

How to be Fruitful

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2020

[0:00] How to be fruitful. That's my message today. Go to 2 Peter. How can I be a fruitful Christian?! John 15 verse 8 says, Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.

It's what our Lord wants for us. God gives us the answer how we can be a fruitful Christian. How we can be such a well-rounded, glowing Christian. It tells us how we can bear much fruit in 2 Peter. I believe that the Lord is saying here, don't stay where you are. The devil wants you to slow down and weaken. Don't fall for that. God wants you to do the opposite of that, to get up, to move forward, to not lose traction, to get back the momentum.

Simon Peter was the one whose faith and confession had weakened. He was the man then who turned into the preacher that God mightily used at Pentecost. And he writes these words for us to take heart today. They're real for us today.

He shows us how to have faith that bears fruit, and what that faith looks like. It's in these words that Peter talks to you and me today. In 2 Peter chapter 1, from verse 1 through 12 it says, Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

[1:29] That's you and me, right? Verse 2, Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Verse 3, According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Peter says, You've been given some things, and you've received some truly precious things we read here. Verse 1, Peter says, You have faith, precious faith. You obtain this, this like precious faith, through the righteousness, not of yourself, but of Him.

And there's some multiplication told of here, Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Notice, His divine power hath given unto us all that we need.

His dunamis power, everything we need for life and godliness, He gives it. And His power makes it happen. And He has called us this, to glory and virtue.

He has given us another precious gift, exceeding great and precious promises. Someone has reckoned in this book, the Bible, there's some 7,487 promises from God to man.

[3:10] Nearly 7,500 promises. By God's promises, the Bible says, we can be partakers. Yes, partakers of a divine nature.

Believe and you will receive. Do you believe it? We can know the very divine nature in our lives. To be like Him. It's got that sense of a seed germinating, springing to life.

What a picture! He gives the increase. A seed springs to life. Ultimately, it becomes a powerful tree. As Isaiah 61 verse 3 says, that they, God's people, might be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

The Bible says we're escapees. It was reported recently of two children fleeing a childcare centre in Queensland. They just wanted to get out. Thankfully, they were found.

We are part of the ultimate prison break. We've fled the prison house. We've escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Peter says we're out of that.

[4:20] Let's not go back there. Get out and stay out. If it's worldly, we don't want it. Abstain from all appearance of evil. That's a good stand to take.

So, how can I be a fruitful Christian? It starts with faith. Who are you going to put your trust in?

Where is your trust? When we get saved through faith, let's not stay there. Let's not stay at first base. Let's go forward. Peter tells us of some things to be diligent about. Here's probably the first key. That word, diligence. Now, a lot of people are the opposite of diligent. You're either diligent or you're not. And what comes to mind is the opposite of diligent. We can think of some words, can't we? Lazy, sloppy, lackadaisical. Surely, it certainly is easy to get comfy, casual, comfortable, careless.

[5:25] Diligence. That's a word that's not in the vocabulary of some people. Proverbs 4.23, it says, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Diligence. That means work, effort. Thomas Edison said, Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

Philippians 2, verses 12 through 13 says, Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. There's some doing to be done here.

His good pleasure. Peter says you've received some things. He says they're precious things. Precious faith. Precious promises. Elsewhere it talks about unto you that believe he is precious.

[6:34] God's very gift of salvation. Peter says elsewhere, he is precious. And so you've received precious things. You've received. And you have some giving to do too.

Give, it says. Give some diligence. Give all diligence. To do what? Here's the keys now here from verse 5. And beside this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue.

And to virtue, knowledge. And to knowledge, temperance. And to temperance, patience. And to patience, godliness. To godliness, brotherly kindness.

And to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Here's that word again in the next verse. Diligence.

[7:39] Verse 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you shall never fall.

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now this word entrance here is the same one used in Hebrews 10 verse 19.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Don't you want to so enter in? Enter into the kingdom? Enter into the very immediate presence of God in the very holiest place of communion with him?

Verse 12. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth.

Peter says it bears repeating here. He says this is a message we need to hear again and again. So how can I be a fruitful Christian?

[8:42] In a world where it seems many Christians seem to lack fruit, Peter shows us here God's way of how to be a fruitful. Peter says verse 8.

For if, notice it's conditional, if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith is the start. That's salvation. Get saved. God has dealt to every man a measure of faith.

Romans 12.3 tells us, For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Faith is the start. Saving faith. The faith that saves you. That you trust in Christ for your salvation.

But there's more. There's more. There's a completing, a growing.

And besides this giving all diligence, Peter says, add. Add some things. Add to your faith virtue. To virtue knowledge. To knowledge temperance. To temperance, patience. And to patience, godliness.

[9:53] And to godliness, brotherly kindness. And to brotherly kindness, charity. There's a progression here that God wants for us all to have.

There's some adding to your faith. And these qualities are Christ-like. They're the very character of our Lord. It's his best for us, his plan for us to become more like him.

