

FAITH AND FRUIT LIKE A 'SEESAW'



The very first commandment God gives to humankind in the Bible, is to **“be fruitful and multiply.”**

On the sixth day of creation, He made man in His own image, and “God blessed them, and God said to them, **‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion ... over every living thing that moves on the earth’.**” (Genesis 1: 28).

The idea of us being fruitful and multiplying must be important to God, because after mankind “lost the plot” and went feral, and God drowned everybody except Noah and his family, the first thing He said to Noah after the flood receded was to **“be fruitful and multiply”** (in fact, God says in twice in Genesis 9, verses 1 and 7).

So how are we to obey this commandment, to be fruitful? To carry out the very specific brief Jesus Himself gives us in John 15:16 – “I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit.” I believe the answer is simple, yet profound (like so many great Bible truths) – by **FAITH!** There is a clear, direct and causal link between fruitfulness and faith, and we see it played out so often and in so many ways throughout the magnificent panorama of God’s Word.

The great chapter on faith in the Bible is, of course, Hebrews 11, where we learn that faith is not something super-spiritual and ethereal, but rather a solid foundation of “substance”, on which we can firmly plant our feet and stand strong against all the storms and attacks that business and professional people experience in their normal working day.

Without faith, Hebrews tells us, we simply cannot please God. But if we have faith, and “diligently seek” Him, it says He will reward us (Hebrews 11: 6). And what form does that reward take? If we read on through Hebrews 11, I believe the next few verses answer that question very directly.

It surely is no coincidence that the first person named after the promise of a reward, in the very next verse, Verse 7, is Noah – the man God commanded twice to “be fruitful and multiply”. After Noah, the writer of Hebrews turns to Abraham, probably the greatest faith figure in all Scripture.

“By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called...” (Hebrews 11: 8). And was Abraham fruitful? Listen to this: “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude – innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.” (Hebrews 11:12).

The Bible goes on to tell us that this one man, who had faith, not only had offspring “as the stars of the sky”, but prospered greatly in his finances and possessions (Genesis 24: 1, 35). God said to Abraham: “I...will multiply you exceedingly...I have made you a father of many nations...I will make you exceedingly fruitful...Blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you. (Genesis 17: 2, 6,6; 22: 17, 18).

And the fruitfulness that Abraham enjoyed, through his faith, was not just for him, but it was passed down through his descendants. God continued the same promise to Isaac that He had made to his father Abraham, that his descendants would be “as the stars of heaven” (Genesis 26: 4). While in terms of personal prosperity, Isaac’s fruitfulness was breathtaking: “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering, until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants.” (Genesis 26: 12-14).

Later in the same chapter of Genesis, Isaac happily announces: “...Now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” God goes on: “I will bless you and multiply your descendants...” (Genesis 26: 22 and 24).

Isaac passes on the “fruitfulness of faith” to his son Jacob, praying: “May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you...and give you the blessing of Abraham.” (Genesis 28: 3 and 4). The generational fruitfulness continues to multiply, with God even changing Jacob’s name to Israel, meaning a “Prince with God”, and saying: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.” (Genesis 32: 28; 35: 11).

And on to the next generation...Joseph, Israel’s son, had God’s special favour, and God made all that he did prosper...” whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper” (Genesis 39: 3 and 23). When Israel called his sons to him at the end of his life, he said of Joseph: “Joseph is a fruitful

bough, a fruitful bough by a well." (Genesis 49:22). Joseph even called the name of his second son Ephraim, which means "fruitfulness" (Genesis 41:52).

Jesus says that if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can move mountains (Matthew 17:20). He sees faith as a seed, something you can plant, and grow, and multiply, until you can move mountains – until the seed grows into a tree bearing "much fruit", which brings glory to God. (John 15: 5 and 8).

As "kingdom business professionals", we must all strive to be fruitful, so we can please our King, and bring glory to Him; and we do that by living and walking in faith, just as our "father in faith" Abraham did. We are heirs to the blessings of Abraham, and one of those blessings – surely – is faith.

The bible tells us we all have a "measure of faith" (Romans 12:3), even if it is as small as a mustard seed – but it isn't the size of our faith that matters so much as what we do with our faith – whether we see it as "substance" and reality, the "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), or just a religious word that gets bandied about in church on Sundays.

God wants us to "TRUST AND OBEY" Him. Trust and obedience are like two sides on a seesaw, each is pretty useless without the other, the same as faith and works or action – faith without action, and action without faith are equally ineffective. Action is where being fruitful comes in; to "trust and obey" means to "have faith and bear fruit". When we work, or do anything for God, the aim is always to bear fruit - we are commanded to bear fruit, to "be fruitful and multiply".

James, with a little paraphrasing, says: "Faith by itself, if it does not bear fruit, is dead." (James 2:17). First faith, then fruit – before we can bear fruit, we must have faith, and that comes simply from having the right relationship with Jesus, the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12: 2). As Paul says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" – by Jesus Christ, the King of kings - the Living Word.