 4:12-15

Colossians 1:10

2 Peter 1:3

Being grafted into God involves cutting off our connections and dependency on the world. To do this we need to know how we have depended on the world for our life and ask God to remove us from that dependency and connect us with him. Depending on the world for life results in death. Depending on God results in life and gives us access to all his resources.

Describe how you have benefited from this new life in God.

Principle One – Grafting

Lesson Three – Fruit

Key Passages – Read John 3:1-20; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. These scriptures deal with what is occurring in our life the change from the old to the new. Study them to gain an greater understanding of what is happening and the effect this process has on your ability to produce good fruit.

The first level of fruit that is being produced is what occurs in our life. We are the first to benefit from the fruit of this change in our status. This fruit in our life relates to the change in our status, our access to resource and the new life that is produced. This alters our outward appearance to those around us and indicates the possibility of more fruit in the future.

Study the following groups of scriptures to understand what is happening in your life and think about how that changes who you are and what others can receive from you as a result of those changes. The first thing that changes is your status. This opens a door to new possibilities.

New Status –
Citizenship – Philippians 3:20-21

Heir – Romans 8:14-17; Titus 3:7

Son – Ephesians 1:4; Galatians 4:5-7

With a change in our status comes a change in access to needed resources. God has many promises about the resources he has available to those who are his children. He states he is ready to provide them to us when we walk in obedience. Three of these resources are doorways to many more. Consider how these make it possible for you to become productive as a Christian.

New Resources –
Spirit – 2 Corinthians 1:22, Acts 1:4-5

Power – Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 1:18-19

Hope – Romans 15:13

One of the key aspects of being grafted into a tree is becoming connected to a new source of life. This new source of life will change many aspects of our life and

activity. God provides us with his resources so that our life will be changed and so that this change will be evident to others. Study the following scriptures and how your new life will be evident to others.

New Life –
New life – Romans 6:4

New self – Colossians 3:10

New creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17

New attitude – Ephesians 4:22-24

New light – Ephesians 5:8

New knowledge – Colossians 1:9-12

Being grafted into to a tree means receiving from the tree all its strength and support to produce a strong healthy branch capable of growing and producing fruit.

Look at your life and consider whether you are allowing all that God has to offer enter into you to change you and strengthen you. What changes is the presence of God causing in your life and how is that bearing fruit for you and for others?

Principle One – Grafting

Lesson Four – The God Factor

Key passages – Read the following scriptures: Psalms 51:10-12; Isaiah 53:1-12; Ezekiel 36:24-32. God has always had a plan to restore us to himself. Take time to reflect on the nature of that plan, the promises he has made and the benefits of that plan to you.

From the beginning this plan has been based on one critical fact. The plan is possible because we originally came from the same source and bear the mark of that source in our lives. It is called the image of God. This means we were designed to be a part of the tree or a part of God. That makes the process of grafting possible and increases the possibility of success and fruitful living for the branch being grafted in.

Read the following scriptures to understand what it means to be created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26

Psalms 100:3

Isaiah 64:8

Ephesians 2:10

2 Corinthians 5:5

Throughout the Bible we see that God has been planning for this event. There are hundreds of prophecies revealing his plan and the details of that plan. The plan was announced in the Garden to Adam and Eve even as they sinned. From that time until the coming of Jesus God has been preparing for our return. Read the following scriptures and write what you learn about the plan that God made especially for you.

Genesis 49:10

Romans 5:6

Galatians 4:4

Titus 1:1-3

Jesus understood what God wanted to accomplish. He told all who would listen that he came for the purpose of carrying out the plan of his Father to restore all who would believe. Our opportunity to be grafted into the family of God is based on Jesus obedience to God and the fulfillment of that plan in his life. Read and respond to Jesus comments about his role in God's plan.

Luke 4:43

Luke 19:10

John 3:17

John 6:38

Read the parable of the prodigal son and consider what God desires to do with your life. What will it mean to be

Principle Two – Pruning

Lesson One – Status

Key Passages – Read John 15:1-17; Psalm 80:8-19

One of the key issues of growth is making sure all of the effort is focused into producing fruit. To do this we need to understand what is important and therefore what needs to be removed. We have habits and attitudes that we are reluctant to let go of. These like unnecessary branches prevent good growth and the production of fruit. It is important to take time to look at our life and make decisions about what needs to be removed and what needs to be changed.

