

# What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian Must Produce Fruit



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# A Christian Must Produce Fruit

Learn about the Christian's responsibility to produce fruit as well as some kinds of fruit Christians must and must not produce

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# A Christian Must Produce Fruit

What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian means a great deal. Fortunately, God has given us all the information we need to know about what being a Christian really means. As we study His saving message, we discover that a Christian must produce fruit.

## *Jesus Expects You To Produce Fruit*

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Does God expect anything from you after you do what is necessary to become a Christian? Or, are you “once saved, always saved” – as some suggest? Revelation 2:10 clearly teaches that you must be faithful until your death in order to receive the crown of life in Heaven. Furthermore, Galatians 5:4 is one passage that clearly states the possibility of falling away from the grace of God after you have been saved by it. So, both of these passages demonstrate the need for the Christian to live in the way that is pleasing to God throughout the duration of his/her earthly life. And, one of the things Jesus expects from your life is that you must bear/produce fruit during your life.

In John 15:1-8, Jesus teaches the importance of His disciples producing fruit. While we will not consider every lesson from this passage, we will want to examine the importance of producing fruit. But, first, let’s consider the text itself.

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

In this text, Jesus identifies Himself as the “true vine,” His Father as the “vinedresser,” and His disciples as branches of the vine. Those who originally heard Jesus speaking these words would have likely called to mind the grape vine, the one who tends to the vineyard, and the various branches/tendrils that were attached to the vine. And, Jesus will demonstrate that this familiar sight has tremendous implications for how Jesus’ followers are expected to live their lives. Consider a few significant lessons from this text.

(1) All life is in the vine. What is a branch without the vine? It will never grow. It will never produce any fruit. Jesus said, “the branch cannot bear fruit of itself.” It will simply wither and die. The same is true concerning those who want to be Jesus’ disciples. There is no spiritual life outside of Him. There is no spiritual fruit worth anything that will be produced without Jesus. Jesus said, “for without Me you can do nothing.”

Certainly this is a solemn reminder that you cannot choose to live your life in just any way. You

must be following the ways of Jesus Christ in order to maintain your relationship with Him and continue to receive spiritual life through Him. And, the only way your life will produce anything that is worthwhile or profitable is if you are joined to Jesus Christ! For, it is only when you are following Him that your life will be producing the kind of fruit that will please God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 indicates that the inspired word of God completely equips you to do every good work God wants you to be doing.

(2) The fruitless branch is worthless to the vinedresser. What good is a fruitless branch to the vinedresser? His entire work (as a vinedresser) is to cultivate the land and the vine to produce the greatest harvest of fruit that is possible. Certainly, then, a branch that never produces any fruit (though he has tried to cultivate it so that it would bear fruit) will be removed from the vine. Not only is this fruitless branch useless to the vinedresser, but, it is actually working contrary to his goals – as it steals valuable nutrients from the fruit-producing branches.

Jesus plainly states that God “takes away” every branch that does not produce fruit. If you claim to be a Christian but do not produce any fruit, you are only putting on a false appearance. Perhaps your life looks religious to others who are living around you. Yet, perhaps your life has nothing but leaves in it. However, God (the vinedresser) will examine each branch at the appropriate time – and He will evaluate whether the branch produced as it should have produced. At that time, if God finds that you have not been producing fruit for Him as you should, you will be cut off from the vine (“cast out as a branch”) and wither. Then, those branches that had been cut off will be gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. Ultimately, eternal punishment in Hell fire is your eternal destination if you do not produce spiritual fruit for the Lord.

(3) The fruitful branch will glorify the vinedresser. Why is it so important for the branches of the vine to produce fruit? Why will the fruitless branches be cast off and burned (even if they look like they are alive)? The answer is found in the purpose of the vinedresser. The vinedresser does not spend his time, energy, and resources to cultivate a vine that just looks good to the eye. He is expending himself in this way in order that he might receive a

return on his investment. Perhaps it is to have fruit for his family. Perhaps it is to sell the fruit and make a profit. Regardless of his specific purpose, only the fruitful vine will glorify the vinedresser.

