

**SCHOOL OF KNOWING AND SERVING GOD**

**PB: 385 BERTOUA (CAMEROON)**

**Tel: (237) 677-43-69-99**

[cnatangana@gmail.com](mailto:cnatangana@gmail.com)

**THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**LESSON 5: FRUIT BEARING**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The lord Jesus Christ said; “you did not choose me; but I chose you and appointed you to

go and bear fruit, fruit that will last”. (John 15:16) he says again “if you bear much fruit, my father will be glorified and you will be my disciples” from these words, the Lord wanted to say two things. The first is that the reason why the Lord chose us and ordained us is that we should bear fruit that will last. The second thing is that fruit bearing serves to glorify God, and to establish the evidence that we are disciples. So any disciple that does not bear fruit is like that is not fulfilling the goal for which it was planted, and which because of its bareness must be cut and thrown into the fire. In effect, the Bible say, “Every branch that is in me and that does not bear fruit, He cuts off; and every branch that bears fruit, He trims so that it will bear much

fruit”. (John 15:2) John the Baptist had said: “now the axe is already at the roots of the tree, every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut and thrown into fire. (Matthew 3:10) In this lesson, we will examine the following, one after the other.

1. What the Lord means by fruit bearing?
2. How can we bear fruit?
3. What type of fruit glorifies the Lord?

### **1. WHAT IS FRUIT BEARING?**

Here, it should be noted that “fruit” is in the singular here, it means “result”. Not meaning any type of result, it means positive and visible result. For a believer then, fruit bearing means producing positive results from what God has done in him. The believer is likened to a tree that God has caused to grow, and which must bear fruit so as to give God a reason to keep it alive and to continue to take care of it. The believer who bears fruit is a disciple. He must bear fruit in three domains: Souls won for Christ, Ministry and Character.

#### **1.1. SOULS WON FOR CHRIST**

We have already considered this topic and written lengthily on it in Lesson 3 of the previous course ‘**The Way of Obedience**’ So, we refer back to what was taught in that lesson.

#### **1.2. MINISTRY**

Every Christian is called to serve the Lord and the body of the Lord (the Church) in one or more ways. The Holy Spirit is the one who calls each one to service after having equipped him with the gifts he needs for the service to which He is calling him. It is worth mentioning that it is the gift that creates the functions. There should, therefore, be no confusion between the ministry which is inspired by the Holy Spirit and human imitation. In the first case, there will be an effective exercise of a ministry; in the second

case, it will just be a title. These gifts that are received from the Holy Spirit are called spiritual gifts. It is through the manifestation of these gifts that the Apostles shook the world in the first century. So these gifts are of critical importance.

There is, however, a second category of gifts called talents, which are received from God as Creator. These talents must also be used for service.

### **1.2.1. THE MINISTRY-GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Under this topic, we are going to list the different possible domains of ministry without attempting to comment on them, because we will study them in details in another lesson titled “The Way of Spiritual Power”. Spiritual gifts have been outlined for us from the following Bible passages:

#### **Ephesians 4:11**

1. Apostles
2. Prophets
3. Evangelists
4. Pastors
5. Teachers

#### **1 Corinthians 12:8-11**

1. Utterance of wisdom
2. Utterance of knowledge
3. Faith
4. Gifts of healing
5. Working of miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Discernment of spirits
8. Varying kinds of tongues
9. Interpretation

#### **1 Corinthians 12:28**

1. Apostles
2. Prophets
3. Teachers
4. Workers of miracles
5. Healers
6. Helpers
7. Administrators

8. Speakers in various kinds of tongues.

### **Romans 12:6-8**

1. Prophecy
2. Service
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation
5. Contribution
6. Aiding
7. Acts of mercy

Part of fruit-bearing is to use one or more of these gifts for the service of the Lord and His Church.

These spiritual gifts are the endowments received from God as Father. Spiritual gifts may be received by two ways.

- a) They are distributed by the Holy Spirit in His sovereignty. The Bible says, "All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- b) They are given, to those who desire them. The Bible says, "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1). "If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1). It's true that even in this case the desire of the believer does not put off the sovereignty of the Lord; this doesn't change the fact that the believer's desire plays a determinant role.