Read Paul’s description of his life in Philippians 2:4-11. It compares his past and its values with his new life. Answer the following questions.

Describe who you are and how that gives value to your life?

Why is it important to make changes in who we are?

What was Paul willing to give up?

Why was he willing to give that up?

There were problems of pride and selfishness in the church in Corinth. Paul describes what was happening in his life to help them understand their problem and see what needed to be done. As you read his discussion of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:6, consider what you are doing with your life and what you are proud of. Answer the following questions.

How does your life compare to the life of Paul?

What have you done that you can be proud of?

Evaluate who you are and the value of what you have done after reading vs 11:31.

We all make our decisions and do our evaluation by using a standard to help us see and understand how we are doing. Paul discusses what happens when we use the wrong standard and the divisions caused by not following

God's standard in 1 Corinthians 3:1-21. Answer the following questions about standards and your use of them.

What is the problem with using earthly standards?

What is the only foundation or standard that we should build our lives on?

What standard have you been using to evaluate your current status in your Christian life?

What do you need to do to begin to grow and produce fruit?

Read the following scriptures about people who did not listen and followed their own standard.

1. Ananias and Saphira – Acts 5:1-11
2. Rich young ruler – Mark 10:17-23
3. Parable of rich man – Luke 12:16-21

What are you doing or not doing that will prevent you from receiving God's blessing and being able to produce good fruit?

Principle Two – Pruning

Lesson Two – Process

Key Passages – Read the following passages Hebrews 12:1-17; Colossians 3:5-8

Pruning is about understanding what is good and should be kept and what is not good and needs to be removed. In general the vine needs to be trimmed back on a regular basis to be sure that only branches that are productive will remain connected to the vine. It is not a process that we can do on our own or for ourselves but is done for us. The difference between us and the vine is we have the ability to choose to be pruned and how much pruning we will allow.

Effective pruning means taking the time to understand what kind of growth, attitudes or activities need to be removed so that we can live a life that is productive. Read the following scriptures. Describe what you think needs to be pruned from your life.

Luke 8:14

Luke 21:34

1 Corinthians 7:31

Colossians 2:20-23

1 Samuel 17:7

As we understand what needs to be done in our life this needs to result in a decision to change. It is not enough to understand what is preventing us from growing and bearing fruit. We also need to understand the decision to change, to be pruned and the effect it will have on our life. The scripture uses some very strong concepts to describe this process. Read the following scriptures and explain what the following phrases and words mean.

Purify – 2 Corinthians 7:1

Put to death – Colossians 3:5-8

Hate your life – Luke 14:26-33

This will not be a simple process. We tend to resist anyone taking away what we have put into our life. Even when someone else is helping us we still resist this action. We become very attached to our past and its possessions, desires and activities. We will need to prepare ourselves for what God will do as we give him permission to prune away what is not good and healthy.

Read the following scriptures and explain what you must begin to do in your life so that God will be able to prune you.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

2 Timothy 2:15

2 Peter 1:5-11

Unlike the vine who is dependent on the decisions of its owner. We must choose to submit to this process. We must choose to understand what we are letting go of and why we should let it go. We have the ability to see and understand what can happen as we allow God to work in our lives. Joshua and Elijah called the people to choose. Read their challenge to the people. Explain how making the choice to serve God will change your life.

Joshua 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21

Section Two – Pruning

Lesson Three – Fruit

Key Scriptures – Read Psalm 128; Matthew 21:33-43;
Luke 6:43-45; John 15:1-16

The vine is used often in scripture to express God’s care for his people and his desire that they produce fruit. God is shown as the gardener who plants, cares for and prunes the vine. The goal is to produce fruit that reveals this care. When the people obeyed and submitted to his care the pleased God and were able to produce fruit.

The purpose of pruning is very clear. It is not just so the vine will produce fruit but to increase the productivity of the vine and the quality of the fruit that is being produced. This will bring greater benefit to those who are in need of the fruit and what it represents in terms of providing life and health.

The New Testament uses the idea of fruit to describe the results that God expects from a life that is under his care. These descriptions of the fruit give us an idea of what our life should look like and how it can bring the blessings of God to others. Read the following scriptures that describe the type of fruit we should be producing. Explain how the production of this fruit affects your life and presents God to others.

Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23

Fruit of Righteousness – Philippians 1:11

Fruit of Light – Ephesians 5:9

Fruit of lips – Hebrews 13:15

In John 15 Jesus describes a good vine as one that produces fruit that will last and fruit in abundance. When we allow God to prune our lives then we will produce fruit that is beneficial and sufficient fruit so that many will benefit. Read the following scriptures and explain the benefit of fruit that lasts and is abundant.

Matthew 19:29

Matthew 13:11-12

Psalms 92:12-15

Colossians 1:6

1 Peter 2:12

The presence of fruit and the type of fruit reveals the purpose of our life, the character of our life and desires of our life. The following scriptures deal with the purpose for producing good fruit in abundance. Read each and explain what you learn about why you should be producing good fruit in abundance.

Matthew 3:8

Matthew 5:16

Romans 7:4

1 Corinthians 10:31

Colossians 1:10

James 1:17

Read again the passage in John 15. Take time to evaluate the fruit you are producing in your life. What fruit are you producing and what is the quality of the fruit? Is there sufficient fruit in your life to help others see the benefits of knowing God?

Principle Two – Pruning

Lesson Four – God Factor

Key passages – Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 12:5-17; James 1:2-4

Pruning has two basic functions, to clean away useless branches, that are either weak or harmful to the vine and to focus the growth of the vine into the production of branches that will be productive. It involves an action that appears severe, cutting away parts that are alive.

God seeks to do the same in our lives. He is cutting away areas that are unproductive and take away from the life he has given us. We call this process disciplining. God has a clear reason for what he is doing. He knows the purpose for those actions and he knows the results that will be possible from the process. But none of this will be possible if we do not submit to his control and allow him to act.

God loves us deeply and it is out of his love that he acts. Read the following scriptures. Rewrite them putting your name in the verse. How does this help you understand what God wants to do?

Revelation 3:19

Proverbs 3:11-12

Hebrews 12:5

God knows the exact purpose for act of discipline we are receiving. He is seeking to help us understand and learn what is best. Read the following scriptures. What is the key area of discipline being discussed and how does it relate to your life?

Psalms 119:71-72

Proverbs 15:32

Romans 8:28

1 Corinthians 11:32

Hebrews 12:11

God knows the blessings he has for us. He promises to bless those who obey and follow his directions. These blessings are part of the fruit he wants to produce in us to help others. Read the following and explain how God wants to bless you.

Job 5:17-18

Psalm 94:12

2 Corinthians 4:17

James 1:12

Read John 21:15-19. Meditate on the discussion between Peter and Jesus. Did Peter need to go through this process of pruning? What was Jesus trying to help Peter understand? How is God pruning your life so that you will be able to produce fruit?

Principle Three – Tree

Lesson One – Status

Key Passages – Read Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 92:11-15;
Jeremiah 17:8

In the first stages the focus is on getting connected and dealing with activities and attitudes that take away from our ability to be productive. Now the focus is on developing the needed depth and commitment to continue in the process. To do this means growing deeper in God’s Word and establishing a stronger connection with God.

The following scriptures focus on our need to be securely anchored in God. Read each and consider what you need to do to deepen your relationship with God.

Ephesians 3:17-19

Colossians 2:6-7

Colossians 1:23

2 Peter 3:17-18

Paul describes a person who is growing deeper as one who has moved from receiving milk like a baby to eating meat like an adult. A tree planted by a stream is like one whose connection to God increases their ability to grow and develop. Read the following scriptures and think about what it means to grow in your relationship with God.

Matthew 13:15

John 3:10-12

1 Corinthians 2:12-15

Ephesians 5:17

As our relationship with God deepens our ability to understand his purpose will also increase. This will allow us to see and understand what God wants to do in and through our lives. God has a plan for each of us, but it is only as we come close to God that we can fully understand and carry out that plan. Read the following scriptures and reflect on what it means to draw closer to God in your life.

James 4:7-10

Isaiah 55:7-11

Matthew 5:3-9

Think about where your roots are. What are you depending on to give you life and strengthen you today? What changes do you need to make so that your relationship with God will continue to grow and deepen? To help you in answering this question, meditate on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Philippians 4:8-9.