Look carefully at verse 8 again. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” God is not glorified when you just put on a show of righteousness in front of others. In fact, He condemns such hypocrisy (see Matthew 23). Instead, He is glorified whenever you truly apply His teachings to your life and produce the kind of fruit He wants from your life. The Father has not created all things and sacrificed His only begotten Son in order to receive your empty praise. Rather, He wants your complete devotion and your true worship! After all, this is your true purpose in life (see Isaiah 43:7 and Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

(4) The fruitful branch is pruned in order that it might bear more fruit. How much fruit should one branch produce? Is just one cluster of grapes enough for a branch to produce in its lifetime? Certainly, the vinedresser knows that some branches are capable of producing more than others. Yet, he also knows that each branch ought to be continuously producing fruit. He knows how to cultivate each one in order to help it accomplish that goal – by pruning the branches that have already produced fruit.

Jesus said that God prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it “may bear more fruit” (verse 2). God knows what you are capable of producing. He does not expect more from you than you are capable of producing. However, He also does not expect less from you than you are capable of producing. Therefore, it is important for you (after you have produced spiritual fruit in the past) to continue to grow and produce more spiritual fruit. While it can be easy for a Christian to rest on his/her past successes as a Christian, he/she must realize that now is not the time for rest! Instead, rest will come after life on this earth is over (see Revelation 14:13). As long as you are living on this earth, God is trying to get your life to produce more fruit to glorify Him!

### **Mark 4:14-20**

In Mark 4:14-20, Jesus explains the parable He had taught in Mark 4:3-9. The parable deals with

three elements: The seed, the sower, and the soils. While we will not consider every lesson from this passage, we will want to examine the importance of producing fruit. But, first, let's consider the text itself.

“The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

This teaching of Jesus has many of the same applications as the first one we considered. Once again, the emphasis is on fruit being produced. However, this parable helps us understand why some people will produce that spiritual fruit and others will not. In the parable, Jesus helps us to see that the seed is the word of God. And, when this seed is sown, it comes into contact with different types of soil (which represent the different hearts of men and women). Therefore, whether fruit is produced in your life or not will depend upon what kind of heart (mind) you have. If you are focused on earthly things, you will not produce fruit for God. However, if you are focused on the things of God, you will be producing fruit. So, you will find yourself *somewhere* in this parable – as one of these four different types of soil. Now, let's briefly examine each one.

(1) The wayside soil. This type of soil refers to the ground that is hard-packed. It is ground that has not been touched by the plow. Therefore, whenever seed falls on this kind of soil, it just lays on the surface and it is easy for the birds to snatch the seed away so that it can never have any kind of impact on the ground.

This category would refer to many people who are simply not interested in the gospel – at least not interested enough to seriously consider its message. Satan has blinded their minds so much that the gospel has no effect on their thinking. Now, in the case of the wayside soil, it is not as if the gospel is too difficult to be understood and obeyed. Instead, these individuals do not understand it because they are not focused on spiritual things. As long as Satan has blinded this person by the temporary things of this world, he/she will never believe the gospel and be saved! Unfortunately, there is a lot of “wayside soil” who will never be interested in God's saving message (just as the majority of land in this world is uncultivated land).

(2) The rocky soil. This type of soil is soil that it intermixed with a lot of rock. Therefore, the top layer of the soil may look good for sowing seed. And, initially after the seed is sown, a plant does spring up. However, because of the rock below the surface, it cannot take sufficient root. Then, due to its inability to get the proper nutrients, the plant withers and dies whenever it is subject to the heat of the sun.

