

By My Fruits I Am Known

John Pollock

Recorded January 13, 2018

I'd like to start today by turning to the gospel of Matthew. Here in Matthew 7 we find what is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, which is comprised of chapters 5, 6 and 7. And we find this reference in verse 29 of chapter 7. We find Christ teaching with authority. But I want to begin reading with verse 15. Keeping in mind that this is Christ's admonition to us, with authority, we find here the words of Jesus Christ Himself.

Matthew 7:15. *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

16) *You will know them by their fruits.... (NKJV)*

We are to know them by their fruits. Who are we to know by their fruits? The false prophets as just mentioned in verse 15.

16 continued) ...Do men gather grapes from the thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

17) Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18) A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20) Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (NKJV)

For some 22 plus years, while sitting in Worldwide Church of God congregations, ranging from the Pacific northwest to the Pacific southwest, when Matthew 7:15-20 were read by the ministry, almost always, invariably, the ministry would follow-up by reading Galatians 5:22, 23. These are memory verses for many.

Galatians 5:22. *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)

The Worldwide minister would then go on to explain that the good fruit of Matthew 7:15-20, are the fruits of the holy spirit as we find here in Galatians 5. I am not minimizing or discounting the Worldwide interpretation of what was just read, but I believe there is a deeper explanation to the good fruit mentioned, as well as the statement found in Matthew 7:20: *therefore by their fruits you shall know them.* Today I want us to view this phrase a little bit differently. Instead of looking outwardly stating "by their fruits you will know them," I want us to all consider looking inwardly. Look at ourselves and state "by my fruits I am known. "

Mother Theresa, the Catholic nun and missionary, once stated that Mahatma Gandhi (the preeminent leader in 1947 of the movement from British-ruled India to independence) once said, "If Christians lived according to their faith, there would be no more Hindus left in India". Dwight L. Moody, the founder of The Bible Institute, as well as Moody Publishers, once stated "Of one hundred men, one will read the Bible and ninety-nine will read the Christian." I find the wording of this statement interesting, as each of us (as we'll see in a few minutes) are to be a walking letter, an epistle if you will, of Jesus Christ: a letter to be read by all those with whom we come into contact. Looking around at Christianity today and sad to say, looking at some within the greater church of God, that they were probably right. How many claiming to be Christians today actually walk the walk? I think a lot of Christians talk a talk, but do they really walk the walk?

Though it sounds a little protestant syrupy, isn't factual so please listen to author Joanna Weaver, from her publication [Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World](#).

Whether we like it or not, we are the only Jesus some will ever see. While they, the Ghandis and the Moodys of the world, they are intrigued by the claims of those individuals that claim to be of Christ, but they shrink back with the disappointment of His offspring.

An offspring meaning, of course, Christ's disciples throughout the centuries. I don't think anyone would disagree with me when I state that Christ is to be our example. But once, and only once, at least that I can find in scripture, did Christ say that He is leaving us an example that we should follow. Paul, in various writings, states that we should follow him as he follows Christ. That we are to imitate Paul as stated in 1 Corinthians 4:16, that we should put to practice whatever we have learned, or received or heard from him; Philippians 4:9. That we should follow his example as he follows Christ; 1 Corinthians 11:1. But only once, as my findings indicate, did Christ Himself state that He was leaving His disciples an example.

John 13:1. *Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave the world and return to His Father. He now showed the disciples the full extent of His love.*

2) It was time for supper ... (NIV)

I realize the NKJV reads *and supper being ended*; the RSV reads *and during supper*, but the NLT reads as follows:

2) It was time for supper and the devil had already enticed Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to carry out his plan to betray Jesus.

3) Jesus knew that His Father had given Him authority over everything and that He had come from God (which can be found in John 1:1) and that He would return to God (John 6:62 and John 20:17). (NLT)

In those referenced scriptures we find that Christ, as the Word, was God; as the Word was with God, and now Christ was to return to God with all the glory that He previously had.

John 13:4. *So He [Christ] got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist*

5) and poured water into a basin. He then began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with a towel that he had around Him.

6) When He came to Simon Peter, Peter said to Him "Lord (the Greek word Kurios) why are you going to wash my feet?"

7) Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

8) No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet (NLT)

I am going to digress here for a moment as to why Peter protested so vehemently to Christ when he said 'no, you will never wash my feet'. I believe we read over the real significance as to what Jesus Christ was doing here and why Peter protested as he did. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states

The Old Testament shows that the washing of the feet was the first act upon entering the tent, or a house, after a journey. The Orientals wore only sandals and this washing was refreshing as well as cleanliness. In the case of ordinary people, the host furnished the water and the guests washed their own feet. But in the richer houses, the washing was done by a slave. It was looked upon as the lowliest of all services (1 Samuel 24:41).

Biblical references are many; Genesis 18:4, 19:2, 24:32, Judges 19:21, 1 Samuel 25:41, Psalms 58:10.

From bible.org we read:

Footwashing was not an unusual thing in bible times. Back then, roads were not paved as they are now. Roads were made of dirt that had been packed down over time. Not only were they dusty, but they were dirty: dirty from garbage and the waste of animals that traveled there. Without cars most traveling was done on foot. People did not wear shoes like the shoes that we wear today. Most people wore sandals and the poorest of people wore no shoes at all. Therefore, even as some would start out their day being clean, by the evening meal their feet would be very dirty. No one would want to eat their meal with dirty feet around. So the feet of the guests were washed. What was unusual about Jesus' actions was who was doing the washing. It was the custom that the lowliest servant would do the job of washing the feet of those that came to eat. Everyone in the upper room knew that Jesus was the greatest among them. He was the

great Teacher. He performed miracles and by that time most of them were convinced that He was the Messiah. And thus we find Peter using the word Kurios in the Greek as he referred to Christ. It would have been unheard of for the most important guest at the table to wash another's feet. But Jesus had come to teach things that were opposite to the world's ways. After telling the disciples that they should serve others, He then showed them how to serve. Simon Peter had a very strong reaction to Jesus' actions. When Jesus had finished washing the disciples' feet He said these words "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set for you an example."

From a physical perspective one must remember that the disciples were not dining at a table as you and I would be sitting at chairs dining at a table. For the most part, the disciples reclined on couches with their feet most likely on the couches, which at that point would be table height with the food. Physical hygiene deemed it necessary to wash one's feet. Of course, the spiritual aspect of Christ's actions addressed the need for each disciple to humbly serve one another as Peter found out in his discourse with Christ. Bottom line: Christ did not merely wash his disciples' feet because they would not, or because there was no servant or slave in the room to do so. Christ became their servant and washed the disciples' feet to show that even the teacher should bear the fruit of humility. More on this as we progress through this message and something to think about as we approach our pre-Passover self-examination in the weeks ahead.

John 13:8. *"No, Peter protested, you will never wash my feet". (NLT)*

Peter was very aware that only servants, and in many cases slaves, washed the feet of guests. Jesus replied that if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me. In other words, if you, Peter, won't allow Me to become your humble servant and wash your feet, then you won't belong to me.

9) (has Peter exclaiming) *"then wash my hands and my head as well Lord [Kurios], not just my feet". (NLT)*

From Peter's exclamation here we find that he truly, emphasis truly, wanted to be part of Jesus Christ.

10) *Jesus replied "a person who is bathed all over does not need to be washed except for his feet, to be entirely clean. And you are clean, but that isn't true of everyone here". (NLT)*

Of course this is a direct reference to Judas Iscariot.

11) *"For Jesus know who would betray Him. That is what He meant when He said 'not all of you are clean'.*

12) *After washing their feet He put on His robe again, sat down and asked “Do you understand what I was doing?*
13) *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right because that’s what I am.*
14) *And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet..” (NLT)*

Verse 15-17 are the key verses here.

15) *“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.*
16) *I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message.*
17) *Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them. (NLT)*

A Christian is one who follows the example of Christ and that example is one of a servant: a humble servant. A moment ago we read the statement: Whether we like it or not, we're the only Jesus some will ever see. With that in mind we find Paul telling us that we are to be an epistle; we are to be a letter from Christ for others to read.

2 Corinthians 3:1. *“Do we begin again to commend others, or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you”?*

2) *“You are our epistle, you are our letter written in our hearts, known and read by all men.*

3) *Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us. Written not with ink, or by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh; that is of the heart”. (NLT)*

I want you to hold that thought, the thought of God writing not on stone, but writing on our heart and turn back to Ezekiel 11, if you would.

Ezekiel 11:19. *“Then I will give them one heart and I will put a new spirit within them and take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.*

20) *That they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them and they shall be My people and I will be their God”. (NLT)*

Ezekiel is describing our conversion process. Paul is stating in above verses that you and I, by our actions, we are led by the spirit of God; that new spirit spoken of by Ezekiel, that we are by our actions letters, epistles, letters to be read by everyone. I don't know about you, but in my 47 years of conversion, I'm ashamed to say that up until about 3 years ago, I never considered my calling in this particular manner. I never thought of myself as a letter from Christ, walking around among a sick society; a letter for them to read. And that letter, are my fruits; whether good or bad. My fruits are the words of that letter. My fruits are the words of my letter.

