

## Gift-wrapped Fruit

**Text: John 15:8**

### Introduction

(1 Corinthians 13:1–3)

“Spirituals” (gifts) are often highly visible. Like wrappings, they tend to be quickly seen and sometimes are even noisy (verse 1). God’s Word teaches the need for both gifts and fruit.

Pentecostals and charismatics are often accused of neglecting the fruit for the more visible gifts. The Scriptures would bring us to a balance of the two—like presenting a perfectly formed and healthful piece of fruit in an appropriate and attractive package. Together they make a perfect team and, if held in proper perspective, will result in a fully developed, mature New Testament believer.

Let’s look at fruit and fruitfulness.

### Message

#### 1. God instructs us to be fruit inspectors.

“By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:16,20).

Nowhere in the Scripture does it say, “You shall know them by their gifts.” It would be like judging a farmer only by his tools. Rather one should judge him by the crops he produces. Now his implements do play a part, of course. One way of looking at the relationship of gifts and fruit would be: Gifts are tools God has given the Body to help get the work done in the garden to produce fruit.

Gifts are given (and are not a sign of holiness).

Gifts are given to imperfect people in the Body to help perfect them so they will produce not just leaves, but fruit that the Master desires to find.

#### 2. God expects us to abide in Him and bring forth fruit (John 15).

Fruit is not what you do. Fruit is what you are. Some think Jesus said, “Go and do witnessing.” He did not. But He did say, “Go and be my witnesses.”

Others think Jesus will say, “Much done, thou good and prosperous servant.” He will not. He will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Numbers (statistics), like gifts, are in themselves no proof of spiritual strength. In God’s value system being is a higher order than doing. Why? Because He knows you can do without being (produce activity and pile up statistics without possessing the right qualifications). But you cannot really be without also doing (Galatians 5:22).

It is much easier to build a Sunday school than model the fruit of the Spirit.

It is much easier to have your name inscribed on a plaque for financial giving than to be known in the congregation for the model of love or meekness.

Fruit has too long been defined as only winning souls. But, fruit is better defined as personal characteristics (brought forth-grown) that when present attract and nourish the weary traveler. The sin sick soul in the world, weakened by the debilitation of sin, can be blessed by fruit. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love.”

So, when he comes struggling and limping to you and plucks a grape from your hand, he says, “Wow. That is good. You must be a Christian.”

#### 3. God teaches the paradox of fruit-bearing.

American culture’s emphasis on doing (performance, advancement, perseverance, assertiveness, success) easily measured and quantified, leaves us unprepared even to think about fruit properly. You do not do fruit—you are fruit.

The paradox is here. Fruits’ attractiveness, so highly valued by the Master, will draw souls to the place of repentance and association with Jesus.

It should disturb us that we do not have an award system for churches and individuals who demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit. Why not a trophy for temperance? A loving cup for meekness? A wall plaque for peace or for joy? Granted, it is not easy to count or measure these abstractions, but couldn’t we try? Why should we spend such an inordinate emphasis on the things that are easier to run through a calculator? Why should we only give out symbols of plaques and gold seals for the lesser, external things?

It is a little-taught truth in our churches, but in the New Testament fruit-bearing is probably the greatest tool for evangelism. Consider this:

- a. Demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit exemplifies the supreme truth of belonging (John 15:13). How shocking to find out God never asks me to lay down my life for the heathen—but for my brother, yes, and that is what will convince the heathen. What a paradox.

- b. Proof of the soul's transformation is a fruit (1 John 3:14).
- c. Showing fruit makes our lives redemptive (John 13:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:7,8). Clearly, the Thessalonians' fruit (joy, faith) were examples in not only Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place the testimony was spread around.

### **Conclusion**

Fruit-bearing or fruitfulness is much better seen as **quality** than **quantity**. Though both are important and scriptural, God's priority seems to be **being** over **doing**. God looks for "brought forth" products from the essence of a person's being. These are personal characteristics coming from the nature of the whole tree. "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit."

The quality that pleases God in a mature life—also, paradoxically—is the same quality that makes our lives redemptive in the eyes of the sinner. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Maturity in Christ does not neglect either gifts or fruit, but through balance of the two produces gift-wrapped fruit for His pleasure and for the healing of the nations.

Del Tarr