

“STEPS TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”
Big Idea . . . Part 4: More on Fruitfulness
John 15:1-8, 11, 16

INTRO: We are studying the Steps to Spiritual Success, based upon John 15.

Step 1: Accept the MISSION to glorify God and have joy now and forever (Jn. 15:8, 11; Psa. 16:8-11). Why glorify? How glorify (reflect His glory)?

Step 2: Adopt His PLAN to achieve mission: five keys.

KEY #1: The key to glorifying God is BEARING FRUIT (v.8)

I. The MEANING of Fruit

- A. Usage: “Fruit” mentioned 70 plus times in NT and in 24 of 27 books (common theme). 6xs vv. 2-8.
- B. Defined as: good works, shining as lights, excess life

II. The MANDATE to Bear Fruit – proof of salvation and discipleship (v. 8b). As the vine (trunk), Christ by the Holy Spirit produces the fruit and as His branches we bear it.

III. The MANIFESTATIONS of Fruit (3 varieties)

- A. Character (Gal. 5:22-23) – Christlikeness
- B. Conduct – godly living, generous giving, continual praising
- C. Converts – engaging in spiritual conversations to scatter the seeds

IV. DEGREES of Fruitfulness (vv. 2, 5; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23)

There are different levels or degrees of fruitfulness. Ask: “How would you describe the level of fruit bearing among Christians today?” little or no fruit? (40%); some fruit? (30%); more fruit? (20%); much fruit? (10%)!!

- A. NF (“No Fruit” – v.2) – maybe a little? almost empty? barren? How does the Vinedresser (God) respond to and treat branches of little or no fruit? 2 Pet. 1:8; Tit. 3:14
- B. SF (“Some Fruit” – v.2) = “30-fold”! Better than none. How does the Gardener treat?
- C. MF (“More Fruit” – v.2) = “60-fold”! What does the Caretaker do to increase the fruitfulness?

D. MF (“Much Fruit” – v. 5) = “100-fold”! How does the Vinedresser increase our fruitfulness?

V. SECRETS TO GREATER FRUITFULNESS

How does God respond to get us to bear more fruit? It depends on how the branches (each unique) respond to the work of the Vinedresser.

- A. To progress us from *No Fruit to Some Fruit* requires God’s *discipline* (v.2 “he takes away”). Remember we are “in Him” (connected). The idea here is “to lift up” (off ground, where can get coiled and spoiled). He does this because He loves us (Heb. 12:5-11). He lifts and cleans us. He takes all necessary means to correct us, including pain and suffering – always for our good (v. 10). God’s discipline is how He deals with sins in a wayward believer’s life. Degrees of discipline: v. 5 “rebuke” (more verbal), v. 6 “chastens” (more emotional – distress, frustration), v. 6 “scourges” inflict punishment. Answer is to confess and repent. *If our life consistently bears little or no fruit, God will intervene to discipline us.*
- B. To progress us from *Some Fruit to More Fruit* He “prunes” us (v. 2b). He not only lifts us up, He also cuts us back so we can bear more fruit. How does He prune us? Primarily through His Word (v. 3 “clean” – Katharos; “prune” – katharo). Reading and submitting to God’s Word is essential (Heb. 4:12-13; Jm. 1:22-25). He has to cut back the “suckers” (good stuff just not the best). M. Tenney . . . *If our life bears some fruit, God will intervene to prune you.*

Note: Discipline vs. Pruning . . .

- C. To progress us from *More Fruit to Much Fruit* requires *abiding* (v. 5). This takes to Key 2 – the key to bearing fruit is abiding. Secret 3: *If our life bears a lot of fruit, God invites us to abide more deeply.*

CONC: Fruitfulness is a must. It is one of the clearest indications of salvation. Actually connected to the Vine.