The one represented here initially accepts the gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice that Jesus states this one hears the word and “immediately receive it with gladness” (Mark 4:16). He/she is willing to accept the fundamental teachings of the gospel and desires the salvation that is offered in Jesus Christ. However, this individual did not count the cost of discipleship. Unfortunately, those who are like the “rocky soil” will not endure the persecutions and tribulations that are associated with living for Jesus Christ (“for the word's sake”) and they fall away. They are not sufficiently rooted (steadfast) in the hope of the gospel.

(3) The thorny soil. This type of soil is soil that is not only supplying nutrients for the seed that was planted; but, it is also supplying nutrients to many weeds. Therefore, this type of soil does produce a plant; but, because of all the other weeds that are growing alongside of it, the plant is choked out and will not bring any fruit to maturity. Notice that no fruit is said to be brought to *maturity*. Perhaps there will be some buds that can be seen or some fruit that starts to grow. However, nothing will ever be brought to a place of maturity so that it is useful.

## ***You Will Be Known By Your Fruit***

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Once again, the implication is that the individual who is represented by this type of soil does initially obey the gospel of Christ (as the seed did produce a plant in the parable). However, this “Christian” is not entirely devoted to cultivating the word of God in his/her heart so as to make diligent application of all its teachings. Instead, this individual has not given up cultivating the desires for worldly things (such as the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things). Because these individuals have divided allegiances, there may be times at which this person appears promising in his/her service of God. However, this individual simply never makes the kind of commitment that is required by Christ to truly serve Him. He/she will never produce the kind of spiritual fruit that God desires.

(4) The good soil. This type of soil is soil that is prepared to receive the seed, provide it with the right nourishment, and will produce the desired result. While every seed results in fruit being produced, not every plant produces the same amount of fruit. Each one simply produces according to its own ability.

These individuals do more than just initially hear and obey the gospel’s message. These individuals are diligent in making the right application of that message to their lives and live accordingly. Therefore, these individuals will see the kinds of spiritual fruit being produced in their lives that is pleasing to God. Then, Jesus says that not every person will produce the exact same amount of spiritual fruit. Instead, just as some plants produce more fruit than others (due to the ability of each one), some people have greater abilities to produce more spiritual fruit than others. However, God knows exactly how much fruit each person is capable of producing – and He expects each one to produce that much (as demonstrated in Jesus’ parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30).

Though more could be said about the expectation Jesus has for you to produce fruit, we now need to consider the fact that you will be known by your fruit. You see, fruit does not just have the characteristic of demonstrating that a branch is alive and useful; but, it is also useful in identifying. For instance, an apple tree will produce apples. A peach tree will produce peaches. And, a grape vine will produce grapes.

### **The fruit you produce identifies yourself**

The type of fruit you produce will identify yourself. This principle is identified in multiple passages in the Scriptures. Consider two examples.

(1) Matthew 7:15-16, 20. In this text, Jesus warns, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits...Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

Those who were promoting false religion could be known by the things their lives produced. Namely, in the realm of false teachers, you can know them by examining their teachings.

(2) Luke 6:43-45. In a parallel passage to Matthew 7, Jesus provides more insight to the value of fruit in identifying. “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Here is the general principle stated (without specific reference to false religious teachers). Jesus says that “every tree is known by its fruit.” If you wanted to gather grapes, you would not go to a bramble bush. In the same way, Jesus says that men produce good things whenever they have good hearts

(hearts that are focused on the right things). However, men produce evil things whenever they have evil hearts (hearts that are focused on wrong things). Likewise, your heart will be made known by your fruit.

## **Known to God**

God is all-knowing. Therefore, He already knows your heart (Acts 15:8). He knows if your heart is good or if your heart is evil. However, in order for His judgment to be righteous and fair, He gives you opportunity to demonstrate your heart to Him through your works.

Are you known to God as being one who produces good fruit? Whenever God looks at your life and evaluates your heart, does He see an individual who is focused on accomplishing His will? Does He see someone who is interested and engaged in leading others to Him? Does He see a person who is focused on growing spiritually and maturing in faith? Does He see an individual who is truly and unquestionably devoted to serving and worshiping Him? The fruit you are producing in your life will help make all of this known to God!