Principle 3 – Tree

Lesson 2 – Process

Read the following scriptures: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27;
Philippians 3:7-21; 2 Peter 1:5-10

As we grow in God’s word and the new life we have received we will learn that each person is given specific work to do by God. God also gives gifts to help us carry out the responsibilities of that work. To be effective in this work means to learn to focus on that work and learning to make wise choices so that we will be able to grow and produce not just now but throughout our life.

Paul discusses some of the decisions he was making to receive all that God had for him and to be able to produce the fruit that God had called him to produce. Read the texts listed and consider what decisions you need to make and what God needs to do in your life for you to become more productive.

Philippians 3:8 – I consider everything a loss

Philippians 3:12 – press on to take hold of

Philippians 3:13 – Forget what is behind

Philippians 3:14 – Press on towards the goal

Philippians 3:15 – Live up to what we have attained

Paul describes this activity of becoming focused as being like a race that we are competing in. To run the race requires preparation and a clear focus if we are to win. This will involve making wise decisions about our training and about how to run the race. Read the following scriptures and consider what you need to do to run the race God has set before you.

Acts 20:24

Galatians 5:7

2 Timothy 4:7

Hebrews 12:1

This task will not always be an easy one. At times the work the process of growing and learning may seem too great. Yet God promises that if we will allow him to work and be willing to go through the process of growing and make wise choices we will receive great blessings from him. Read the following scriptures and reflect on how they relate to your life and the decisions you are making.
Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 11:28-30

Luke 9:23-27

John 6:27-29

In life you only receive based on what you give. We are paid according to the nature and level of our work. That others love us is often based on how we love them. We are respected as we respect others. Read the following scriptures and write out a plan for your life on what you need to do to be able to do what God is calling you to do. What changes in your life need to be made so that you will be able to run the race and reap the harvest God has for you?

Principle Three – Tree

Lesson Three – Fruit

Read the following scriptures: Psalms 92:12-15; Jeremiah 17:5-8; Matthew 7:15-20; Luke 13:6-8

The fruit tree represents years of growth and the ability to continue producing fruit over long periods of time. Proper care expands the ability to produce and extends the time of productivity. A healthy productive tree is the result of a strong root system and healthy branches. The quality and quantity of the fruit is the evidence of this. More important is the fact that a healthy tree carries the fruit it bears to maturity.

The deeper our relationship to God, like the root system of the tree, the better we will be able to produce good fruit. What we produce in our lives reveals the nature and reality of that relationship. Read the following scriptures and apply them to your life and relationship to God.

Proverbs 11:30

Isaiah 3:10

Isaiah 32:17

Jeremiah 17:8

Ezekiel 47:12

John 15:16

The ability to produce is based on a deepening relationship with Christ. The deeper our relationship the more effective we can be in producing good fruit, no matter what is happening in and around our lives. Read the following scriptures and think about what you are doing that is evidence of the depth of your relationship.

Hosea 10:12

Luke 6:48

I Corinthians 15:58

Ephesians 3:17-19

Colossians 2:6-7

2 Peter 3:17-18

Our life as a tree is an expression of our faith and confidence in God. It is also an expression of our commitment to God and to be all that he asks us to be. This is because we know that he will supply all we need to grow and produce good fruit. Consider the following people and their faith in God. What was the result of their faith?

Abraham

Joseph

Moses' parents

David

Daniel

Stephen

Principle Three – Tree

Lesson Four – God Factor

Read the following: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Timothy 4:4-11; 1 Peter 2: 7-11

In caring for a tree a key issue of productivity is focus. To be truly productive the extra branches and extra buds need to be removed in order to focus the energy of the tree into producing a harvest of good fruit. Being productive is not just about producing fruit, it is about producing good fruit. God wants to work in our lives to make it possible for us to produce the good fruit that he wants, that will help others grow.

With God's direction we can produce good fruit and continue to be effective in producing good fruit. This is how God intended us to be. Read the following scriptures and reflect on what they say about God's purpose for you.

Jeremiah 32:39

Ephesians 2:10

1 Corinthians 3:11-14

2 Corinthians 5:5

For God to work requires that we make a decision. We must decide to allow him to remove what is unessential from our lives. This will require us to submit to his will and not follow our will. It means learning to do what God wants, when God wants us to do it, where he wants us to do it and in the manner he chooses. Read the following scriptures and reflect on the value of submitting to God's will so that you can be fruitful.

