

Russell Kelfer

Herein is My Father Glorified

#1358-A

Series: The Parables of Scripture

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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Jesus was seated on a tiny little fishing boat, anchored just a few yards from the shore. A somewhat unusual congregation lined the beach, listening to His every word. Most of them didn't understand a thing He said. Oh, they got the gist of the stories, but the deeper truths made no sense to them at all.

But to *those who had ears to hear*, Jesus was revealing the hidden mysteries of the kingdom of God. He was speaking to them in parables, and as the disciples questioned Him as to why, He explained that it was not given to everyone to understand these mysteries, *but to them it was given*.

His opening story was a simple one, but its implications were eternally significant. He talked to them in agricultural terms about why a farmer can't just assume that because good seed is sown, they will have a good harvest. He spoke of seed that fell by the side of the road where it was trampled underfoot; He spoke of seed that fell on soil that looked good, but was too shallow, so when life's storms came, there were no roots.

He spoke of seed that fell on soil that was excellent, and the crop should have been the envy of the farming community. But the farmer wasn't tending the soil. The farmer was so proud of how beautiful the ground *looked*, and how powerful the seeds *were*, that he got drawn away by lesser things, and *other things entered in and choked the seed*. Weeds. Thorny, vicious weeds they were. They looked green and healthy at a distance, but under the soil, they were wrapping their rapidly advancing roots around the potential harvest, until they choked the life out of what might have been a fruitful crop.

Then Jesus made it clear that the seed of which He spoke was the word of God, the soil was the human heart, and the problem was threefold: *"The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things enter in and choke the Word, until it becomes unprofitable (or unfruitful)"*

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We have been taking a slow walk through that passage to see what it is in our own personal lives that might be entering in and preventing us from bearing the kind of fruit that was meant to flow from our lives. It has been a little discouraging, for we have found that many of the things that enter in are good things but we let them get out of control, and they become the very weeds that entangle us and keep us from focusing on the eternal fruit we were put here to produce.

In our last study, however, we came to the end of the story, and Jesus allowed the Spirit of God to burst through with a glorious promise of sunshine when He spoke of what happens when good seed falls on good soil and the farmer pays attention to tending the soil. It is what we've been waiting for. He not only says it's a possibility to bear fruit; He guarantees a bumper crop. It's an absolute. It is written in the stone of the word of God. He said this:

And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

(Mark 4: 20)

This is what we've been waiting for. It isn't hopeless, and it isn't a mystery any longer. God has clearly told us that we were meant to bear fruit and if we would just pay attention to those thorny weeds that enter in, the issue wouldn't be *if we would*, but rather *how overwhelming the crop would be*.

We also found in our last lesson, that in John, chapter 15, God has written a treatise on fruit-bearing that peels back the veil and reveals God's heart and our need. Our need is for a relationship with God called "abiding" and the Master graciously explained what that meant and what it would produce.

As we proceed in our study and conclude our look at this parable, we must clear up a few unanswered questions and complete the circle of revelation so that we will not have more knowledge and still be men and women who are standing on the shoreline of life, hearing God speak, but doing nothing about it.

OUR REASON FOR LIVING

Among the truths nestled in that John 15 exhortation was an incredible statement by God about why we are left here on planet earth and what relationship that has to our calling as farmers. It is extremely clear, but somehow some of us have missed the real

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impact of it. He said this:

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

(John 15:15,16)

This abiding relationship with God has opened up a whole new vista in our perspective of Him. He is still the God who framed the universes and spoke the worlds into being, but He is also our own personal Savior and Friend. He has, by virtue of what He did on that Cross, ushered in a kind of intimacy that is available to the believer which will allow us to experience His friendship in a way we never dreamed possible. He will tell us and teach us the deepest secrets of the Kingdom. Everything the Father told Him, He is willing to tell us. That is what verse 15 says.

