

LET'S ALL GET INTO THE FRUIT BUSINESS

By John Gagliardi



God doesn't mind what kind of (legitimate) business we're in, as long as - at the end of the day - we're all in the fruit business!

Jesus makes it clear it's His kind of business – He has chosen and ordained us to bear fruit that lasts (John 15: 16), and if we bear “much fruit”, we glorify the Father (John 15: 8).

Fruit (“peri” in Hebrew and “karpos” in Greek) is a recurring theme throughout the entire Word of God, with the first reference in Genesis, and the last in Revelation. Indeed, the first command God gives to mankind, is to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1: 27 and 28).

When a plant bears fruit, it automatically means increase and multiplication – and our God is a fruitbearing God, a God of increase, and He expects us to follow His example in all our affairs. He expects us to be fruitful as our natural condition, and if we are not, He makes His displeasure crystal clear.

In the well-known parable of the “talents”, He tells the unfruitful servant that he is “wicked and lazy” and is headed for the “outer darkness” with “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. But He calls the two servants who increased the talents he had given them “good and faithful” (Matthew 25: 14-30).

The only difference between the servants was what they did with the talents – whether they were fruitful, or unfruitful. Fruitfulness brings great rewards, but unfruitfulness great condemnation and punishment.

Jesus again uses fruitfulness as a test in Luke 13: 6-8, where a fig tree that hasn't borne fruit for three years is given just one more year to bear fruit, and then it's firewood. Also in the story in Mark 11, where Jesus actually curses a fig tree and says, “let no one eat fruit from you ever again”, and the unfruitful fig tree dries up and dies.

Fruitfulness is a serious matter with God, and something that all Kingdom business professionals need to keep in the forefront of their minds. We have been called into the marketplace, into your particular business or profession, to “go and bear fruit”. Most of the fifteenth chapter of the Book of John is about what we need to do to bear fruit – we are not left wondering and ignorant.

The Lord expects us to be fruitful, and He tells us how – it is not a mystery. Our job is just to read the instructions in His Word, and obey them. He says: “I am the vine, and you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5).

He tells us that if we “abide” in Him, and His Words “abide” in us, then whatever we ask for will be done for us, and “by this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” (John 15: 5, 7, 8). As we go and bear fruit in obedience to His Word, Jesus tells us we become His friends, not just servants (John 15: 14 and 15).

Of course, as we have talked about in the last couple of weeks, there is always a time of testing and trials – and He warns us here too, that we will be “pruned” to help us bear more fruit.

The key word is “abide” – we are to abide in Him, and His Word is to abide in us, if we are to be able to go out and bear much fruit.

The Oxford Dictionary meaning of “abide” is to “act in accordance with, remain faithful to, remain, continue, dwell”. Webster’s says it means to “be obedient to, to bear patiently, to dwell.” One of the meanings given in Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary (Greek: “Meno”) says to abide is to “cleave” unto a person, indicating “persistent loyalty”, to “endure, remain, stand”.

So what Jesus is actually telling us in John 15, is that if we read His Word consistently, and let it “abide” in us, standing patiently and loyally with Him through thick and thin, then we will “abide” in Him, and bear all the fruit we possibly can. We will achieve the goal of “optimal fruitfulness”.

Obviously, we all don’t bear the same amount of fruit – we are all individuals, with different God-given gifts and talents; but the lesson is that we must do the best we can, not just sit back like the “wicked and lazy” servant. Indeed, if we don’t even try, then we will lose what we already have, and see it transferred to the fruit-bearing people. (Matthew 25: 28 and 29).

Jesus even warned the chief priests and the Pharisees in Jerusalem that they would miss out on the Kingdom of God because of their unfruitfulness: “Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” (Matthew 21: 43).

So it is crucially important that Kingdom business professionals do their very best to “bear fruit”, and not get into any form of “excusitis” if it seems hard: “I am not smart enough” ... “I don’t have the education” ... “I am too old” ... etc. etc. etc. blah blah blah.

God is not looking for excuses – He is looking for obedient fruit-bearers. Look at Abraham, a father and an example to Christians. He was 99 when God said to him: “I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My Covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly...I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.” (Genesis 17: 1, 2 and 6). So even if you are 99 years old, there is no excuse – get out there, and bear fruit!

In spite of his early trials and tribulations, Joseph became a “fruitful bough” (Genesis 49:22), and called his second son Ephraim, which means, “double fruitfulness”. (Genesis 41: 52) Let God do it for us too – let Him abide in us, and us in Him, “fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work.” (Colossians 1: 10).

God promises us that if we “diligently obey” Him, He will bless us in many ways: “And all these blessings shall come upon you ... The Lord will grant you plenty ... fruit ... increase ... The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand.” (Deuteronomy 28: 2, 11, 12)

If you haven’t been living in the land of “optimal fruitfulness”, then it is time to open up the Scriptures and let God’s Word abide in you and guide you to your own Promised Land. Let this motivating Scripture from Deuteronomy sink into your spirit right now:

You have stayed at this mountain long enough. It is time to break camp and move on. Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the neighbouring regions...I am giving all this land to you Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to all their descendants.

And may the Lord the God of your ancestors multiply you a thousand times more and bless you as He promised.

Look! He has placed it in front of you. Go and occupy it as the Lord the God of your ancestors has promised you. Don’t be afraid, don’t be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 1: 6-8, 11, 21)