

Spending Time Engaging God's Word

Message 2 of 5 in the series: "Fruitful"

A. God wants us to live abundant, fruitful lives.

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. **Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing... When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples.** This brings great glory to my Father." John 15:1-2, 4-5, & 8 (NLT)

1. The fruit God wants us to bear is Christ-like character. "May you always be filled with **the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ**—for this will bring much glory and praise to God." Philippians 1:11 (NLT)
2. Branches don't produce fruit for themselves. They produce fruit for others. "After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, 'Do you understand what I was doing? You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. **I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.** I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.'" John 13:12-17 (NLT)

B. The key to bearing much fruit is remaining connected to Jesus.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. **Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.** For apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NLT)

Remain = ménō (ancient Greek) = to abide, to dwell, to endure, *to stay connected*.

1. Before we became Christians, we used to follow the desires of our sinful nature, which means we were really following the devil. "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, **obeying the devil**—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. **He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way**, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature."
Ephesians 2:1-3a (NLT)
2. When we stay connected to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will follow His desires and live very differently. "**When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear:** sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. **But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives:** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:19-23a (NLT)

C. Spending time engaging (reading/studying/meditating on) God's Word is vital to staying connected to Jesus and bearing much fruit.

"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But **they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season.** Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do." Psalms 1:1-3 (NLT)

1. God's Word reveals who God is so we can know Him, understand His will and His ways, and have a personal relationship with Him. "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son."
Hebrews 1:1-2a (NLT)

"We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard **so that you may have fellowship with us.** And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy." 1 John 1:3-4 (NLT)

2. God's Word is powerful and life changing. "For **the word of God is alive and powerful**. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)
 "So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for **it has the power to save your souls**." James 1:21 (NLT)
3. God's Word is trustworthy and true. "Make them holy by your truth; teach them **your word, which is truth**." John 17:17 (NLT)
 "Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. **Having carefully investigated everything** from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you..."
 Luke 1:1-3a (NLT)
4. God's Word is our guide in all matters of faith and practice. "**Your word is a lamp to guide my feet** and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105 (NLT)
 "Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow. **Lead me by your truth** and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you." Psalm 25:4-5 (NLT)
5. God's Word equips us to live Godly lives so we can bear much fruit. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. **God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work**." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

Life Application: If we are obedient to the truth/guidance/equipping God gives us through His Word, He will reveal more of Himself to us so we can keep growing more and more like Jesus.

"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and **reveal myself** to each of them."

John 14:21 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read John 15:1-8, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Have you ever used a devotional guide or followed a Bible reading plan? Are you willing to try Centerpoint's 28-Day Bible reading plan?
2. What does it look like to live a spiritually fruitful life? (Hebrews 1:1-2, Galatians 5:22-23) How fruitful do you want your life to be?
3. Why is remaining connected to Jesus essential to bearing lots of good fruit? (John 15:5, Ephesians 2:1-3, Matthew 7:17-18)
4. Discuss the following 5 reasons reading/studying/meditating on the Bible helps us remain connected to Jesus.
 - God's Word reveals who God is so we can know Him, understand His will and His ways, and have a personal relationship with Him. (Hebrews 1:1-2, 1 John 1:3-4)
 - God's Word is powerful and life changing. (Hebrews 4:12, James 1:21)
 - God's Word is trustworthy and true. (John 17:17, Luke 1:1-3)
 - God's Word is our guide in all matters of faith and practice. (Psalm 25:4-5 & 119:105)
 - God's Word equips us to live Godly lives so we can bear much fruit. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 1:1-3)
5. Why does Jesus say our obedience is directly related to receiving more revelation from God? (John 14:21)
6. Quotations to Consider:

"The sole basis for our belief is the Bible – the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is God's Word to all people in all times. The entire Bible is uniquely God-breathed, without error, and the final authority on all matters of faith and practice." Centerpoint Statement of Beliefs

"Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God."

2 Peter 1:20-21 (NLT)

"An unread Bible is like food uneaten, a love letter never read, a buried sword, a road map unstudied, gold never mined..." Jerry Vines