### **1.2.2. TALENTS.**

Part of fruit-bearing is the use of all the talents that the Lord has given us in His service and the service of His Church. Talents are gifts, natural endowments received from God as

creator. They may also be found in unbelievers. True spiritual gifts are the possessions of believers only. Those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus cannot have spiritual gifts since they

cannot receive the Holy Spirit.

Talents include anything positive in my body and soul and all natural and material endowments. They may include the following:

1. An intelligent mind with a capacity for clear thinking.
2. Academic success
3. A good job
4. An influential social position

5. Financial wealth
6. An influential personality
7. A good capacity to communicate and sway people
8. Good looks
9. A tender nature
10. A capacity to solve problems
11. Natural leadership
12. A capacity to endure
13. A capacity to pity people
14. A helpful disposition
15. A capacity to organise people and things
16. A capacity to plan and see the plan realised
17. An imaginative mind
18. A capacity for exactitude
19. A good voice
20. A capacity for stage performance
21. A caring nature
22. A capacity to adopt easily
23. A retentive memory
24. A capacity to make friends with ease
25. Natural goodness.

Talents have to go through the cross before they can truly serve the Lord and His people. One characteristic of a talent that has gone through the cross is that the one who has it

has totally renounced it. From that moment, the talent is no longer used according to the self will

of the person who has it, but according to the will of the Holy Spirit. The talent is no longer used

for selfish motives and for the glory of "self" but exclusively for the glory of God.

### **1.3. CHARACTER**

Another aspect of fruit bearing has to do with character. The desire of God is that the character of Christ will be produced in the disciple by the Holy Spirit. The character of Christ

(the fruit of the Holy Spirit) will include amongst other things:

1. Love 9. Self-control
2. Joy 10. Compassion
3. Peace 11. Lowliness
4. Patience 12. Meekness

- 5. Kindness 13. Longsuffering
- 6. Goodness 14. Forgiveness
- 7. Faithfulness 15. Tenderness
- 8. Gentleness 16. Gratitude

We shall consider this theme of Christian character more fully in a later lesson, but let us retain

that God gives primordial importance to Christian character because it is especially in the domain

of Christian character that fruit bearing is a proof that one is a disciple. About this issue the Lord

said “no good tree bears bad fruit nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by

its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars” (Luke, 6:43-44)

## **2. THE WAY TO FRUIT BEARING**

No one can succeed in any domain without ambition. This is more true in the spiritual domain.

The Lord said “suppose one of you wants to build a tower; will he not first sit down to estimate

the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke, 14:28)

“Whoever wants to be great amongst you should be your servants and whoever wants to be first

amongst you should be the slave of all” so each believer becomes what he wants to become; only

those who have ambitions will succeed. They transform these ambitions into clear goals and

impose on themselves the necessary discipline to get what they want

### **2.1. SPIRITUAL AMBITION**

Selfish ambitions have no place in the life of any would-be disciple. In the world, people live for

self. There are two types of people in the world - those with great worldly ambitions who, because of their ambitions, accomplish great things for themselves or for the world, and those

who because of their lack of ambition accomplish nothing for themselves.

There are three possible classes of believers:

1. Those who are bound by self and want to accomplish great things for themselves. The Bible prohibits this by saying, "And do you seek great things for yourselves? Seek them not"

(Jeremiah 45:5).

2. Those who seek nothing great. They are contented with no accomplishment.

### 3. Those who seek great things for the Lord and His Church.

The Lord is looking for people who will seek great things for Him. This is spiritual ambition.

The Lord had spiritual ambition. The words "I MUST" characterized His whole life. At the age of

twelve He said, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's

house?" (Luke 2:49).

"I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice" (John 10:16). He was moved by a great sense of compulsion. He accomplished the

impossible for God!