I read once of a man who loved experimenting with fruit trees. He would try grafting one type of fruit to a tree of a different type of fruit. Using good root stock he finally came up with a tree that was part peach, part plum, part apricot and part nectarine. But the tree itself had a major problem. Oh it grew fine, and every year in the spring it would bear blossoms, but the downfall was that it would never produce fruit. Good root stock is not the only thing needed to produce fruit. John the Baptist understood this and he didn't mix words in explaining it.

Luke 3:3. *"Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan river preaching that people should be baptized to show how they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven."* (NLT)

Luke 3:7. (As a sample of John teaching to the crowds who came for baptism).
*"You brood of snakes, who warned you to flee God's coming judgment?
8) Prove by the way you live you have really turned from your sins and turned to God. Don't just say we're safe; 'we're the descendants of Abraham'. That proves nothing. God can change these stones here into children of Abraham.
9) Even now the acts of God's judgment is poised ready to sever you roots. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire".* (NLT)

John was explaining to the Pharisees and the Saducees that the DNA of Abraham, their root stock, meant absolutely nothing. He was stating that they had to bear fruit. The lesson for us that is it not enough to call ourselves Christians. It isn't enough to know that our spiritual DNA, our spiritual root stock, is that of Christ. But what matters is that we bear fruit; and not that we just bear fruit, but bear much fruit. We must bear much fruit.

John 15:1. (begins with Christ's own words here) *"I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser.*

2) Every branch in Me (and I want an emphasis here that every branch is Christ as our spiritual root stock) that does not bear fruit He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit".

The Father certainly does prune, He can take away, but we have to be in Christ to bear fruit.

*3) "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
4) Abide in me (Question: Abide in who? Abide in Christ) and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in me.
5) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit. For without me (without Christ brethren) you can do nothing.*

- 6) *If anyone does not abide in Me he is cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned.*
- 7) *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.*
- 8) *By this My Father is glorified that you bear much fruit so you will be my disciples”.*

Bearing much fruit brings with it discipleship in Christ. Bearing much fruit glorifies the Father. Our DNA is Christ. Our root stock is Christ, but we must abide in Christ. Abide means simply to accept or to act in accordance with, and we must bear much fruit. In doing so, we will then be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let's understand this: a pretty simple thing to understand; apple trees bear what? Apples. Pear trees bear pears, peach trees bear peaches. If we then are Christians, then our lives, our epistles, our letter should bear none other than the fruit of Christ. He is our root stock. Is that with so much respect, don't get me wrong.

Let's reread Matthew 7:15-20.

Matthew 7:15. *“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep, but are really wolves that will really tear you apart.*

16) *You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don't pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles.*

17) *A healthy tree produces good fruit and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit.*

18) *A good tree can't produce bad fruit and a bad tree can't produce good fruit.*

19) *So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.*

20) *Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that it produced'. (NLT)*

The word “fruit” found in these 6 verses is Strong's number 2590 and is transliterated as karpos and means that which is produced by a living organism. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words reads *metaphorically of works or deeds, fruit being the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly; the character of the fruit being evidence of the character of the power producing it.* So we see the fruit mentioned here is that of works and deeds. In other words, words of action. The character of the fruit being produced is made evident by the one producing the fruit.

What is my letter producing? Here in Matthew 7:15-16 we see bad fruit produced by false prophets metaphorically dressed as sheep, but in reality they're really wolves. So we can come to understand verses 15-16 by understanding verse 20; by the kind of fruit that is produced. Or, as the NKJ reads *'by your fruits you will know them'*. In other words, by their works, deeds and actions. Precisely what Gandhi and Moody were stating.

Have you ever thought about this? Spiritual fruit is something we can't manufacture or create in our lives. You may be asking why you can't manufacture or create fruit in our lives. Because, fruit just happens. I am going to explain that so don't get me wrong. To produce an acorn squash, for instance, you have to plant an acorn squash seed and the seed needs to be nourished. Then at some point a squash blossom appears, then a tiny squash bulb appears and as long as the bulb remains connected to the vine, you get an acorn squash. It just happens. That tiny little squash bulb cannot go off on its own and produce an acorn squash. Staying connected to the vine is paramount to producing fruit. There is nothing we can do about it. Yes, we can water, we can fertilize, we can weed, but it's the vine that actually produces the fruit. Staying connected to the vine will produce fruit. And in some cases it can produce tons of fruit.

