

Spending Time Serving Others

Message 5 of 5 in the series: "Fruitful"

A. Jesus said He wants us to live abundant, fruitful lives.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it **more abundantly**." John 10:10 (NKJV)

"This is to my Father's glory, that you **bear much fruit**, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

John 15:8 (NIV)

1. The fruit Jesus wants us to bear is Godly character. "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."
Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)
2. The key to bearing much fruit is remaining connected to Jesus. "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." John 15:4-5 (NLT)

B. Jesus also said that abundant, fruitful life is found through giving, not getting.

"You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: '**It is more blessed to give than to receive**.'"

Acts 20:35b (NLT)

"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But **if you give up your life** for my sake, you will save it." Matthew 16:25 (NLT)

Note: Branches produce fruit for others, not themselves. "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. **Don't look out only for your own interests**, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." Philippians 2:3-5 (NLT)

"Freely you have received; **freely give**." Matthew 10:8b (NIV)

C. Bearing much fruit necessarily means serving others the way Jesus did.

"You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. **Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant**, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25b-28 (NLT)

1. God has prepared good fruit-bearing opportunities for us to serve others.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do **the good things he planned for us long ago**." Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

Note: The Holy Spirit will show us the serving opportunities God has planned for us through the Bible, prayer, and other Christians. "**When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth**."

John 16:13a (NLT)

2. God will give us the desire and the strength to serve others.

"For God is working in you, giving you **the desire and the power** to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

"So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. **May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do**."

2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NLT)

3. God will gift us with the abilities we need to serve others as part of his Church.

"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, **God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well**. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." Romans 12:4-8 (NLT)

4. God has gifted our church staff with the abilities they need to train and equip the rest of us.

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. **Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.** This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

Reminder: God will prune us on occasion so that we can serve others even more effectively. “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.**” John 15:1-2 (NLT)

D. Three things that will NOT help us live abundant, fruitful lives and serve others like Jesus:

1. Thinking too highly of ourselves

“If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. **You are not that important.**” Galatians 6:3 (NLT)

2. Grumbling and complaining

“**Do everything without grumbling or arguing**, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky...” Philippians 2:14-15 (NIV)

3. Procrastinating

“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it’s in your power to help them. **If you can help your neighbor now, don’t say, ‘Come back tomorrow, and then I’ll help you.’**”

Proverbs 3:27-28 (NLT)

“Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.” James 4:17 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read John 15:8. Describe someone who lives a spiritually fruitful life. How do they act/talk? How did they become so fruitful? (John 15:4-5)
2. Why do you think Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”? (Acts 20:35) How does this relate to living a fruitful, abundant life? (John 10:10, Matthew 20:25-28)
3. React to the following statements about serving:
 - God has prepared good fruit-bearing opportunities for us to serve others. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - God will give us the desire and the strength to serve others. (Philippians 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 1:11)
 - God will gift us with the abilities we need to serve others as part of his Church. (Romans 12:4-8)
 - The Holy Spirit will show us the serving opportunities God has planned for us through the Bible, prayer, and other Christians. (John 16:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
4. Read Ephesians 4:11-13. Then discuss Centerpoint’s Vision Statement: “Our vision is to be a multiplying church of small groups that equips ordinary people to serve their communities, to share the Good News of Christ, and to gather for worship wherever God leads.” What role does our ministry staff play in carrying out our vision?
5. How do the following behaviors hinder us from bearing spiritual fruit and serving others?
 - Thinking too highly of ourselves (Galatians 6:2)
 - Grumbling and complaining (Philippians 2:14-15)
 - Procrastinating (Proverbs 3:27-28, James 4:17)
6. Quotations to Consider:

“No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow.” Charles Spurgeon

“And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.” The Lord in Jeremiah 29:7 (NLT)

“It’s not about me!” Rick Warren

“Simply by our proximity to Jesus, we can bring hope and life to people and places trapped in discouragement and despair.” Louie Giglio