Paul had great spiritual ambition. He wanted to know Christ in His totality. He did everything he could to win some. He wanted to preach Christ where He had not yet been named

and also wanted to lay the claims of Christ before the Emperor himself. He wanted to accomplish

great things for the Lord and he did! If you want much fruit, you must have great ambitions in the

areas of soul-winning, ministry and Christ-likeness. For example, you may determine to witness to

a certain number of people every day; aspire to a certain spiritual gift and insist that God gives it

to you for ministry and then use it for the service of the Lord and His Body. Also you may aspire to

put on the character of Christ by mercilessly dealing with all that will stand in the way of holiness

in you. If you mean business you will go very far.

#### **2.2. CLEAR GOALS**

God-centred and Christ-glorifying ambitions must be crystallized in clear goals.

Anyone with vague goals will accomplish nothing. The goals of the one who will succeed must be

so clear that if someone were to wake him up from sleep at midnight, he would be in a position

to state his goals correctly and clearly.

Such goals must be fairly narrow. If you want to accomplish everything, you will

end up accomplishing nothing. The apostle Paul said, "One thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). "One

thing", said he and not one hundred things. Your goals in the three areas of fruit-bearing should

be worked out into clear and straight-forward objectives that are understandable to you but big

enough to envelop you.

### **2.3. DISCIPLINE**

Great ambition crystallized in clear goals is good but it will not be realised without a great price paid. Someone said, "There must be great renunciations before there can be great

Christian careers." Something must go. This is where discipline comes in. A disciple must be

disciplined. If you are indisciplined, you immediately disqualify yourself from becoming or continuing as His disciple.

Discipline means that you say "NO" to many things that, though good in themselves, may hinder the one great purpose to which your life is consecrated. A disciplined

person is of necessity narrow in his choices. You cannot invest in ten things. The disciplined

person will not be extravagant in the things he loves.

Discipline means that the body is brought under control to serve. The major reason why many people do not make much progress in fruit-bearing is that they allow their

appetites, inclinations, desires, wishes to pull them in different directions. A disciplined person

will refuse all indulgences. He will follow one hard line of living on the barest necessities. He will

ask about everything, "Will it help me to accomplish my one ambition?"

Discipline means that the body is buffeted when necessary. The apostle Paul said,

"I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel by body and subdue it,

lest after preaching to others I should myself be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). There is

practical reality in this. I remember a man I knew and loved as I have loved few others. He was a

student in the seminary at the age of 40. He decided that he would stay among the top three of

his class. To do this he studied and studied. He would place his feet in cold water when he felt

sleepy and in that way put in the extra time that was necessary to help him to accomplish his

goal. Not too long ago, I met the son of this man. The son's ambition was to subdue a nation for

Jesus. To do this he decided to pray for many hours each night. I was touched when I found that

he was using his father's technique. At the early hours of one morning, I found him at prayer. He

had been praying the whole night through with his feet in a basin of cold water. He was disciplined. He was buffeting the body! (*Testimony of Z. T. Fomum*)

Indulgence is a tragedy. The love of sleep, the love of food, the love of luxury, the love of pleasure, and the others, are among the most tragic loves of a life. Big nations have been destroyed by indulgence. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by the love of ease (Ezekiel

16:49-50). Gideon's army was reduced from 10,000 to 300 by the test of indulgence at the state

of drinking. It takes only a bit of indulgence at a time to ruin a life completely.

Think of those who practise the indulgence of procrastination. Where are they? How far do they go? Are they not ruined permanently?

Discipline means that one can keep at the task when all natural and emotional incentives for doing it are gone. The disciplined person obeys God's commands and voice. He goes on and

on irrespective of what he feels and irrespective of what it may cost him. He is bent on succeeding. He strives, presses and strains to reach the set goal. This is the way of discipleship?

### **3. FRUIT THAT GLORIFIES THE LORD.**

Fruit that glorifies the Lord is fruit that abides and the more the fruit is abundant, the more it glorifies the Lord.

#### **3.1. ABIDING FRUIT**

The Lord is concerned that there be abiding fruit. Much that goes for fruit in the lives of too many believers never reaches maturity. There is a sense in which permanent fruit is dependent on the sovereignty of God. In another sense abiding fruit is dependent on the spiritual

quality of the one bearing it.