Colossians 1:10

John 15:16

Philippians 2:13

Hebrews 13:21

This process will require us to go deeper in our relationship with God. It will involve a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit and making God the center of our lives. This is about sanctifying our lives and committing ourselves totally to God. This is the meaning of the David's comment about the wise person is like a tree planted by a stream. His roots are fed by the Spirit of God and he gives God complete access to his life. Read the following scriptures and reflect on the depth of your relationship with God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

1 Peter 1:13-16

2 Peter 2:4-5

God wants you to be holy. God wants you to be productive. God wants to work in your life to restore us to full relationship with him and so make us able to produce fruit that will bless us and bring salvation to others.

Step Four – Wheat

Lesson One – Status

Read Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-46; Luke 19:12-27

We have come to the point where we are workmen doing the work of God. The focus is on our ability to work and produce results. We have fruit and it needs to be distributed to those in need. We are the workers that God has chosen and prepared to do this work. Each of us has a role to play in carrying out the work.

Jesus was very concerned about the need for workers. He challenged us to pray for more workers. People like you who would be willing to get involved in the work of the harvest. That means we are ready to go where the harvest is and doing our part to plant the seeds and bring in the harvest of those who respond.

God does not just call people to the work. He prepares them and then expects them to be involved. We are the workers God has prepared. Read the following scriptures that explain what God expects us to do and where he expects us to work for him. Write down what God is telling you.

Matthew 28:19-20

Mark 16:15

Acts 1:8

A key aspect of our status as the workers is to always be ready to do the work. Unlike the work of the world that has set times and locations the work of God is to be part of every aspect of our life. It is not to be isolated from any activity we are involved in. We are told to be always ready to do the work. Read the following scriptures and reflect on how you need to be ready to do the work you have been given.

Ecclesiastes 11:6

John 4:32-34

1 Thessalonians 5:12-19

2 Timothy 4:2

Hebrews 3:13

This also means we need to persevere in the work. We are not like others who are hired for a period and then leave the work. The work is to be our life and will require a level of commitment not found in the world. Read the following and think about the level of your commitment to being a worker in God's harvest.

Matthew 10:37

Matthew 16:24-28

Luke 9:23-27

Luke 14:26-27

All work requires commitment. Success requires an even greater level of commitment. Read the following scriptures and reflect on your level of commitment to being a worker called by God who bears fruit in the harvest. Luke 14:26-30; John 17:13-19; Philippians 3:8

Step Four - Wheat

Lesson Two – Process

Read Isaiah 28:23-29; Matthew 13:1-23

Planting seeds involves a number of processes. We need to be aware of several of these so that we can gain the best results from our planting.

The first thing we need to be aware of is the process of preparing the soil. This is work we do to prepare the soil, or the people around us, to receive the seeds being planted. Poor preparation will result in the seeds dying, the plant being unable to grow properly and not producing anything. This means the life of the seed, the gospel is lost. Read the following Scriptures and think about the importance of your actions and what you can do to prepare others to receive the seed.

Hosea 10:12

Ephesians 4:12

Hebrews 12:14-15

Secondly, once we have planted the seeds we need to care for the garden and the plants that have begun to grow

from the seeds. We are to be involved in this process and be available for God's use in nurturing the growth of the seed. Much like a shepherd cares for the flock; we need to care for what we have planted. Read the following scriptures and think about your responsibility in this area.

Ecclesiastes 11:6

Romans 12:18

Colossians 3:25-17

James 3:18

To have the best results means learning to work together. Harvesting the fruit of what has been planted is about working together as the body of Christ. We all need to be involved in planting and harvesting. This means being ready at any time to enter into the work, wherever and whenever we are needed. Read the following scriptures and reflect on if you are ready to do what God wants from you and what you need to do to be ready.

Proverbs 11:30

John 4:36

2 Timothy 4:2

Galatians 6:9

1 Peter 3:15

Reread the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-8, 18-26) and reflect on the nature of the different soils. Think about what could have been done to improve the results in some of the situations. Ultimately each person will make their own decision, but we need to do all we can to help them make a good decision that will help them deal with the struggles that come. Describe what you need to do in your life to do a better job of being involved in the process of preparing the soil, caring for the seeds and the plants that develop and in bringing the harvest into God's kingdom.

