Fruit or Foliage

INTRO

- God desires fruitfulness, not appearance.
- **Mark 11:12-14, 20-25** – *12 The next day when they went out from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, he went to find out if there was anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And his disciples heard it.*
- *20 Early in the morning, as they were passing by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. 21 Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered."*
- *22 Jesus replied to them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received it and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."*

What is <u>seed</u>?

- The word of God. The holy scriptures; our spiritual foundation and source of spiritual growth. We need it every day.

What is <u>fruit</u>?

- Spiritual fruitfulness – It is the evidence and proof of a life transformed by the faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 *"But the <u>fruit</u> of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control."*

What is foliage?

- Spiritual fruitlessness or barrenness. The lack of growth and productivity in relationship with God.

Ask yourself this question: Am I producing fruit or foliage?

What Christians should be doing to produce spiritual fruit:

1. **PLANT**

- You must plant seeds to expect a harvest.
- Parable of the Sower - **Luke 8:4-8,11-15**
- **Luke 8:4-5** - *4 As a large crowd was gathering, and people were coming to Jesus from every town, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the sky devoured it.*
- **Luke 8:6** - *Other seed fell on the rock; when it grew up, it withered away, since it lacked moisture.*
- **Proverbs 22:6** – "*Start a youth out on his way; even when he grows old, he will not depart from it."*
- **Luke 8:7** - *Other seed fell among thorns; the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 Still other seed fell on good ground; when it grew up, it produced fruit: a hundred times what was sown." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen."*
- **1 Corinthians 3:6,9** - *6 "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." 9 For we are God's coworkers…"*

- **Luke 8:11** - *“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.*
- **Mark 4:15** - *“**immediately** Satan comes and takes away the words sown in them.”*
- **Luke 8:13** - *And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing.*
- **Mark 4:16** - *“they hear the word, **immediately** they receive it with joy.”*
- **Luke 8:14** - *As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit.*
- **Luke 8:15** - *But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit.*
- Point 1 Takeaway: It matters where and how you plant.

2. **PROVIDE**

- You must nurture what you plant.
- What does it take to do this? Sacrifice and obedience.
- **1 Samuel 15:22** - *“To obey is better than sacrifice.”*

- **Sacrifice**

- **Genesis 3:7**, Adam and Eve *"sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."*
- **Genesis 3:21** - *"The Lord God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them."*
- Sacrifice without obedience is in vain.

- **Obedience**
- **Exodus 16**, Obedience leads to provision. Disobedience ruins provision.

- **Provision is important for your family.**
- **Deuteronomy 6:6-7** – *"6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

- **Provision is important within the church and the local community.**
- **Colossians 3:12** – "*12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience…"*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** – *"11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing."*
- Point 2 Takeaway: You must provide nourishment to produce spiritual fruit.

3. **PROTECT**

- You must protect what you plant, or it will produce poorly.
- **Psalm 3:7** –

  “7 Rise up, Lord!

  Save me, my God!

  You strike all my enemies on the cheek;

  you break the teeth of the wicked.”

- **1 Samuel 17:46** – *“46 Today, the Lord will hand you over to me. Today, I’ll strike you down, remove your head, and give the corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the wild creatures of the earth. Then all the world will know that Israel has a God.”*

- **Protection through Provision**
- Your plants will die without water. Your soul will be destroyed without living water.

- **Ezekiel 18:20** - 20 *The person who sins is the one who will die. A son won’t suffer punishment for the father’s iniquity, and a father won’t suffer punishment for the son’s iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous person will be on him, and the wickedness of the wicked person will be on him.*
- **Romans 6:23** - *3 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- **John 3:16** - *16 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

- **Sin always matters, AND salvation always conquers!**
- Point 3 Takeaway: Protection preserves spiritual prosperity.

4. **PRUNE**

- You must make room for new growth.
- **John 15:1-2** - *1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit."*
- **John 15:6** – *6 "If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned."*
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11** - *11 "He has made everything beautiful **and** appropriate in its time."* – Amplified Bible
- **John 15:5** - *"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."*
- The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds - **Matthew 13:24-30**
- **Matthew 13:24-30** - *24 He presented another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while people were sleeping, his enemy came, sowed weeds among the wheat, and left. 26 When the plants sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also appeared. 27 The landowner's servants came to him and said, 'Master, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?'*
- *28 "'An enemy did this,' he told them. "'So, do you want us to go and pull them up?' the servants asked him.*
- *29 "'No,' he said. 'When you pull up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I'll tell the*

reapers: Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to burn them, but collect the wheat in my barn.'"

- D.L. Moody – "The best way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it."

- **Producing much fruit proves we are His disciples.**
- **John 15:8** – *"My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples."*

- **Christlike love proves we are His disciples.**
- **John 13:34-35 – Love**
- **John 15:1-8 - Pruning**
- **John 15:9-17 - Love**
- The principle of pruning is bookended with the principle of love.

- Point 4 Takeaway: The fruit of our life and the love we show to one another will show the world we are His, and we will all be pruned in the process.

5. **PICK (HARVEST)**

- You must exercise the fruits of the spirit.
- Josh Howerton – "Roots grow up intro fruits."
- **Hebrews 12:15** – 15 *"Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many."*

- **Jeremiah 24:5** - *5 “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Like these good figs, so I regard as good the exiles from Judah I sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.*
- **Jeremiah 24:8-9** - *8 “But as for the bad figs —those remaining in this land (Jerusalem) or living in the land of Egypt. 9 I will make them an object of horror and a disaster to all the kingdoms of the earth, an example for disgrace, scorn, ridicule, and cursing, wherever I have banished them.*

- JC Worley – “You will become what you tolerate.”
- *Extreme Ownership* by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin – “It’s not what you preach, it’s what you tolerate.”

- **Matthew 6:5** - *5 “Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward.”*

- Kevin Wallace – “Don’t hate my harvest when you don’t know my seed.”

- **Psalm 1:3** – *3 “He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams*

  that bears its fruit in its season,

  and its leaf does not wither.

  Whatever he does prospers.
- Point 5 Takeaway: Your fruit will reflect your reality.

CLOSING

- God desires fruit, not foliage.