

Bearing Spiritual Fruit

God's plan is that, as we follow Jesus, we become like Him in all areas of our lives. In this series we will examine this way of spiritual growth through the lens of the 'fruit of the Spirit'.

Written by Mark Leach. Mark is the rector of Darling St Anglican Church, in inner city Sydney.



**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: NIV

| Day | Readings | Reference | Reflection/Question | Prayer |
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| 1 | Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. | 1 Peter 2:1-3 | <p>Peter assumes that it is as natural for believers to 'grow up in your salvation' as it is for a baby to grow up physically. Our initial taste of the goodness of the Lord results in an ongoing craving for more of Him and His goodness in our lives. It is this feasting on Jesus, through His Word and Spirit that gives us the spiritual nutrients to grow and flourish as His disciples, to grow up in our salvation.</p> <p>When last did you 'taste' the goodness of the Lord? How might you stir up your craving for more of His goodness in your life?</p> | Lord Jesus, thanks that you are all good, help me to feast on your goodness moment by moment today. Amen. |
| 2 | Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. | Matthew 7:17-20 | <p>Life is lived from the inside out. What we are at our core is revealed in and through our behaviour. Bearing 'good fruit' is an essential and inevitable outworking of a heart that has been renewed by Christ. The path of spiritual growth is the path of bringing all dimensions of our existence under the rule of Jesus, so that the new nature he has given us is increasingly reflected in all areas of our life.</p> <p>If you were to be put on trial for being a deeply committed follower of Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you?</p> | Lord Jesus, thanks for giving me a new heart that loves you and is alive in your kingdom. By the power of your spirit may my behaviour, in all areas of my life, increasingly reflect this new nature I have. Amen. |

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| 3 | Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. | John 15:4-5 | <p>The key to our spiritual life is our deep, intimate, personal union with Christ. He is in us and we are in him. It is out of this incredible connectedness with Jesus that we live our lives. It is Christ living his life, through his Spirit in and through us that results in us exhibiting Christlike character and behaviour.</p> <p>On a scale of one to ten, with one being "no awareness at all" and ten being "I am continually, consciously aware of the presence of Christ with me", how aware are you of the indwelling presence of Jesus in your day to day life? What could you do to increase this score?</p> | Lord Jesus, thanks that you live in me and I in you. Help me moment by moment, day by day, to recognise this reality and to live in the light of it. Amen. |
| 4 | Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. | Romans 8:5-6 | <p>Who is calling the shots in our lives? Here in Romans 8, Paul shows us the two options before us: either we are ruled by the desires of our bodies (status, security, sensory pleasure), or we are ruled by the Spirit and our minds are directed by the desires of the Spirit. Paradoxically, when we live to fulfil the desires of our bodies, the fruit is death, but when we live to fulfil the desires of the Spirit, the fruit is life and peace.</p> <p>What might it mean to let the Spirit to govern your mind? How can you do that today?</p> | Heavenly Father, forgive me for letting the desires of my body rule my life. Holy Spirit, fill me so that my mind and my body want only what you want, so I can have life and peace, now and always. Amen. |
| 5 | But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. | Galatians 5:22-25 | <p>This is one of the classic lists which describes the shape of a life that is renewed and restored from the inside out by the Holy Spirit. As we 'keep in step with the Spirit,' this is the kind of character and behaviour that we will increasingly exhibit. Note how this is all singular 'fruit' – it is the work of the Spirit to so renew us from the inside out that we become Christlike in all parts of our life.</p> <p>To what extent do you think of yourself as 'living by the Spirit'? How can you increase your conscious co-operation with the Spirit to manifest a Christlike life?</p> | Lord Jesus, thank you that because I belong to you I am not rule by the passions and desires of my flesh. Holy Spirit, fill me, help me to keep in step with You in every area of my life, for all the days of my life. Amen. |

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| 6 | <p>If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. – It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.</p> | <p>1 Corinthians 13: 1-7</p> | <p>In the middle of dealing with a divided church, full of people who had an overinflated view of their own spiritual maturity – which was leading to all kinds of sin and conflict in the church – Paul reminds them of the central priority of love for a Christian person. If our love life is not developing and growing, then every other external behaviour is largely irrelevant. Love is the spiritual fruit without which there is, by definition, no true faith in Christ and no deep work of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>How is your love life?</p> | <p>Lord Jesus, forgive me for my failure to love you and love others as myself. Thank you that in you, and by your Spirit, I have both forgiveness for these failures and the power to love as I ought. Strip away from me anything that hinders my capacity for love, and do whatever it takes to make me a person of Christlike love. Amen.</p> |

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| 7 | <p>“Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord.</p> <p>“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.</p> <p>“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name— the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God. “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord your Redeemer.</p> | Isaiah 54:1-8 | <p>The greatest sorrow and disgrace for a woman at the time Isaiah wrote these words was to be barren, unable to bear a child. In this wonderful passage God promises to remove our shame, sorrow and disgrace by being for us a husband and a redeemer who fills us with everlasting kindness and compassion. As a result of this experience of God the woman who has known no earthly joy or honour (she has never been in labour) will now burst into song and shout for joy. – This kind of joy is in fact a deep work of the Spirit making the truth of the gospel real for us emotionally and existentially, not only intellectually.</p> <p>Do you grasp how great and wonderful God’s everlasting kindness and compassion are for you? When last did you shout for joy at God’s love for you?</p> | <p>Heavenly Father, by your Spirit make the truth of your everlasting kindness and compassion, poured out for me on the cross, so real in my heart that songs of praise are ever on my lips and joy is my constant companion.</p> |