Step Four – Wheat

Lesson three – Fruit

Read Matthew 13:18-23; John 4:34-38; 2 Corinthians 10:13-18; 2 Peter 1:5-8

Fruit in this area relates not just to the seed or fruit but to the extent of its distribution to others and the extent of the harvest that is now possible. The goal here is to share what we have received as often as possible and in as many places as possible. It is as we share willingly what we have received from God that the possibility of a harvest exists. In this case not just a small quantity but a great harvest.

This is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 9:38. When we serve faithfully and share our blessing it will result in the possibility of a great harvest. The focus is planting to win souls and inform as many as possible through the fruit produced in our lives. Read the following scriptures and think about how important it is to plant your seeds in order to produce an abundant harvest.

Proverbs 11:30

Daniel 12:2-3

1 Corinthians 9:22

John 4:36

Paul saw this as the purpose of his life. It is the purpose of the message of forgiveness. When we plant the seeds, we are carrying out this purpose. We make it possible for the gospel not to merely grow but to multiply. Read the following scriptures and reflect on the purpose for your life and ministry.

John 12:24

Acts 4:4

Acts 5:14

Acts 6:6

2 Corinthians 9:10

Colossians 1:16

This type of fruit production is expansive in nature. It is not just about passing a fruit from one person to another but scattering the fruit so that any and all can have access. It is about doing everything to be sure the seed is scattered everywhere. When the seeds fall on fertile ground they produce a great harvest which increases the potential for a greater harvest and the planting of more seeds. This is how the gospel works, how it produces fruit in and through our lives.

Mark 4:26-29

Acts 12 24

2 Corinthians 2:14

Colossians 1:6

1 Thessalonians 3:13

We are called to bear fruit and to share that fruit with the world. We are called to bear much fruit and increase the harvest of righteousness. Read Psalms 1 and think about the nature of your life and relationship with God. Are you sitting in a place that will yield a harvest? As you meditate on God's word are you becoming a fruitful tree? Is your relationship with God such that you are always spreading the fruit of the gospel? Is God directing your life so that you can sow your seeds and yield a harvest for Him?

Step Four – Wheat

Lesson Four – God Factor

Read the following scriptures: Isaiah 55:10-13; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Ephesians 1:9-11

God is the source of life. It is only through our willingness to die to our old life that God can work to create true life in us. This life is special in that it becomes a fountain within us welling up to new life for others. God uses the new life he has created to sow seeds of truth in the lives of others. It is God who places his word in us and brings us alive. It is this same word that God uses in us and through us to plant the seeds of truth in all who come into contact with us who have been reborn by God's power and purpose.

The seed contains within it the life of the plant that produced it. That life is capable of producing new life. This is what God is seeking to do in us. Restore what he created in us, a seed, and use it to produce more life. If the life produced from a seed is amazing, then how much more amazing is what God is seeking to produce through our lives. Read the following scriptures and describe the nature of the life God has produced in you and what he wants to produce through you.

Matthew 24:35

Philippians 2:15-16

Hebrews 12:22-23

1 Peter 1:23, 25

James 1:18

God is the master of the harvest. He is seeking people who are willing to work in the harvest, both sowing and harvesting. When we hear his call to work in the harvest and accept the work assigned then the harvest is further multiplied. As the master of the harvest he knows what is needed and when it is needed for the harvest to be successful. God is seeking workers. Read the following scriptures and reflect on what God promises you as a worker in his harvest.

Proverbs 11:18

Isaiah 55:12

Matthew 20:9-12

2 Corinthians 9:10-11

Ephesians 1:6-10

God knows when to plant, what to plant and how to care for what is planted. Our task is to be available when God wants us, where God wants us, and to do what God wants done. God has a plan and we are a key part of that plan. Jesus knew the plan and carried out his part. Through his submission to the plan of God all who come to him will be saved. We are being called and sent by God to continue the work. Now is the time. Read the following scriptures and think about the urgency of the harvest and the work God wants to do through us.

Matthew 9:38

2 Corinthians 6:2

Hebrews 2:3

Rom 10:13-15

or, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

God is calling us to the harvest. God is calling us to sow the seeds of the gospel everywhere and to everyone. Are you a fruit-bearing Christian?

How can you plant the seed of the gospel in someone's life today?"

What can you do every day to continue sowing the seeds of truth that God is growing in your life?

What can you do now to help in the harvest that God has prepared because of those who have done the work God called them to do?