Or, are you known as being one who produces bad fruit? Whenever God looks at your life and evaluates your heart, does He see an individual who is focused on living according to your own desires and interests? Does He see someone who is not truly interested and engaged in leading others to Him? Does He see a person who is not growing spiritually or maturing in the faith – at least not how you should be growing and maturing? Does He see someone who is sowing seeds of discord and doubt? Does He see an individual who is devoted to gossip and tale-bearing? Does He see a person who is not 100% devoted to His cause? The fruit you are producing in your life will help make all of this known to God!

## **Known to others**

God is not the only one who is watching your life. You are also being watched by the world. The world is watching those who claim to be Christians. For instance, in Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus demonstrates that the Christian's life should be as

different from the world as light is from darkness – and demonstrates that everyone who is around you will be able to see your shining light (if your light indeed is shining). However, this is not the only time that the world takes notice of those who claim to be Christians. The world also takes notice when a person claims to be a Christian and then lives in ways that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible – demonstrating himself/herself to be a hypocrite. In the same way, you will make yourself known to those who are around you (i.e. other Christians, your family, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, your classmates, etc.) by the fruits you are producing.

Are you known to others as being one who produces good fruit? Do others know you as someone who puts God first in everything that you do and in every decision that you make? Do others know you as a person who tries to serve and do good to others whenever there is opportunity to do so? Do others see your spiritual growth and maturity in the faith? Do others know you as a person who will try to encourage them to serve the Lord and overcome the temptations of life? Do other people know you as an individual they can come to and ask their Bible questions? The fruit that you are producing will make all of this known to others!

Or, are you known to others as being one who produces bad fruit? Do others know you as a trouble maker? Do others know you as being dishonest and dishonorable? Do others know you as someone they cannot count on? Do others know you as fitting in with the crowd? Do others know you as being an individual who pursues your own selfish desires? Do others know you as using filthy language, consuming alcoholic beverages, and engaging in other sinful activities? Do others know you as a person who is seeking your own earthly pleasures and riches? Do others know you as someone who is religious, but just not deeply devoted to serving God? The fruit that you are producing will make all of this known to others!

## **Known to yourself**

Finally, your fruit will not just make yourself known to God and to others. Your fruit will also make yourself known to yourself! You see, it is

## ***Some Fruit You Must Not Be Producing***

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possible for you to deceive yourself. For instance, James wrote, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). So, when you know the right things God wants from your life, but fail to actually do those things He requires, you can deceive yourself into thinking that you are pleasing to God.

It can certainly be quite challenging to objectively look at our own lives – because we usually want to view ourselves in the best possible way. We don’t like to be wrong and have to make changes in our lives. Often, whenever someone else (after looking at our fruit) tries to encourage us to do better or rebuke a sin in some area, we get defensive – because we don’t see what they see! However, if you will dedicate yourself to self-examination by looking at the fruit of your life, you can know whether your life actually is pleasing to God or not. This is exactly what Paul instructed to be done in 2 Corinthians 13:5. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you are disqualified.”

Is your life pleasing to God? Are you completely dedicated to serving and worshiping God? Are you always putting Him absolutely first in the things you do and the decisions you make? Are you really interested in doing the things He wants you to be doing? You will be able to know the answer to these (and similar) questions by looking at the fruit produced in your life.

Or, does your life fail to please God? Are you focused on pursuing things that make you happy and that please yourself? Are you unwilling to sacrifice in order to do the things God wants you to do? Are you participating in sinful things? Are you settling for a form of religion rather than following the steps of Jesus Christ? Are you conforming to the world rather than transforming into a person devoted to holiness? You will be able to know the answer to these (and similar) questions by looking at the fruit produced in your life.

Now, as we have been talking about the need for the Christian to produce fruit, we need to be more specific. Indeed, there are many people who profess to be Christians – but, they don’t produce the kind of fruit God wants them to be producing in their lives. While there is much that could be said about this point, I want to look at only two passages.

