



What do You Want?
THE SIX WEEK
Pursuit

“Is Your Life Fruitful?”

When you heard the word FRUITFUL, it’s likely images of productivity, success, morality, Christian living, and so on, pop into your mind. But, what does it mean to not be FRUITFUL?

An easy example of unfruitfulness can be found down Highway 7 in the Okanogan Valley. As you drive down that old country road it appears as though every orchard on the old highway is being chopped down. Yet, upon closer inspection, there is life. Those chopped down trees are being grafted and transformed from one variety of fruit to another. Though now only a stump with some sticks glued to it, within a few years, those little sticks will grow into healthy branches bursting with fruit. It is an amazing miracle to witness.

But wait; hold on one minute, why were the trees cut down to begin with? Why was it necessary to cut down the old tree and nearly start over with something new?

“The Tree was no Longer Fruitful”

Whether by sickness or an out-of-style variety of fruit, eventually an orchardist must update their trees. Several orchards towards Loomis have traded out all of their red Gala apples for green Granny Delicious. Why? To that Orchardist, the owner and caretaker of the trees, the red Galas are no longer FRUITFUL. So, back to our question we started with:

“Is Your Life Fruitful?”

In John 15, Jesus meets with His disciples, His closest friends. Last week, we discussed how these young men were just beginning to investigate Jesus. Some time has passed by John 15 and these curious kids were close with Jesus. They have seen Him perform amazing acts, and even

taken part in His miracles and teaching. Back to John 15, Jesus is preparing both Himself and His 11 remaining Disciples for the Cross and all that will follow. It's going to be a crazy ride!

It is within this crazy time of urgency that Jesus teaches His friends, His disciples, that if they stay or abide in Him and His teachings, they will be FRUITFUL. Furthermore, Jesus states their FRUITFULNESS will prove they belong to Him and know Him.

“Is Your Life Fruitful?”

We are a lot like the fruit trees of an orchard. We just grow. We survive, and we grow. But just because you are growing does not mean you are FRUITFUL in God's terms. And God's terms, kinda matter way more than anyone else's measurements or ideals. God is our caretaker and owner, especially if we are a follower of Jesus. So what happens when Jesus, our orchardist, informs us that our growth is not FRUITFUL? How do we respond?

We all have our own concept of what is FRUITFUL. In fact, I guarantee many of us have conflicting opinions and notions of what a FRUITFUL life looks like. But, just for a moment, let's put aside our opinions on FRUITFUL living and just take a look at what God defines as FRUITFUL.

“God Values Another Fruit”

Galatians 5:22-23 states: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

This FRUIT is the FRUIT God values. It is the FRUIT Jesus wants to grow in your life. Did you notice the word in this passage is FRUIT and not FRUITS? All of these qualities are of the FRUIT Jesus wants to produce in your life. Not just one, not just two, not even just eight. All of these qualities are qualities of the FRUIT Jesus grows in people.

“How Can I Grow Fruit?”

Jesus gave simple directions to living a FRUITFUL life. Jesus simply asked His Disciples to STAY. “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Abide, STAY with Jesus. Keep His words close and you will just start to grow FRUIT. Why? Because you are spending time with the orchardist; the caretaker of our souls: Jesus Christ.

“What Do You Want?”

What are you seeking? What are you pursuing? Is your life FRUITFUL because of your pursuits? Or is your life like an overgrown fruit tree; appearing healthy and vibrant and yet bearing no good fruit? Jesus wants to give you a FRUITFUL life. But are you willing to STAY with the orchardist? Do you trust the caretaker of our souls to make your life FRUITFUL?

Jesus is trustworthy. And I guarantee, if we learn to STAY with Jesus and hold His words close to our hearts, we will be astounded and amazed with the FRUIT He will produce in us!

GROUP DISCUSSION

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your group.

1. How do you define a FRUITFUL life apart from the FRUITS of the Spirit? For example: is having a happy family what makes your life FRUITFUL, is it a good career, is it financial security, is it fulfilling your goals, etc.
2. So is your life FRUITFUL based on your definition? Now, let's flip things around, is your life fruitful based on Jesus' definition of FRUITFULNESS? Why or why not?
3. Can your neighbors tell that you are Jesus follower simply by watching you? What kind of FRUIT to they see?
4. The FRUIT Jesus produces in your life has many qualities. Of the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23, which traits do you most strongly display in your life? Which qualities do you lack or struggle with?
5. Jesus wants us to stay with Him and keep His words close to our hearts. By doing this, we become FRUITFUL. Does Jesus' definition of a FRUITFUL life conflict with your perspective?
6. Sometimes, we are like fruit trees and our lives grow in all kinds of crazy directions. But is all growth FRUITFUL? Why or why not? Jesus is the orchardist, and sometimes he needs to cut things out of our wild growing lives. What “branches” do you think Jesus would cut out of your life? Do you trust Jesus as your caretaker to cut so you can be FRUITFUL?

QUESTIONS FOR KIDS

If you have children, here are some questions you can go over with them.

1. The FRUIT of the Spirit has 9 parts. Which ones do you have?
2. Which FRUIT of the Spirit do you struggle with?
3. God wants to give you all the parts of the FRUIT. It's kind of like how a cherry has a stem, a seed, and the tasty fruity part. God wants to give you all the parts of the FRUIT of the Spirit. How do you get all of the FRUIT?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer. Here are a few ideas of what you could pray about based on the topic of today's discussion:

- Pray for Jesus to shift your view on what is a fruitful life.
- Ask for Jesus to give you a fruitful life. Pray that He would enrich your current life and bring fruitfulness to where you are right now. Pray that your life would show Jesus.
- Ask God if there is anything in your life that is wild growth and needs to be cut. Pray that God would reveal to you what is unfruitful growth and pray for Him to remove it.
- Pray for Jesus to give you strength to trust in Him as your orchardist and caretaker. If you are struggling with this, let Him know. He won't be offended.
- Tell Jesus of your need for Him and your need to stay with Him. Pray that He would invade your day-to-day life and surprise you with His presence.

THIS WEEK...

Take a moment within this next week and spend some time in earnest prayer. Consider and ask of Jesus: what do I need to cut out of my life? What is currently unfruitful in my life? How can I become more fruitful? Allow yourself to be challenged and be warned: being cut and pruned is never fun, but the fruitfulness God will produce in your life will blow your mind! Let Jesus be the orchardist this week and take a step of faith. You can trust Him as your caretaker. God bless!