To be like Jesus as we spend time with our Lord. We see these qualities germinate. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.

It's almost like a ripple effect, if you like, as you throw a stone into the surface of a lake. This progression, this ripple effect. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.

It's also, you could think, like a building. A building up of a most holy faith. A building up. Layer upon layer upon layer. Brick upon brick. Verse 8 says, what the result is, we will not be barren.

[11:00] Barren. Nor unfruitful. Now I've got a few fruit trees in my garden, but they're fruitful in name only. Some of them have not yet born fruit, or scarcely any fruit.

The Lord wants his people to bear fruit, much fruit, with their faith. And here it is. It shows us how. Peter says, add. Add some things. Don't just stay at first base.

Add to your faith. Now you've likely heard about mineral supplements and health supplements. And I put to you, these are kind of faith supplements, if you like. They make your faith stronger.

They put your faith into action, into life. Into practice. And to use another analogy, it's like the key ingredients in this cake that God wants for us to make.

He says, add. And he calls us to do this with diligence. To apply ourselves earnestly, with eagerness, to make every effort. And not so much self effort, but as letting God have his way with you.

[12:04] Not a self reliance, but a God dependence. And he says this, add to your faith. He gives us these seven things. And they're all very practical. You can apply them in your own life.

And with how you go about your daily living and interacting with people. It's like putting your faith into action. It's what we meant to do. That our faith is alive. God wants us to advance in our Christian walk.

To go forward. To leave that spiritual babyhood stage. To progress. And it's a walk. There's some steps, some stages that he wants for us. So let's not miss out on any one of them.

We need each one. In these different departments of our life. Let's look through them from verse 5. Point number 1. God wants us to add to our faith. Virtue.

Virtue. It speaks of goodness. Of moral character. Of righteousness. Of excellence. Of bravery. Of courage. Some people they trust in the Lord. But their faith doesn't always show through.

[13:06] As well as it could. In their character. They're saved. But they don't grow. It's like they're stunted spiritually. The Lord wants our believing.

To affect our behaving. That's virtue. He wants us to aim for virtue. That strength of character. That determination. I will do what is pleasing unto him.

Add to your faith virtue. Number 2. God wants us to add to our virtue. Knowledge. Some people have the faith and it shows through in their lives.

But they haven't developed in their knowledge side. They're kind of short in that wisdom department. They make unwise choices. Friends. God wants us to learn. To have knowledge. Not so much we can brag and strut around.

And show it off. What we know. But so that we can know right. Many Christians stay ignorant of the Bible. And of Bible doctrine. Many are biblically illiterate.

[14:03] They don't search the scriptures. Friends. God wants us to have spiritual growth. Think of the blessed man of Psalm 1. His delight. It says.

In the law of the Lord. In his law doth he meditate. Day and night. And he shall be like a tree. Planted by the rivers of water. That bringeth forth his fruit.

In his season. His leaf also shall not wither. And whatsoever he doeth. Shall prosper. So we know. As we know more of the word.

[19:15] That we have that consideration of others. Keep sweet. Don't be sour. Your Christian life is not all about you. You could say, really, it's the opposite.

The Bible speaks of the mutual benefit and blessing of others in our lives. Of course, in the fictional story of Robinson Crusoe, he suffered shipwreck. He was cast alone ashore on this uninhabited island.

It was a beautiful location. Crusoe also managed to salvage supplies from the wreck. He built a house, a boat, and something of a life for himself.

But Crusoe was never truly happy. It wasn't the climate or the food or the setting that made him so desperately unhappy. It was the solitude.

And the story speaks of, really, a basic human need. That God has created us to be in community. It's God's design. That's why the church matters.

[20:17] It matters that we care about others. That we put ourselves in the shoes of others. The Bible has much to say about one another. And how we should relate to one another as a church.

It's used many times in the New Testament. Bear one another's burdens. Forbear with one another. Forgive one another. Encourage one another. A lot of the one another verses speak of unity.

About one third of the church getting along. Being devoted to one another in brotherly love. Being honoring of one another. Above ourselves. To be kind, tenderhearted to one another.

To live in harmony with one another. To receive one another. To be of the same mind with one another. And to avoid biting and devouring one another.

Don't do that. A lot of the one another verses speak of love one another. About one third. And about 15% of the one another verses speak of humility.

[21:17] Such things as serve one another. Wash one another's feet. Regard one another as more important than yourself. Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another. So let's look out for one another.

Bear one another's burdens. Build up one another. Provoke one another to love and to good works. Be hospitable to one another. Pray for one another.

Teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Add brotherly kindness. One more thing to add.

Number seven. Really it tops it off. It says that God wants us to add charity. God wants us to love. To love one another. To love our enemies.

And we're talking about God's kind of love. The kind of love that Christ showed. That took him to the very cross. These life qualities friends. These are the life qualities that make us to be useful, fruitful Christians.

[22:16] Because God wants us to be fruitful. Not barren. I pray that you will put these into your life. God helping you. Add to your faith.