Then, with that relationship in mind, He speaks of the essence of grace, and of the specifics of our calling. First, He tells us again that it is all of grace. We aren't bearing fruit because one day we decided it would be a noble thing to do. God chose us and He ordained us. He set in place a plan, and we were a part of that plan. The goal of the plan is for God to reproduce Himself in man and through man, through a system known as fruit-bearing. Just as God had commanded man in the physical realm to go forth and multiply, so He did so in the spiritual realm. And His plan is for us to:

- 1- go
- 2- bear fruit
- 3- the fruit should remain

As to where we are to go, what kind of fruit we are to bear, and why and how the fruit should remain, that is what the remainder of this lesson is all about.

Jesus, in verse 8, made this incredible statement:

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

(John 15:8)

The whole essence of the Christian life, then, can be summarized in that one verse. To glorify the Father and fulfill our mission on

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earth, we must bear much fruit. That will be the true evidence of our discipleship. Not how many jobs we take, not how many meetings we attend, not how many verses we can quote; how much fruit we bear. Some of those things may be tools or methods by which we bear fruit, but not necessarily. What then does it mean to bear fruit?

I believe if we were to interview 100 Christians on a given day and ask them if they were fruit-bearing Christians most would say either “no”, or “I don’t know, but I hope so”. Now if this is the whole essence of the Christian experience and the reason we are alive, *ought we not to know for sure at least what it means?* Most Christians will tell you they don’t know for sure what bearing fruit really means. To some it means winning the lost. To some it means working at anything that advances the kingdom. To some it means pouring their lives into other people. All of those things *may* produce fruit for them, but it is not automatic, and *often fruit-bearing is an invisible experience which we are not even conscious of at the time.*

THREE KINDS OF FRUIT

Let’s see if we can search John 15 and other passages and determine what it means to bear fruit in the Christian life. The first thing we need to know is what this fruit looks like and if there is more than one kind. I believe this passage and all of Scripture confirm that there are at least three ways to bear fruit, and all of them are crucial to the kingdom. Don’t get them confused, because they come about in totally different ways; and don’t assume that because they are so different, the results are different. The results will be singular: when you bear fruit in the Christian life *something happens in the spirit world.* God is either changing you or using you to change someone else. God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. His is a spiritual kingdom, and He measures life in spiritual terms. That is the plumb line God uses.

The Fruit of Character Transformation

One of the things we often overlook is that fruit-bearing is something God does in us and through us, not something we do for God. Therefore, the results are often internal and virtually invisible; but to God, they are of the highest importance. That is why abiding is so important. Abiding in Christ allows us to dissolve

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into Him and allow His nature to flow into us and through us into other lives. One way we bear fruit as Christians is for the fruit of the Spirit to come alive in us. Ephesians 5:8-10 says:

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

(Ephesians 5:8-10)

The fruit the Spirit produces in you is spiritual. It changes character. It takes what was once darkness and transforms it into light. It produces that which is goodness, righteousness and truth. These are all characteristics of God's nature. No one is good but God. No one possesses righteousness but God. God alone *is truth*. If you want to reveal what brings pleasure to God, the verse concludes, you will set the Spirit free to produce His nature in you. Galatians 5:19-25 gives us a checklist:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

The first kind of fruit that grows in the vineyard of God's Spirit is the transformation of character that takes man's sinful nature and His bent to evil and through the appropriation and application of truth in a fashion yielded to the grace of God produces *the literal character of God in man*. It is not an imitation of God's nature. You cannot imitate perfection. It is the actual character of God, who is now resident within you, being set free to shine through you, in ever increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another.

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Where once bitterness reigned, *love now shines through*. There is no natural explanation except *that God is love*, and you have spent so much time in His presence and so much time in His word, that the very essence of who He is has become who you are. Where once impatience was the very trademark of your behavior, you have become inexplicably patient. Where once you struggled with life's tribulations and tended to be depressed and often downcast, now your life is characterized by a spirit of joy. You are confident in God in the darkest of hours. What has happened? *God, who lives in your body, is demonstrating His very nature through your transformed character*. The time you have spent with Him is beginning to bear fruit.

Others, seeing the difference, cannot explain it except that someone or something supernatural has happened to you. You are growing *into His likeness*. The key is abiding. So long as you maintain that time in the secret place and maintain a pure and obedient heart, the process will go on. The older you get, the more Christ-like you will become. And so long as you do not grasp the glory for yourself, but quietly give all the glory to God, the process will actually multiply.