In the realm of people brought into the kingdom of the Lord, we can say without hesitation that the gospel preached by men of varying degrees of spirituality will produce varying

results. Like begets like. Those who hate sin thoroughly and love the Lord supremely will tend to

bring forth their kind. Similarly, carnal men will produce converts who will fall away.

In the realm of ministry based on gifts, it should be remembered that gifts are not grace.

When need arises God can speak through an ass or get stones to sing but for how long will asses

speakers and stones sing? Saul was used, Samson was used, Demas was used, and the others, but for

how long? Gifts may manifest themselves in carnal and superficial men and these men may be

used for a while but God does not count on such when He has His eternal purpose in mind.

In the realm of character, are there not many who started putting on Christ - love, joy, peace, and so on, but have since turned back and are back where they started? Does the dog not

often return to its vomit?

Human talents, emotions, techniques may stir the crowd for a while but only what God does lasts. God cannot be overthrown. What He does cannot be overthrown.

### **3.2. ABUNDANT FRUIT**

The Lord of glory said, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit"

(John 15:8). He also said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him,

he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in

me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers" (John 15:5-6).

Much fruit is the result of abiding in the Lord, of helplessly depending on the Lord of the harvest,

and on the Spirit of the harvest. Every disciple must learn this lesson quite early in his walk with

God. The first disciple learnt this lesson quite early in their training in the Master's school. The

Bible says, "And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let

down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!

But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great

shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to

come and help them" (Luke 5:4-7).

The first thing to be learnt about abundant fruit is that, it is the result of launching out at Jesus' command. The disciples had launched on their own initiative the whole night and

had caught nothing. Then the Lord commanded them to launch out and the results were different.

Abundant fruit (as assessed by God and not by man) results from a work in which

God is the sole Author. The work must be God-conceived and God-planned. It must be God's

work committed to man by God. People must be individually called to it by God. God does not

want people serving Him at their own initiative. He wants every servant of His to have a personal

appointment from Him. He wants definite persons in definite jobs in definite places at precise

times. The Holy Spirit, who is the Director of God's missionary enterprises appoints men, selects

the spheres and time of their service, gives necessary limits and draws up the boundaries. Every

disciple and each would-be disciple needs to stop and ask himself, "The work I am doing for God:

Is it His initiative or mine?" Any work which is merely man's initiative cannot be God's work and God need not commit Himself to it. It may apparently bear much fruit but the fruit would not last.

Another thing about much fruit is that it results from a work that is not only Godinitiated but is carried out using God's methods. So many of the methods, organisations, and running of spiritual work in our day are just a copy of the business world's promotional methods.

They are methods that are products of minds that have put the Bible pattern aside. God cannot

approve of any such work.

Finally, there is the crucial element of motive. Much effort is put in to promote one denomination or the other, one organisation or the other, one personality or the other, one

doctrine or the other. Such impure motives must necessarily cause God to withdraw, at least in

pains, from what is being done. God's work must be done solely for the glory of the Lord Jesus

and for His glory alone. When the motive is pure, God is free to bless in a big way, yet the blessing

must be viewed from God's stand-point and not man's for, to many, Jesus was a failure in the

numbers that He drew to Himself on a permanent basis but before God He was a total success.

The second thing to be learnt about abundant fruit is that it results from "launching out into the

deep." Being in the deep is risky business. Many prefer shallow waters. It is easy to preach Christ

where there is no opposition but what of those circumstances where the gospel may cost you

your life? Are you still prepared to minister there? The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, unless

a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"

(John 12:24). My prayer for you is that you will accept death and actually die so that there will

much fruit.

The last thing I want to say about abundant fruit is that it is the work of the local assembly. Peter was quite prepared to involve other like-minded people in the catch. He was not

interested in his own glory. He was not only interested in those who were with him in the boat.

He was prepared to call out to others so that the catch might not be lost. He wanted the fish

preserved regardless of who got the glory from man.