### **Ephesians 5:3-7**

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”

Take a moment to observe the fact that there are some things that can be produced in your life that are not fitting for one of God’s saints to be producing. A “saint” is a most holy thing. Specifically, “saints” are those who have been made holy by the blood of Jesus Christ and are committed to living according to God’s standard of holiness. Therefore, anything that is not according to the holiness of God is not fitting for you to produce in your life – as one of God’s holy people.

Then, consider the things identified in this passage that are not fitting for you to produce in your life. Fornication. All uncleanness. Covetousness. Filthiness. Foolish talking. Coarse jesting. Being a partaker with those who disobey God. All of these things are contrary to God’s will for your life. And, in order to produce any of these things in your life requires that you abandon the teachings of God’s word and the spiritual life that is found in Jesus Christ. Remember, a tree produces fruit after its own kind. Therefore, your life will never produce any of



these “rotten” fruits if you are truly following after Jesus Christ!

## **Galatians 5:19-21**

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

This passage actually begins back around verse 16 and continues through verse 26. In it, the apostle Paul demonstrates that those who are Christians ought to be following the ways of God (as revealed by the Holy Spirit – the things written in the pages of the Bible). And, the Christian must not be living to fulfill the desires of his/her flesh. This is because the ways of the flesh and the ways of the Spirit are “contrary to one another.” They do not lead you to live in the same kind of ways – which Paul demonstrates in verses 19-23. He then states that those who are Christ’s have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (verses 24-25).

Now, take a moment to look at the things which should *not* be produced in the life of the Christian (who is dedicated to following the ways of the Spirit). Adultery. Fornication. Uncleanness. Lewdness. Idolatry. Sorcery. Hatred. Contentions. Jealousies. Outbursts of wrath. Selfish ambitions. Dissensions. Heresies. Envy. Murders. Drunkenness. Revelries. Then, the phrase “and the like” demonstrates that there are even more types of “rotten” fruit that are produced in the life of the person who is living to please his/her own fleshly desires rather than following the ways of God. However, this list provides an excellent starting point to see the kinds of things God does *not* approve of your life producing. He says that those who produce these kinds of fruits in their lives “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Therefore, you should be diligent to study the activities that are identified in this passage (along with finding similar sinful things in

the rest of the Scriptures) so that you can keep your life from producing this kind of “rotten” fruit.

## ***Some Fruit You Must Be Producing***

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We have already established the fact that, as a Christian, Jesus Christ expects you to be producing fruit in your life. And, as we have already seen (from Jesus’ parable of the soils in Mark 4), some will produce a greater quantity of fruit than others will – because some have greater abilities and opportunities. Still, all will be producing something. And, all will be producing the same kinds of spiritual fruit (though in different quantities). This is because God gives every Christian the same basic responsibilities. The instructions He gives (unless He says they are only applicable to a particular classification of people, i.e. husbands and wives) are equally applicable to all. Therefore, let’s consider some of the fruit that every Christian must be producing in his/her life. As we do, understand that we will almost certainly not identify every type of fruit discussed in the New Testament. That will take an ongoing commitment to studying the word of God.

### **The fruits of righteousness**

Hebrews 12:3-11 speaks about the chastening (discipline) of God. That is, God (through various means) will discipline you whenever you sin against Him. However, the Hebrew writer indicates that God does not do this because He likes to watch you suffer. Instead, He does so for your own profit, that you may be a partaker of His holiness. Verse 11 says, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

So, God wants you to be producing the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” in your life. This simply refers to every kind of fruit in your life that is in line with the righteousness of God. Romans 6:22 states that, as a Christian, you will “have your fruit

to holiness.” While both of these passages are very generic, they are applicable to so much!