If it is really of God, the more His nature enfolds you, the more humble you will become. The more of Him you reflect, the less of you there will be to vie for attention. You will cry out with John the Baptist: "*He must increase; I must decrease*". For the most part, you will be virtually unaware of the transformation. Instead of calling attention to the process, you will most likely be drawn rather just to worship Him the more.

When you get to heaven, there will be crowns awaiting you to cast at His feet. Because of what you did? No, beloved, all you did was spend time with Him. Because of what He did. That's the beauty of it. If we are willing to tend the soil and spend time with the vinedresser, He will produce the fruit, and we will get the rewards. As we return the rewards to Him in worship and adoration, we will have seen the glory cycle go full circle and we will spend eternity praising Him and glorifying His precious name.

Beloved, if you are not becoming more Christ-like in your inner character as the years progress, *something is wrong*. There is a problem with your abiding relationship with God. He will increase and you will decrease automatically if you are humbly, obediently spending time with Him. Like Moses when he came down from the

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mountain, the glory will shine through you and others will look at you and see Him. Then, beloved, you are bearing much fruit. That is what Jesus meant when He said:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:4,5)

Much fruit will be your legacy, provided that you abide in Him. And one of the great joys you will experience in heaven will be learning that those precious crowns He gives you with which to worship Him will have come from allowing His nature to so transform your spirit that when people saw you, they saw Him.

The Fruit of God-Produced Works

The second kind of fruit spoken of in Scripture is not quite as experiential, but every bit as important. It is the works God does through you to advance the kingdom when you let Him be Himself in you. The Scripture speaks of it many times. For instance:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Colossians 1:9,10)

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. (Romans 1:13)

A worthy walk is a fruitful walk. It involves increasing in the knowledge of God and allowing that knowledge to work itself out in practical activities in the kingdom. Paul was writing to the Christians in Rome saying that he had been prevented from making the journey to them, but he desired to, *that he might bear some fruit among them*, even as he had among other Gentiles. Paul wanted God to do something through him that would have eternal consequences. That is what he was saying.

If you study the journeys of Paul and the ministries of Paul, you will see that his works included winning the lost, preaching the

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gospel, teaching the church how to walk with God, comforting the hurting, and exhorting those who were straying from the course. How many of these activities would bear fruit?

Jesus seemed to explain that in John, chapter 15. He reminded the disciples there that “without Him, they could do nothing”. I believe that *whenever Paul allowed the Spirit working through Him to be the sole agent of spiritual transformation, he bore much fruit.* I believe Paul was an orchard full of spiritual apples. But it is also possible, *that at times*, the flesh got in (Paul said it did), and the things he would have done, he didn't. At those times, *if the word was going out*, I believe fruit was being borne, but not being accrued to Paul's account. Remember his letter to the Philippians? In the first chapter, he raised a question and gave an answer:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

(Philippians 1:15-19)

Some were actually preaching just to hurt Paul; out of envy and strife they were pretending to be led by the Spirit, yet were ministering under a cloak of hypocrisy in their own energy. What did Paul say? Let them preach. The word is going out. Fruit will be borne. God will take care of them. Paul was rejoicing that God was working, *even if the one He was using was totally operating in the flesh.*

They may well not have even been believers. Certainly no fruit could be attached to them. In all likelihood, they were not even connected to the vine. But still fruit was borne. The truth is: there may have been many times in your life and mine when we have shared the word or ministered in the flesh, *doing something for God, who says in His word, we can't do anything apart from Him*, and God used His word and spiritual transformation took place. Praise His Name! But when we get to heaven, there probably will be no

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crowns for those activities. There probably will be no rewards, for *apart from Him we cannot bear fruit that is accrued to our account.*

It makes the issue of daily and continual surrender much more important than we tend to make it. Abiding is resting in the finished work of Christ, being available while He does His miracle-working spiritual works. So long as we are doing something for Him, we will miss much of the blessing. When we reach the point where we constantly empty ourselves and realize that we can do all things, but only through His divine, supernatural grace, we have begun to enter into the heart of fruit-bearing in the Christian life.