True disciples will separate from all who do not have the same objectives and who have put aside the methods of God revealed in the Bible. They will ensure that their work is

accomplished within the framework of the only institution that the Lord Jesus left behind for that

purpose - the local church. My prayer for you is that you accept death and that you really die so

that there will be much fruit.

### **WHAT SHOULD WE RETAIN?**

Many children of God give the impression that, Christianity is a religion of "do not do this, do not do that" in midst of the world. They can fill pages upon pages with a list of things that they

no longer do since the day they believed in Jesus. But they have nothing to say when they are

asked to make a list of the things they have done for Jesus from the day they believed in Him. This

attitude is a caricature of the reality. The Lord said; "you are the light of the world. A city built on

a hill cannot be hidden; neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put

it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine

before men that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in heaven.

(Matthew,

5:14-16). The children of God have the responsibility to act on the world so as to save those who can be saved before the earth is destroyed. They also have the responsibility to manifest the works of God in them and through them. The apostle Paul said: "although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians, 3:8-10) Yes, the children of God must glorify God before Satan, the author of the fall. God has brought good out of the evil that Satan did. God has brought out a more excellent creation out of the old creation which was before the sin. This more excellent creation is the church, the Bride of the Christ. This Bride is made up of disciples who bear fruit, to the point of exciting Satan's jealousy showing Satan and his army the manifold wisdom of God, who has

raised us with Christ and seated us together with Him in heavenly places to the confusion of

Satan, principalities and powers, in the heavenly realms. (C/o Ephesians, 2:6-7) Yes, we join the

apostle Paul to pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, should give to His

children a Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him better; that He should enlighten the eyes

of their hearts so that they may know the hope to which He has called them, the riches of His

glorious inheritance in the saints and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That

power is like the working of his mighty strength. (C/o Ephesians, 1:16-19) Every saint has all that

is needed to bear abundant and abiding fruit and so be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In lesson 6, we will be treating the upward call of God with all its possible by-ways.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **SECTION 1**

1. What is fruit bearing?
2. What is the goal of the believer's election?
3. In how many domains can the believer bear fruit

List them:

4. What is the end result of the fruit that the believer is supposed to bear?
5. What is the different between spiritual gift and talent?
6. In how many ways can spiritual gifts be received?

List them

- a)
- b)

7. List 5 talents that you have

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

8. List two gifts that you have.

- a)
- b)

9. In which way can a talent be used to serve God?

10. List four aspects of the fruit of the Spirit that are in you.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

## **SECTION 2**

11. What is a Spiritual ambition?

12. Name the three types of believers that we meet in terms of spiritual ambition

- a)
- b)
- c)

13. To which category do you belong?

14. Do you have a spiritual ambition? If yes, which one?

15. What are your goals in the domain where you must bear fruit?

- a)
- b)
- c)

16. What are the characteristics of the (type of) the goals that lead someone to success?

17. On what conditions can one attain great spiritual careers?

18. How can we define discipline?

19. Cite from you life 5 things that show discipline.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

20. Give five instances of indiscipline from your life.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

### **SECTION 3**

21. What ambition do you have in the professional domain?

22. What discipline will you apply to succeed?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

23. What ambition do you have in the domain of Bible reading?

24. What discipline will you apply to succeed?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

25. What ambition do you have in the domain of prayer?

26. What discipline will you apply to succeed?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

27. What ambition do you have in the domain of Christian character?

28. What discipline will you apply to succeed?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

### **SECTION 4**

29. What is the type of fruit that glorifies the Lord?

30. On what condition can we bear such fruit?

31. Can an unbeliever accomplish the work of God?

Why?

32. Name two things that characterise the work of God:
33. What becomes of the “fruit“born by another work which is man’s initiative?
34. In the story of the miraculous catch of fish, what symbolises the deep water?
35. How can you illustrate it in the domain of witnessing? (evangelism)
36. Give some examples of impure motives

### **SECTION 5**

37. In which way could the Lord’s work be considered a failure in the year 34 AD?
38. What did Jesus do to prove to the world that He had not failed?
39. Did Jesus succeed?

Justify your answer.

40. What lesson do you draw from the example of the Lord Jesus?