Whenever you make any kind of decision in your life that is in harmony with the righteous and holy ways of God, you are producing this kind of fruit. Therefore, whenever you decide to clothe yourself in modest apparel, you produce the fruit of righteousness. When you refuse to engage in sinful entertainment, you produce the fruit of righteousness. When you work for a living rather than stealing, you produce the fruit of righteousness. When you control your tongue and only speak words that will glorify God and encourage those who hear, you produce the fruit of righteousness. When you fulfill your God-given role in your family (i.e. as a husband/wife, father/mother, child, etc.), you produce the fruit of righteousness. Since God’s word is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), you produce the fruit of righteousness whenever you give yourself to being obedient to its instructions!

### **Personal spiritual growth**

Growth is a fundamental part of life. For instance, plants work to grow stronger throughout the duration of their lives so that they will be capable of producing the proper fruit. Babies grow and mature into toddlers, young children, young men/women, young adults, etc.

In the same way, God expects you to be growing spiritually. Just as newborn babies are not capable of the same amount as a mature adult, a new Christian is not capable of the same things that a mature Christian is capable of. Each one must simply produce all the fruit he/she can at the time – and must be continually devoted to growing and maturing. For instance, 2 Peter 1:5-7 identifies things which must be supplemented to your faith. “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

Problems come, however, whenever Christians aren’t growing and maturing. Wouldn’t you be concerned as a parent if your newborn child never grew or matured? Wouldn’t you be concerned as a farmer if your plants never grew beyond the point of a tiny sprout? God also is not pleased whenever His children are not growing. He is not pleased as the vinedresser whenever the branches on the vine are not maturing! For instance, the Hebrew writer spoke concerning some Christians who had not matured and grown properly in Hebrews 5:12. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” As a Christian, you must be making incremental progress every day to be more of what God wants you to be!

### **The fruit of the Spirit**

In the context we discussed previously, the apostle Paul identifies some things that God’s people will be producing in their lives whenever they devote themselves to living according to His word (as revealed by the Holy Spirit). Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Whenever you give yourself to obeying God’s word rather than fulfilling the desires of your own flesh, you will be producing these fruits. You will be demonstrating your love for God and for your fellow man. You will be living a life that is full of joy through the hope of the gospel. You will be living a life that demonstrates peace with God and with your fellow man (as much as depends on you, see Romans 12:17-21). You will be patiently enduring all of the trials, temptations, persecutions, and hardships of living life for the Lord and maintaining your faithfulness in God’s service. You will be demonstrating kindness to others in your thoughts, your words, and your actions. You will be living according to God’s standard of what is good in every area of your life. You will prove yourself to be faithful/trustworthy to God no matter what obstacles you face in life. You will conduct yourself in a gentle/meek way. You will be diligent to exercise

self-control to do only those things which will glorify God. In fact, as Galatians 5:24 indicates, all of the passions and desires of your flesh will be given over entirely to the Lord's service!

## **Spiritual instruction**

As you study God's word to see what kind of fruit God wants you to produce in your life, you should observe that God expects for all of His people to be actively involved in teaching His saving message to others. Notice again that the Hebrew writer said there was a time in which those who had once been babes in Christ "ought to be teachers" (Hebrews 5:12). Over time, these Christians are expected to mature in the faith and grow in their understanding of God's word. Then, as you grow in this way, you also increase in your ability to communicate God's word to others.

"But I am not a good speaker," someone might think. Yet, almost everyone who considers himself/herself "not a good speaker" could tell someone how to drive a car, how to prepare a meal, how to run the vacuum cleaner, how to work a computer, how to do the job he/she is trained to do at work, etc. You see, whenever you know how to do something, you can use whatever abilities and opportunities you have to help someone else learn the same. Yes, perhaps someone else is *better* equipped to train another in those areas. Still, you do have the responsibility to use your abilities and opportunities to teach what you know.