Good works. They are what God does that glorifies Himself through spiritual transformation in human life. Be careful. You may do many things that are considered good works that have nothing to do with bringing people to Christ or causing them to grow into His likeness. You may participate in charitable causes, get involved in all kinds of meaningful and helpful activities that clean up the community, help mankind, and make this world a better place in which to live. There is certainly a need for that.

But God's primary concern is not making this world a better place, but calling men to a perfect place, where sin and corruption and pain and persecution will be a thing of the past. You may receive accolades in this life for other good things you do, *and this is not to say we should not do them*, but remember, *from God's perspective*, the good works that produce fruit in eternity are:

- 1- Things He does through you, and
- 2- Things that have eternal significance through spiritual transformation.

Satan sometimes encourages good works so long as they are not God's works. Watch for it. Empty yourself daily and ask God to simply work in and through you using His incredible grace, to be an agent of transformation in the lives of lost and hurting people. God isn't looking for your ability, but for your availability. That is why I believe that oftentimes, *once we begin to be recognized in the kingdom's work, we bear less fruit than before.* The reason is: we look at what God has done through us, and subtly begin to accrue some of the glory to ourselves, thus robbing God of glory that's His, robbing us of rewards we would have, had we remained humble. In Matthew, chapter six, Jesus talked openly about men who consciously or otherwise pray, give, or fast and begin to accept glory for it. It says they already have the only reward they will

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receive: the approval of man. You can't receive the glory both here and there. One place or the other. That's God's formula.

The Fruit of Transforming Prayer

There is, then, a kind of eternal fruit borne when God is allowed to change your life internally through spiritual transformation as you abide in Him. There is also fruit produced when we allow His Spirit in us and through us to do good works: supernatural, grace-originated activities that result in the going forth of spiritual power.

There seems to be, however, one more evidence of fruit-bearing that we often overlook. It is clearly stated in these verses:

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (John 15:7,16)

Jesus seemed to be saying that He has ordained us to bring forth lasting, or eternal fruit, *so that we can be so at one with Him in prayer that whatever we ask is in harmony with His will, and thus is certain to be fulfilled.*

It doesn't mean that if you abide in Him, you become a god and tell Him what to do; so whatever you want, He does. I John 5 makes it clear how this works:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

(I John 5:14,15)

The truth is: the more time you spend abiding in Him, the more of His will He reveals to you. The more of His will you come to understand, the more power you have in prayer. The more power you have in prayer, the more eternal fruit you bear that will accrue as precious crowns to one day place at His feet. It will also be true that the more you abide, the more humble you should become, and the less likely you should be to tell God what He should or should not do. You will rather more likely come to understand with greater depth what Paul meant when he said In Romans 8:26:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself

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maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be
uttered. (Romans 8:26)

I believe that in glory we are going to be amazed at some of the people who are granted the glory of many crowns, who are total unknowns in the Christian world. They will not have preached to multitudes, written great treatises for the saints to applaud, or even written great hymns for believers to sing.

They will be men and women who spent their lives on their knees, far, far away from the plaudits of men. Quietly, without any fanfare, they fought the good fight of faith in the prayer closet where the warfare is most intense and the true battles of the kingdom are won or lost. And with each glorious confirming answer from God, they became less enamored with themselves and all the more in awe that the God of eternity would hear them and answer. I believe that theirs may be the most glorious fruit of all.

THIRTY, SIXTY, A HUNDREDFOLD

What ought our goal to be, then? To grab up crowns or try to bear more fruit than our neighbors? Oh, no, beloved, it is not a competition. It is a cooperation. We are all part of one body. Some are hands, some are feet, some are eyes, some are ears. Some of us are parts of the body less noticed or seemingly less used than others. Still others seem to be the features the body is known by. They are the men and women whose names appear on the marquees of Christendom and whose names are on the lips of so many believers. Their books are widely read, their sermons widely circulated.