Throughout God's inspired Word we find fruit mentioned. In all four gospels we find the analogy of the vine and the branches. Fifteen of the 27 books of the New Testament mention fruits; fruits that we should all be developing in our lives. So if we are to be known, if you will, by our fruits. If we are to be known by the letter, the epistle that we are, how then is this abundant fruit produced? God's Word tells us both from a physical perspective, as well as a spiritual perspective. Physically we find that abundant fruit depends on five things: right soil (Matthew 13:8), rain or water (James 5:18), sunshine (Deuteronomy 33:4), seasons (Matthew 21:34) and cultivation (Luke 13:8). Then, of course, God will bless the efforts of the one performing these actions. Spiritually we find that abundant fruit is also dependent upon five things. And for the remainder of this message we will address those five.

Abundant spiritual fruit is produced by obedience.

Romans 6:13. *“Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourself completely to God since you have been given a new life and use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.*

14) *Sin is no longer your master for you are no longer subject to the law which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace.*

15) *Of course we still have to look at the penalty of the law. We are no longer under the penalty of the law, death if you will, as we have repented of our sins against the law. We have turned from disobedience to obedience through faith. So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not.*

16) *Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.*

17) *Thank God! Once you were slaves to sin but now you've obeyed with all you heart the new teaching God has given you.*

18) *Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master; righteousness.*

19) *I speak this way using the illustration of slaves and masters because it's easy to understand. Before, you let yourself be slaves of impurity and lawlessness. Now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so you that you will become holy.*

20) *In those days when you were slaves to sin, you weren't concerned with doing what was right and what was the result? (NLT)*

22) *What fruit did you have in those things which you are now ashamed? It was not good since now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom". (NKJV)*

22) *But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. (NLT)*

23) *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (NKJV)*

The first thing we must do to assure abundant fruit is to yield to God. To be obedient God as verse 1 states *"Once you were slave to sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you"*.

Hebrews 5:5. ... *So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest.*

...

7) *Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to His Father, who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His Godly fear.*

8) *Though He (Christ) was a son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

9) *And having been perfected, Christ became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (NKJV)*

The word "Author" is Strong's number 159, transliterated as aitos, and means *one who causes*.

10) *Called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Christ learned obedience through sufferings and because of his obedience He became the Savior of all those who obey Him. Abundant fruit is dependent upon obedience. (NKJV)*

The second factor in producing abundant fruit (we've touched on this already) is that of abiding in Christ. We referenced these scriptures earlier.

John 15:1. *"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.*

2) He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit and He prunes the branch that do not bear fruit so they will produce even more.

3) You have already been pruned for great fruitfulness by the message I have given you.

4) Remain in me (that's Christ stating that) and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

5) Yes, I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

6) Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile and burned.

7) But if you stay joined to me (it's interesting how that reads) and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like and it will be granted. My true disciples produce much fruit that brings great glory to my Father. (NLT)

As we stated earlier, staying joined to Christ brings exceedingly great fruit and brings glory to the Father. In John 15:4 the NLT uses the word "remain", where the KJV is "abide". This is Strong's number 336, transliterated as meno; and it means *to stay in a relationship*. Staying, remaining in a relationship with Christ will produce abundant fruit.

1 John 2:28. (in the NIV because it uses present tense) *"And now dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears, we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.*

29) If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him".

Verse 28 reads 'continue in Him'. Here's that relationship we just read regarding the meaning abide. Continue in Him, keep the relationship going; in doing so we will produce much fruit. In verse 29 we find the evidence of His righteousness in our lives. It proves that we have the proper relationship with Him. That we are abiding in Christ, which is the second factor in producing abundant fruit. The previous 28 verses outline our relationship we are to have with Jesus Christ. And all of that glorifies the Father.

A third factor in assuring abundant fruit is that of a spiritual emphasis, spiritual effort. That spiritual effort of course has to be on our part. You see, I'm writing my letter. You have to be writing your letter. It takes spiritual effort. Effort can be defined as energy consumed to get something done. In Philippians 3 my emphasis will be on verses 12-14, but to better understand them we'll first begin in verse one, which gives us some background as to Paul's statements in verses 12-14.