Regardless of where you are right now in your spiritual development as a Christian, you can teach other people the message of Christ. A Christian (a servant of the Lord) "must" be "able to teach" and must be actively involved in helping those who are living in opposition to God "come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Every Christian can begin by teaching people about the love of God and what he/she did to become a Christian. Then, as you grow and mature, you can teach even more people, respond to even more questions, and even teach those who are Christians in order to help them grow in Jesus Christ!

## **Edification**

Every Christian has the responsibility to be edifying his/her Christian brothers and sisters. Hebrews 3:12-13 states, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Notice that this is even a "daily" responsibility for those who are Christians. The Christian is clearly expected to be concerned about his Christian brothers and sisters – and be actively involved in helping them overcome the challenges they face in living for Jesus Christ. This fruit of edification involves bearing the burdens of your brethren (Galatians 6:2). It involves not neglecting the assembling together of the local church (Hebrews 10:24-25). It involves forgiving your brethren who have repented of sin (Ephesians 4:32). It involves helping your brethren when they are in need (Acts 4:32-37). All of these things (and others) are involved in producing the fruit of edification.

And, sometimes, this edification also includes rebuke and correction. You see "edification" is not about leaving someone with a good feeling. Instead, it is all about building someone up in the faith of Jesus Christ. However, when a brother or sister has sinned and left the faith, edification involves going to that brother/sister and pointing him/her to Jesus Christ (see Galatians 6:1 and James 5:19-20). In doing so, James says that you can "save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins"!

## **Good deeds toward others**

The Christian is taught to be a servant – of God and of other people (see John 13:1-17). In performing this kind of service, the Christian should be producing the fruits of doing good to people as they have opportunity. For instance, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) demonstrates that truly loving your neighbor involves using your abilities to do good to those you have the opportunity to help.

Galatians 6:10 records this commandment. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” So, you must “especially” take advantage of your abilities and opportunities to help your Christian brothers and sisters. But, this responsibility also extends to all mankind. You could produce this kind of fruit by giving a meal to someone in need, helping someone financially through a difficult stretch of time, mowing the grass or cleaning the house of someone who is unable to do so, giving someone a ride to the doctors or to the assemblies of the local church, etc. Opportunities to do good are everywhere. You must simply lift up your eyes and focus on producing this kind of fruit!

### **True worship**

As you seek to produce fruit throughout your life that is pleasing to God, you must not fail to produce the fruit of true worship to God. In fact, true worship is one of the things God expects of those who are His people. Listen to Jesus’ words in John 4:23-24. “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Since the Father is “seeking” those who will engage in true worship, shouldn’t you desire to produce this kind of fruit in your life? Hebrews 13:15 states the following: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” However, as you seek to produce the fruit of worship to God, remember that you must worship Him in spirit (heartfelt, sincere) and in truth (according to God’s revelation of truth) in order for your worship to be pleasing to Him.

## ***Conclusion***

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Are you producing spiritual fruit that pleases God? As a Christian, you must produce fruit that is pleasing to God throughout the course of your lifetime. And, no matter how much fruit you have

produced in the past, you must continue to produce even more fruit (note that even the apostle Paul – with all the fruit he had produced in his life – said that he could become “disqualified” and lose his salvation, see 1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Get to work today in producing the fruit God wants from your life!

## ***Study Questions***

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### **1. Jesus Expects You To Produce Fruit**

What do you learn about the importance of producing fruit from John 15:1-8?

What do you learn about the importance of producing fruit from Mark 4:14-20?

### **2. You Will Be Known By Your Fruit**

How will the fruit you produce identify yourself?

How will the fruit you produce make yourself known to God?

How will the fruit you produce make yourself known to others?

How will the fruit you produce make yourself known to yourself?

### **3. Some Fruit You Must Not Be Producing**

What fruit must you *not* be producing, according to Ephesians 5:3-7?

What fruit must you *not* be producing, according to Galatians 5:19-21?

#### **4. Some Fruit You Must Be Producing**

List and briefly explain each of the fruits identified in this lesson.

A)

B)

C)

D)

E)

F)

G)