They, beloved, are not necessarily accruing more fruit than you. They may, in fact, be under more attack to remain humble and Spirit-led than you. Pray for them. Don't assume that the well-known orator is producing fruit a hundredfold, while you, at your best are a thirty kind of man or woman. Remember who it is that is producing the fruit: God. Remember as well what He told us:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

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For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. (I Corinthians 3:5-9)

It's God's kingdom. It's God's power. It's God's vineyard. It will be God's increase and God's alone. He that plants is nothing apart from God. He that waters is nothing apart from God. He will reward us for our labors, and it will be a time of great rejoicing. But I believe we will rejoice over one another's rewards as much as over our own, *for after all, we didn't do it, God did, and we are all laborers together with Him.*

Don't focus on the fruit; focus on abiding in Christ, and the fruit will come. The rewards will be there. The less we strive for them in our own energy, the more likely we will be to simply let God use us in ways we never dreamed of, thus bearing fruit we never thought we would have.

Those with the greatest crops in heaven may be nearly in shock when they see the harvest, for they were so focused on the One who produced the harvest, it never entered their minds that the fruit would be so glorious.

This parable and Jesus' admonitions in John 15 ought to give us a far better understanding of the dangers of simply assuming that we are bearing eternal fruit. It is why we are here, beloved, and it is our calling. He chose us and ordained us so that we might bring forth fruit, and herein is our Father glorified. He has told us exactly what things keep us from fruit-bearing. It would seem, then, that we are without excuse if we continue laboring in the flesh to be seen and heard, or attempting in our own energy to fashion works that would please Him, or assuming that anything the world calls good automatically produces works that are good in eternity.

It would also seem that if we continue to willingly allow other things to "enter in" and take the time and the intensity that we ought to spend abiding in Him, we are without excuse, as well. We will have knowingly made choices that choke the word and destroy the fruit.

If all this is true, we have received knowledge about eternal fruit.

If we have personalized that knowledge and considered that God was speaking to us, we have gained understanding.

It is now God's will that this understanding be turned into

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wisdom through humble obedience.

Beloved, fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the King, it is time to go forth, bearing precious fruit for,

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When His children bear much fruit,
Ought we with all our heart and soul
Not make that our pursuit?

If what the heart of God desires
Is that abiding saints
Allow His precious Spirit
To become our very strength,

Allowing Him to work in us
Sin's nature to erase,
Until His very likeness
But shines forth from our face.

Allowing Him to work through us
Until His loving Son
Has taken such control, we
Scarcely know the works are done.

Allowing Him to pray through us
As we stay on our knees,
Teaching us to pray aright
As in us grace He frees.

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When fruit is borne so sweet
That one day they become rewards
To cast at His dear feet.

Oh, on that day what joy there'll be
When at His feet we fall,
Giving all the praise to Him,
Because...He did it all!

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A Challenge to Further Study

1- Meditate on John, chapter 15, verses 8, 15, and 16. Paraphrase them. (Write them in your own words) Now personalize them. (Insert your own name where there is a *ye* or a *you*.) What is it that God has done? What does it mean that He has *ordained* you? What does He say actually glorifies the Father? How important is it, then, that we come to understand the principle of fruit-bearing?

2- Reread Galatians 5:22-25. If this is what God looks like when He is living in us, what should be progressively happening in our lives? Try to define each of the fruits of the Spirit. Make it a goal to cross-reference them in the future and see what Scripture says about each one. What ought we to do if we are greatly lacking in meekness or gentleness or self-control? Can you approach God with confidence and ask Him to change you? What verse can you claim? (It is found in this lesson.)

A Challenge to Further Application

1- Spend time this week seeking to abide in Christ. As you spend time with Him, crawl up into Him and rest. Ask Him to make your heart beat as one with His. Tell Him you want to be a fruit-bearing Christian. Open up your heart and share which of the fruits of the Spirit you seem to long for, but do not consistently have. Ask Him to be at work in you, producing that fruit.

2- Reread the parable of the sower. Make a list of the principles that God has placed on your heart during this time of studying that parable. Take them one by one. Search out the convictions you may have had concerning *things entering in*. Have you been faithful in following through? Or are they still *choking the Word* until it becomes unfruitful?

3- What do you need to do to turn knowledge into wisdom in the days to come? Make a list. Take that list and lay it at God's feet. Ask Him to do it. Make yourself available, and then abide in Him.

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize John 15:16

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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