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| 8 | <p>“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”</p> | John 14:25-27 | <p>We live in a world sorely lacking in peace. From terror attacks, to civil war, to broken relationships in our homes, to the internal distress of anxiety, we are surrounded by conflict of all sorts. In this mess, Jesus promises to give us his shalom (peace). This is not merely an absence of conflict, but a healing and restoration of all things to work together in perfect accord with their nature and the good Creator God’s intention. The work of the Holy Spirit is to help us learn and live in accord with Jesus’ teaching, and, as we do this, to be filled with peace. Jesus doesn’t want your heart to be troubled or for you to be afraid. His word and his Spirit are constantly available to fill, empower and transform you so you can live a life of divine shalom.</p> <p>What parts of your life need peace?</p> | <p>Jesus, Prince of Peace, set me free from my troubled and fearful heart. Fill me with your Spirit, shape my mind with your word so that I might live a life of shalom, now and always. Amen</p> |
| 9 | <p>Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!</p> <p>Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.</p> | James 5:7-11 | <p>There are many situations in life when it can seem as though God is entirely absent from the world and our lives. Evil people prosper. The poor and vulnerable are oppressed. God’s people suffer and no one notices. We can be tempted to give up our faith and try and make life work without God, on our terms. In this context James urges us to be patient, to stand firm in our faith, because the Lord is coming, and at his coming justice will be done. Innocent suffering will only last for a short while until the eternal judge returns to right all wrongs. In light of this, the fruit we are to exhibit is the capacity to hang in there with our faith, to be patient, trusting God, his timing and his judgement.</p> <p>How does the knowledge of the soon return of Jesus as the just judge help you be patient with the evil in this world?</p> | <p>Heavenly Father give me grace to be patient, to stand firm on your promises, trusting that your son Jesus will return soon, and that his return will be the time of vindication for your people and an end to all evil and suffering. Amen.</p> |

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| 10 | <p>This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.</p> | Jeremiah 9:23-24 | <p>The reason we are to become kind people is that this is not just how Yahweh, Israel’s God, and ours, behaves, but also what he delights in. When last did you think about the fact that God actually delights in kindness? When you treat others with kindness you bring God joy. Isn’t that an incredible thought?</p> <p>Think back over the past 24 hours. How kind have you been to each person with whom you have had any contact? How can you do better tomorrow?</p> | <p>Almighty God, who delights in kindness, remove from me the inclination to meanness and selfishness and replace it with a heart that delights in kindness and fill all my interactions and relationships with your Divine kindness. Amen.</p> |
| 11 | <p>Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.</p> <p>Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.</p> <p>Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.</p> | Psalms 37:1-6 | <p>The psalmist highlights the obvious for us – we are greatly tempted to worry about those who are evil and/or to envy them. The implication is that our worry or envy will in turn lead us to evil, so that we can ‘succeed’ the way evil people do. Instead of doing this, v3 contains a wonderful summary of the life of faith, “trust in the Lord and do good”. Being a ‘do-gooder’ in this sense is in fact the only way to peace and security, to dwelling in the land and enjoying safe pasture. For our faith in God to result in the fruit of goodness, to be good people who never grow weary of doing good, is God’s plan and path to true success and significance.</p> <p>Do you like the idea of doing good to every person you meet? What stops you doing it?</p> | <p>Almighty God, forgive me when I worry about, or envy the success of evil people. Help me to trust you and to go about doing good in every situation and with every person you bring across my path, today and always. Amen.</p> |

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| 12 | <p>My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.</p> <p>Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.</p> <p>Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.</p> | Proverbs 3:1-6 | <p>This Proverb tells us that faithfulness (and love) is to be a defining part of who we are. It is to characterise our external behaviour, adorning us like a necklace, and to shape our hearts, written on the fabric of our innermost being. Faithfulness is a profound reality. It means being true to our word, staying steadfast in our commitments, being honest about the nature of things. The fruit of a life lived under the rule of Jesus and the guidance of the Spirit is a life that is faithful to God in all things, that expresses our commitment and loyalty to God in everything that we do, say, think and feel.</p> <p>When have you been hurt by someone else's faithlessness? What do you love about those who have been faithful to you?</p> | <p>Faithful God, thank you for your eternal faithfulness to me. Strengthen my heart and my will that I might in turn be faithful to you in all of life's challenges. Amen</p> |
| 13 | <p>"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."</p> | Matthew 11:28-30 | <p>In this passage Jesus is inviting us to be yoked to him. He is coaxing us in, like oxen reluctant to take on a yoke because it is painful and hard to be yoked to pull a plough or cart. What Jesus says is that we don't need to fear His yoke because in fact He is gentle (and humble). We won't get hurt or broken following Him. His strength and gentleness are not mutually exclusive. There is something wonderfully comforting and appealing about being in the protective presence of a very strong, but gentle person. So we are to be in this world. God's plan is that people are drawn to us by our spiritual strength and gentleness. Divine power at work in us, but always gentle, especially with the weak and vulnerable.</p> <p>Do you find it easy to believe in the goodness of a gentle Jesus? Where do you need to practice gentleness in your life?</p> | <p>Jesus, thank you that you are gentle with me. Help me in turn to be gentle in all I do and say. Amen.</p> |

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| 14 | <p>For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> | 2 Peter 1:5-8 | <p>These past 13 days we have looked at various aspects of bearing spiritual fruit. In this final passage we see that there is no end to spiritual growth. As v8 says, we are to possess these qualities in 'increasing measure'. The great promise is that if we keep on growing in these areas then we will be effective and productive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Continual growth in the fruit of the Spirit is God's path to an effective and productive Christian life.</p> <p>How much do you really want to be effective and productive? Enough to develop a lifelong plan to keep growing spiritually?</p> | <p>Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, please continue to work in my life, transforming me from the inside out, so that I might possess these qualities in increasing measure, and so that my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will therefore be effective and productive. For your glory, my good and the blessing of the nations I pray. Amen.</p> |