

# Bearing Fruit

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of bearing fruit, making disciples, and taking hold of the power of God to fulfill the personal call to make disciples of all nations.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:18, John 13:34, John 15:2, John 15:5, John 15:8, John 15:16

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of believers making a true commitment to Jesus, emphasizing the need to bear fruit and make disciples as a response to experiencing God's grace and power. He challenges the congregation to believe in God's empowerment through prayer and to recognize their personal calling to bring others from darkness to light. By abiding in Jesus and stepping out in faith, believers are encouraged to actively engage in fulfilling the Great Commission and to be attentive to the divine appointments God orchestrates in their lives.

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## Transcript

Let's suppose that everybody reading these words has, at some point, made a commitment of their life to the Lord Jesus.

A commitment, not to a set of Christian beliefs,

not to some church dogma,

but to Jesus, crucified, risen, alive...as alive and present with you right now.

Even if you've lost your fire....even if you've backslidden, big-time....even if you think of yourself as a "spiritual slob".....

...if there was ever a time when Jesus was real to you....you cried out for help: "Here I am, Lord! I abandon myself to you. I throw myself on your mercy!"

If, at some point you at least came that far, what I have to say in the paragraphs below will, hopefully, make sense.

But maybe someone reading these words has never made such a commitment. You have not yet had an encounter with the risen Lord. Perhaps for you Jesus is still only a figure of ancient history, shrouded in

the mist of past centuries. My prayer is that you will at least have a taste of the real thing as you read on.

In our churches these days we hear repeatedly about all the good things God has done and is doing for us. The word "grace" is heard again and again.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!"

God, pouring mercy into this troubled planet, draining away all human guilt, all the sick, sordid suffering we inflict on each other, all the pain, all the sorrow, all the bitterness. It happens as God himself, in the person of his Son, dies on that cross, and sucks all this evil down into death.

We hear about the change that came over Jesus' followers as they met him alive from the dead --- not just the eleven, not just the hundred and twenty gathered on Pentecost. Many, many more were touched and changed as they saw him. Paul tells us that five hundred brethren gathered together saw Jesus alive from the dead. And there are people reading this now who have, at some point also, met Jesus in the power of his resurrection; tasted, in that encounter, the powers of the world to come.

Yes, we keep hearing about grace. We've tasted it. And to some extent, we have been changed by it.

But here's what we haven't heard much about: What are we supposed to do with this grace, now that it has come to us?

So Jesus has actually opened a door for me to a new life. All I have to do is walk through this door by faith, and it's mine. So I do. "Here I am, Lord. I'm walking through the door into the Kingdom of God. Now what?"

Well, I go to church. I try to live a decent life. I help people. I pray. What more can I do. What more do you want, Lord?

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

Fruit. If I don't bear fruit, I'm gone. If I do bear fruit I'm pruned, cleansed, strengthened.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit (she it is that bears much fruit), for apart from me you can do nothing."

"If you abide in me, you will bear fruit. Guaranteed!"

That's what it's all about. How come we never hear about this?

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

We prove that we are his disciples by bearing fruit!

"You did not choose me, but I chose you, and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide."

Why did he choose us? To be good little church members? To be respectable citizens? He chose us to bear fruit! Lasting fruit!

And the fruit that we are called and ordained to produce is not just the fruits of the Spirit, like love, joy, peace. The Spirit will produce those good things in us as we go out there and bear the fruit we were ordained to produce.

Listen to Jesus' words to his disciples of all time on one of the last occasions when he was seen alive from the dead. Jesus met them at an appointed mountain in Galilee and spoke these words:

"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

"All authority in the universe, all power on this planet is mine. So here's the power; I'm giving it to you. Here's my authority, I'm putting it into you. Now go out there and make disciples!"

Notice Jesus did not say, "Go out there and get people saved." He did that on the cross. That part was already done. He said, "Make disciples, people who follow me, like you're supposed to be following me....."

Of all nations. Not just Jews. Not just Greeks. Not just middle class.

Not just Lutherans. All nations. All walks.

Baptize them. Bring them through the water to new life.

Teach them everything I've taught you.

And remember. I am with you all the while you're doing this. Every single day. Every hour. With all the authority of heaven.

Jesus promises that if we abide in him, we are going to bear fruit. We are going to make disciples. He promises all the power we need to do this.....But Jesus also warns that the branch that does not bear fruit is cut off.

The fig tree that has lots of religious leaves, but no fruit, withers and dies.

The House of Prayer that bears no fruit becomes a pile of rubble ... like the Temple.

And we see it. Churches all around us are withering and dying.

Perhaps even our own church ---

--- All we have to do is open our eyes. If our churches don't start bearing fruit they won't be here much longer.

The responsibility comes down to each of us who at any point in our lives knew Jesus and made a commitment to him.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you, and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit..."

Bottom line: If a church doesn't bear fruit, it is on borrowed time.

If you and I do not bear fruit, we are bypassed.

So how do we get out of the rut we're in? If all power in heaven and earth is put at our disposal by the risen Lord, how do we take hold of this power and start bearing fruit, making disciples?

Here are three questions which each of us needs to ask. And each of these questions has to do with faith. Faith --- that's all.

#1. Do I really believe that God expects me to bear fruit?

Let's face it, most of us don't really believe that.

"After all, I'm untrained. My faith is pretty shaky. I'm just a layman. Besides, my faith is a private matter between me and God. So let me alone!"

So what are you going to do with this?

"Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

--- "If you are my disciple, you are going to abide in me, and you will bear fruit.

--- If you are my disciple, all power in heaven and earth will be poured into you as you make disciples.

--- Lo, I am with you all the days, and you will know my presence and my power as you make disciples.

It doesn't matter how old you are, or how young, how tongue-tied or how eloquent, if you take me at my word, and know that you are under my power, you will bear fruit. People will find their way into the Kingdom through you."

#2 Do I really believe that God will empower me, through prayer, to bear fruit?

Let's face it, most of us don't really believe that. We pray for our loved ones. We pray for our friends. We pray for all the starving children of the world. But do we pray for the power to bring people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God?

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

"Lord, give me bread to feed the hungry souls who come to me! My own relatives. My friends. My neighbors. Wounded, hurting, lost! And all we ever talk about is hockey and the weather? Lord, I'm asking for power! Pour out your Spirit, Lord!"

If you abide in him and his words abide in you, that's what you'll be praying for! And that prayer will be answered!

#3. Do I really believe that I've been ordained by the Lord, to bear fruit?

Ordained. Empowered. Commanded. Maybe up to now we have never considered such a thing as a personal calling. But let's step out in faith and believe it!

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."

Believe it, and you will see it happen. People will be dropped right into your lap by God himself. And you will have the exact words they need to hear, the exact touch they need to receive from you.

You will bring them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. You will do this!

What I'm asking you to do today as you read these words, and in the coming days, is to open your eyes. Be alert. Pay attention. Notice the person that God sends right into your path. And then, don't just stand there! Reach out! Open your mouth and speak the words that you will be given.

This is why you and I were born. This is why you have read this far. This is why the flame of faith is rising in your heart right now.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples...."

That's a personal word to each of us.

It's a word to the church each of us is part of.

If we take hold of it, it will be fulfilled.

If we turn away from it, we already know what the outcome will be.

Two things will happen as we respond to this personal call:

1. The flame of faith in each of us will suddenly come to life. We will experience a stirring of the Spirit within us --- beyond anything we have ever known --- as we step out and obey.
2. Our church will come to life with a life it has not known in a long, long time.

It will become a City set on a hill. People will be drawn to us and find among us the doorway to the Kingdom of Heaven.

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