

Bearing Fruit for the Glory of God

Introduction:

This past week I came across this little phrase in my devotional “Thoughts for the Quiet Hour” – *“The influence we exert in the world is created by our relationship to Jesus Christ; and our relationship to Jesus Christ is revealed by our influence.”* The center of this quote has to do with our relationship with Jesus, our friendship with him, the sharing of life together in all kinds of circumstances and friendships with one another. As well I wondered how my influence rated last year and how my influence could be better this year. We can’t change our history or 2011 but we can learn from it and move forward into our future and 2012.

Today I want to share with you a wonderful passage of Scripture that will encourage us in our relationship with God and our influence with each other and to the ends of the earth. 2012 will provide us with opportunities and challenges; opportunities to grow in influence and challenges to overcome.

John 15:1-17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and **my words abide in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.****

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love.** 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that **your fruit should abide**, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 15 is an amazing passage of Scripture highlighting the spiritual oneness of Christ and his people, and his relation to them as the Source of all their spiritual life and fruitfulness. John uses descriptive language familiar to Jewish ears, that of the vine and the branches. One of the keys messages in **John 15:1-17** is to abide:

We abide in Christ, his Words and his Love resulting in our fruitfulness remaining.

Courageous is the latest movie to exhort and challenge Dads to be Fathers and Dads to the best of their abilities so that spouses and kids alike may grow in their relationship with God.

Most of us here today have had a positive relationship with our dads and to some degree have desired to please them. What a joy it is to have your dad proud of you and your accomplishments in life. This is also true of our relationship with God. One of our chief desires is to please and bring glory to God. AMEN...

We have a church motto – Apprehending God’s Heart and Fulfilling His Dreams. How do we do this? One of the ways is simply this: by abiding in God and bearing much fruit.

Apprehending and abiding:

The abiding process involves our inner lives as we genuinely and consistently connect with the vine.

Phil 1:9-11 - And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The fruit of the Spirit – **Gal 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

Remember the picture of Father God pruning the vine. There are areas in our inner lives that must be pruned away; they are dead thoughts, emotions and actions that do not glorify God. Areas where we are not growing will be pruned by the Father not by one another... However, there are times when Father God prunes areas that are bearing fruit and we wonder why. This is so that we can bear more fruit at a later time. We must be genuine and growing in our relationship with God and this is accomplished by abiding and remaining in God.

Grace is like the sap of life that nourishes God’s children. Abiding is not meant to be religious but full of the rest of God. If we are abiding in Christ and his Word and his Love but finding ourselves shriveling up spiritually then we must adjust our approach to God. As we draw near we must do so based on his grace and mercy for our lives, not out of some religious duty.

Fulfilling and bearing:

The fruitfulness of Christians must not stop at simply having the life of Christ formed inwardly, but we must also understand God's passion for fruitfulness to be evident to those around us. It is much like a newly married couple who learn to abide with each other. As they grow in intimacy some day they will have children. This is the same idea as abiding in Christ and growing in intimacy with him, someday the believer is meant to be fruitful.

There are several Scriptures that challenge us as believers to be fruitful. As believers we are convinced of being fruitful inwardly but at times hesitant to be fruitful outwardly, not wanting to appear proud. However Jesus tells us to **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).**

Here we see good works as glorifying our Father in heaven much like **John 15:8**.

1 Peter 4:10-11 - As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, **that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

One of the ways to be fruitful outwardly is to be good stewards of the gifts of God given to us. As we serve the body of Christ with our gifts God is glorified.

Col 1:3-6 - We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, **the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing**—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of **God in truth...** In this passage we see fruitfulness related to the gospel and those who have come to the Lord and who will come to the Lord in the future – bearing fruit and increasing....

In Conclusion:

John 15:8 is a key verse to consider today - **By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.** Proving to be disciples of God comes into focus by bearing fruit, both inwardly and outwardly. As Christians we must grow in the fruit of righteousness and also be bearing fruit according to the gospel. This is an ongoing circular process of abiding in Christ and his Words and his Love. We learn to allow the fruit of the Spirit to grow in our lives, while letting the Father prune those areas of our lives that are diseased and dying or maybe even dead.

Today let's remind ourselves that we are servants of God with gifts and talents.

Let's continue to develop these gifts into maturity, putting them into action in the church and the world.

Remember the quote we started with: *"The influence we exert in the world is created by our relationship to Jesus Christ; and our relationship to Jesus Christ is revealed by our influence."*

Let's become influencers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:10 reminds us that **"we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."**

As we see fruitfulness and answers to our prayers, let's remember praise must always follow our fruitfulness and God's faithfulness. This praise leads us to glorifying God who is the source of our fruitfulness thereby proving to each other and to God we are his disciples as we abide in him.