

Glorify God by Bearing Fruit  
John 15:1-8  
May 3, 2015

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

Grace, mercy, and peace from the vine who gives life to all of his branches, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

From today's Gospel reading, you might get the idea that Jesus is suggesting that we bear fruit, but he isn't suggesting. He is demanding that we bear fruit. Furthermore, Jesus says that those who bear no fruit run the risk of being cut off from his kingdom. That makes this reading very serious business.

Don't misunderstand. Good works and bearing Christian fruit will not save you. However, there is a connection between good works and faith. James warns us that: *faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead* (Jam 2:17 NIV). Friends, dead faith is of no value.

Since it is hard to bear Christian fruit without knowing what Christian fruit is, the logical question is, "What is Christian fruit." To answer that question, we are going to turn to Scripture to identify five examples of Christian fruit. If you incorporate these five Christian fruits into your daily life, your faith in Jesus Christ will be alive and well.

**Our first Christian fruit is developing a Christian character.** If the goal of the Christian life is to be Christ-like, then it stands to reason that every trait you develop that reflects the character of Jesus must be proper Christian fruit.

Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit in nine ways. These nine things could also be labeled as fruits of the Christian life. Paul writes: *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal 5:22-23 NIV).

In his second letter, saint Peter gives us another list of character traits that lead to Christian fruit. Peter says: *Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being*

*ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Pet 1:5-8 NIV).

If you consider each of these character traits, you will quickly see that these are all terms you could use to describe the life of Jesus. By its very definition, the name Christian means to be like Christ. Therefore, developing Christian character will always be a matter of growing in the Christ-like qualities.

**If we cultivate Christian character traits into our lives, those traits will result in our second fruit of faith – right conduct.** Right conduct for a Christian is to do good works. A life of Christian good works, done in the name of Jesus, will bear fruit. Paul told the Colossian Christians: *We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God* (Col 1:10 NIV).

Paul linked growing in the knowledge of God with doing good works. That's because as we study God's Word and we spend time in prayer, we learn more and more what pleases God. That knowledge serves to draw our good works in line with God's will.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote: *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me* (Philip 1:21-22 NIV). Paul was torn between his desire to be in heaven with his Savior, and his desire to remain on earth to do the work God had given him.

Paul understood, that as long as he remained on earth, his duty was to live a life that produced Christian fruit that glorified God. Whether he was saying his good works were the fruit, or whether he was talking about the fruit his good works would produce, Paul's driving force was to fulfill God's will for his life.

The third kind of fruit we are to produce is extremely important. This fruit is the people who come to faith as a result of our witness for the Christ. No matter what some churches teach, God does not zap the happy heathen into being a believer. For someone to come to faith, that person must be confronted with his or her sinfulness and with the saving message of the Gospel.

After you are in possession of saving faith, your number one job is to bring other people to Christ. Spreading the Gospel is the most important thing you can do. The eternal salvation of other people hangs on your response to Jesus' words: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you* (Matt 28:19-20 NIV).

Paul knew the importance of producing the fruit of new souls for Jesus. He told the Roman churches: *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles* (Rom 1:13 NIV). The New King James Version even uses the term "fruit" in describing those who have been led to saving faith: *You know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia* (1 Cor 16:15 NKJV).

What greater thrill could there be than meeting someone in heaven that was saved from eternal damnation because you chose to bear fruit for the Lord.

The fourth fruit we can bear is the praise and thanksgiving we give to God for all he has done and will do. Scripture is full of references to thanking and praising God.

Psalm 138:2 *I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.*

Psalm 139:14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Psalm 145:4 *One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.*

The author of Hebrews tells us to offer the fruit of praise to the Lord. He writes: *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name* (Heb 13:15 NIV). It is impossible to praise and thank God enough for his grace, his mercy, his love, his patience, his forgiveness, or the sacrifice of his Son for our sins. Our fruit of praise and thanksgiving builds up our brothers and sisters in the faith and it is a witness to the unbelieving world.

The fifth fruit of faith is our giving. When the topic of giving is mentioned in church, too many minds make the immediate assumption that the pastor is trying to boost the weekly offerings. While supporting the church is certainly a valid part of the Christian life, and should be a priority in every believer's heart, that is not the only way the disciples of Jesus are supposed to give.

A great deal of Christian giving is to be directed toward the welfare of other people, especially other Christians. It is our duty to take care of others less fortunate than ourselves.

During Paul's ministry, there was great poverty and suffering among the believers in Jerusalem. Paul made it his business to seek an offering from the Gentiles to aid the Jews. He writes this about the giving of the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia: *Macedonia and Achaia [believers] were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them ... they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way* (Rom 15:26-28 NIV).

Paul referred to the gifts of the Macedonian and Achaian believers as fruit. It was true Christian fruit. He also used the word fruit when he spoke of the support his ministry received from the Philippian believers. He said: *[When I was] in Thessalonica you sent aid*

*once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account* (Phil 4:16-17 NKJV). Paul calls our giving that supports the spread of the Gospel Christian fruit that is credited to our account.

If we wish to abide in Jesus and have Jesus abide in us, we must bear fruit for God's kingdom. The fruit that Scripture says God is looking for is; a Christ-like character, a life abounding in good works, a faithful witness to God's plan for our salvation, a pair of lips devoted to praise and thanksgiving to God, and a generous spirit when handling the gifts God has given to us.

May the Holy Spirit work in our hearts to make us faithful branches that reach out into the world and bear fruit.