

## **How To Attain a Godly Marriage - Part 5**

### **Producing Abundant Fruit**

In today's article we'll look at how to produce abundant fruit. God wants us to sow good seed so we can produce good fruit. Our goal is to become like Christ in everything we do. Our thoughts and actions reveal what is in our heart. To change our heart we must sow good seed (God's Word) continuously.

It's important to understand that we reap what we sow. If we sow bad seed, we will reap bad fruit. If we sow good seed, we will reap good fruit. That is why we need to understand what works and what doesn't, what methods are from God and what are from man. The world's ways are opposite of God's ways and cannot produce godly fruit. It will never happen! Therefore, we must be able to distinguish what is good seed and what is not. The only way to discern the difference is to saturate ourselves with God's truths in order to identify the false ways of the world.

When we align our character with Christ's, then we become the spouse that God designed us to be. Therefore, in order to obtain a godly marriage, we must work on improving ourselves. We must take 100% responsibility for who we are. We must stop our complaining and making excuses. How we react to our spouse and our circumstances is our choice. Let's make the godly choices and reap a marriage relationship that reflects God's love toward us.

### **The Source of Developing Our Fruit**

Before we became Christians, we only had ourselves to rely upon for strength and the world's wisdom to change. Now that the Holy Spirit resides in us, we have constant access to God. Since God will not override our choices, we must purposely choose to follow God's ways and utilize the power of the Holy Spirit inside us. Where we once had no power to change, we now have all of God's power and His wisdom we need to change. But we must stay connected to God to draw upon this power and wisdom.

In John 15:5 Jesus illustrates this connection. He states, *"I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing."* This is the key to bearing much fruit.

What does it mean to stay attached to the vine? Stay focused on God, be aware of when we lean upon our own reasoning, and recognize that whatever good happens in our lives comes from God, not ourselves. We draw from the vine all the energy, power, love, motivation, living water, and guidance that we need to help us grow to maturity and continuously produce good fruit.

### **Internal Fruit**

What good fruit are we trying to produce? We are told in Galatians 5:22-23:

*But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness) peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraining, continence) Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].*

Although the Holy Spirit resides within us, our soul and body have not come into total alignment with what the Holy Spirit offers us. Once we recognize the lies we believe and replace them with God's truths, we then work on bringing our body and soul into alignment with these new truths.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is already present inside us. We need to bring them into existence through what we do. Remember, seeds get planted by our "doing," just like works bring what we are believing for in faith into reality. It isn't that those things don't exist; they exist in the spiritual realm and we must bring them into reality in our world. Knowing that they already exist relieves us of worry over whether God will provide us with those qualities. He already has! Knowing this truth allows us to immediately act according to those qualities. When we do, they manifest themselves in our lives.

If you want love—then love others. If you want joy—then go ahead and choose to believe you have the joy and change your thoughts accordingly. Do you need patience in your life? Then realize that it is already there and you can access it this moment. Stop telling yourself you don't have patience, when the truth is you do have it, you just need to access it. You want kindness, it's there waiting for you to use it. Goodness is always available for those who take the time to use it.

Faithfulness is also available; it's our choice and God will always give us the power to make the right choice to follow His guidance. Gentleness, meekness and humility are available, but we have to purposely choose to put on these attitudes. What about self-restraint and self-control? Yes, they are already inside us. We have to recognize that we can access God's power inside us at any moment to apply self-restraint and self-control. Again, the choice is ours.

What about peace? It is always available, but it requires that we align ourselves with God before we will receive it. We can go through troubles and turmoil and still keep our peace if we are in the will of God. But if we do things that are against God's will or struggle to do things by ourselves (apart from abiding in the vine), then we lose our peace. Therefore, not having peace should be a signal to us to review our life and see if we're doing something out of the will of God or if we're trying to make things happen on our own.

Another internal fruit is that of knowing our full authority and power in Christ. If we know that God has already healed us, we can speak and act accordingly. If we know that Satan can't do anything against us unless we give him that power, then we can draw close to God and successfully resist Satan. If we know the spiritual laws, then we can act upon them with confidence.

## External Fruit

Some of our internal fruits flow out of us for the benefit of others. These include unconditional love, words of encouragement, our testimonies, sharing God's truths, giving (our time, finances, material goods, etc.), serving, our attitudes, kindness, forgiveness, self-control, and using our authority and faith in Christ to help manifest things in a person whose faith has not manifested to that level.

In order to adequately share these fruits with others, we must keep ourselves filled in these areas. That is why it is important we continually draw close to Jesus Christ and continually read the Bible and pray.

## Seed Planting

The seeds are biblical principles and Scriptures. We must continuously sow seeds in order to continuously reap. Psalms 1:1-3 states:

*Blessed (happy, fortunate, prosperous, and enviable) is the man who walks {and} lives not in the counsel of the ungodly [following their advice, their plans and purposes], nor stands [submissive and inactive] in the path where sinners walk, nor sits down [to relax and rest] where the scornful [and the mockers] gather. But his delight {and} desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God) he habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night. And he shall be like a tree firmly planted [and tended] by the streams of water, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not fade {or} wither; and everything he does shall prosper [and come to maturity].*

When we have God's Word in us, we become like these solid trees—firmly planted—which enables us to withstand any storm that comes our way, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season, and everything we do prospers. Isn't this what we want? To be able to live a solid life without falling apart every time a problem comes our way.

Notice it says our delight and our desires are wrapped up in knowing God and doing His will. That is when we learn how to lead a solid, stable life.

Once we receive God's Word into our heart, it takes deep root through our actions. James 1:21-25 bears out this principle:

*So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive {and} welcome the Word which implanted {and} rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls. But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]. For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it {and} being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror; for he thoughtfully*

*observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like. But he who looks carefully into the faultless law, the [law] of liberty, and is faithful to it {and} perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets but an active doer [who obeys], he shall be blessed in his doing (his life of obedience).*

It's interesting that this Scriptures talks about our "reasoning" contrary to the truth. We do this so easily. We hear the truth, we know it's the truth, but we come up with reasons why it won't work in our life or some excuse why we can't do it. But God tells us we're deceiving ourselves. Once again, we're looking to our own abilities (or lack of abilities) and tell God what we are or are not capable of doing. But it's not our ability we are to look at. Remember, we have all of Christ's power inside us; therefore, we can do what God tells us to do. The choice is ours. How bad do you want to get out of your problems and into living the abundant life? Here are two Scriptures to encourage you:

*In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides]. (Ephesians 6:11)*

*Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over {and} above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it). (Ephesians 3:20)*

## **Waiting & Weeding**

Similar to how a farmer tends to the seeds he plants until they produce a crop, so we must tend to the spiritual seeds (God's Word) planted in us until those seeds reach their fruition. Some of the seeds produce fruit quicker than others and we need perseverance during those long times of waiting.

What do we do during this waiting time? We maintain an attitude of expectancy. We continue to water our seeds by prayer and reading the Word (confirming the truth of the seeds planted and also planting more seeds). We pull weeds by not believing everything that is contrary to God's Word. Sometimes we put up fences to protect our mind (by reading God's Word) and to protect our flesh (from indulging in sin). Fences for protection might include (1) avoiding people who are a negative influence, (2) driving a different route to avoid a temptation; (3) putting a filter program on your computer, or (4) finding an accountability and prayer partner.

While we develop the fruit of the Spirit, we must tend to it every day. Being a Christian is a 24/7 relationship. It is our life. It is our only life! Therefore, we never give up on God's promises. We believe God will do what He says He will do. We live with an attitude of expectancy.

## **Harvesting the Fruit**

The object of producing fruit is two-fold. First, it brings our life into alignment with becoming more like Jesus Christ in everything we do. Second, the fruit is for the benefit of others. Our lives may be the only glimpse of Jesus that others see. They may not listen to our words, but they cannot ignore the transformation that Jesus did in our lives. Our unconditional love towards others does not go unnoticed.

A bigger picture of the fruit in our lives is the fact that we no longer follow the passions, appetites and desires of our flesh. Instead we live under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit

The fruit produced in our life greatly enhances our marriage.

In the next article we'll continue this series by looking at how love binds everything together. We'll see how everything we do is an outflow of love.