Philippians 3:1. *"Whatever happens dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord give you joy. I never get tired of telling you this. I am doing this for your own good.*

2) *Watch out for those dogs, those wicked men, and their evil deeds. Those mutilators who say that you must be circumcised to be saved. (NLT)*

In other words those false prophets of Matthew 7:15.

3) *“For we who worship God in the spirit are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in human effort. Instead we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us. (NLT)*

We find here, Paul boasting about what Christ had done for him, and of course what Christ has done for us.

4) *“If I could have confidence in myself, if anyone could, if others have reasons for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more. (NLT)*

Paul’s being a little facetious as we go through this.

5) *“For I was circumcised when I was 8 days old, having been born into a pure blooded Jewish family that is the branch of the tribe of Benjamin. So I am a real Jew, if there ever was one. Once more, I was a member of the Pharisees who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law; and zealous yes.*

6) *I harshly persecuted the church and I obeyed the Jewish law so carefully that I was never accused of any fault.*

7) *I once thought all these things were very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done for me.*

8) *“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared to the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all garbage, so that I may have Christ.”*

What a statement by Paul regarding Jesus Christ his Lord.

9) *“And become one with Him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God’s law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God’s way of making us right with Himself depends on faith.*

10) *a result, I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead.*

11) *I can learn what it means to suffer with Him, sharing in His death so that somehow I can experience the resurrection from the dead.” (NLT)*

So with these eleven verses as a background we’ll continue in Philippians 3:12 and remember that we are referencing the third factor in assuring abundant fruit, that of spiritual effort.

12) *"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I keep working toward the day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus wants me to be.*

13) *No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all that I should be but I am focusing my energies on this one thing: forgetting the past and look forward to what lies ahead."*

14) *with this goal in mind, I strive towards the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

You see it takes spiritual effort to produce the abundant fruit needed to attain the goal that is set before us. Paul kept working towards that day, focusing all his energies, striving. Strive just means to put forth great efforts to attain something, to struggle or fight vigorously for something. Paul kept striving for the prize of the upward call of God through Christ Jesus. To produce the abundant fruit necessary to be reflected in us as letters from Christ to those whom we come in contact with; to be known by our fruits, to achieve the upward call of God, it takes effort brethren, a great deal of spiritual effort.

A fourth aspect of assuring abundant fruit is that of death. Now this may sound somewhat strange, but we'll let the apostle John explain what it means to die to produce fruit.

John 12:24. *"Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain". (NKJV)*

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary states this regarding John 12:24:

...Provides a parable of Jesus' career. Apart from death His life stands in isolation with no power of increase. Death is the key to spiritual fruitfulness."

Based on Wycliffe's Commentary let me read verse 24 from the NLT: "The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone, a single seed, but it's death will produce many new kernels, a plentiful harvest of new lives."

My research states that one grain of wheat, one seed if you will, can produce eight or more stalks with each stalk having a head and each head can produce 40-50 seeds. All from a single seed planted in the soil. Christ died so that through His death much fruit could be produced. In essence, you and I are that fruit. But, you and I must face death. We too must die to produce fruit.

Romans 6:3. *"Or do you not know that as many as us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (NKJV)*

I think we all realize that baptism symbolizes the giving up of the old life, our old ways of death through burial in the water.

4) *“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism unto death that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life.”*

And in point 5, where we will get in a moment, we'll address this newness of life. Regarding verse 4 the following is taken from a study series Exploring the Bible: Romans, Corinthians, page 43 states:

The word ‘baptism’ is from the Greek work ‘baptisima’, which refers to being immersed and pictures being buried. Burial is the most obvious confirmation of death. Baptism confirms our commitment to put to death our desire to sin. Jesus was resurrected to eternal life not that the same life that He lived in the flesh from His conception until His death. In like fashion, those that come out of the water of the baptismal grave have been raised up to live different lives than they lived prior to baptism. Jesus was raised up as a glorified spirit being. We are raised up from the waters to walk on the same path that He walked while He was in the flesh. It is a path, a new direction, totally different from the direction we were going prior to God’s calling, and our subsequent repentance and baptism.”

Romans 6:11. *“In the same way count yourselves to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Christ is now free from the slave of death, so sin should not be a slave over us.” (NIV)*

1 Peter 2:21. *“For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps,
22) who committed no sin nor was deceit found in His mouth.
23) Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return. When He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.
24) Who, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness by whose stripes we are healed”.* (NKJV)

Look at the abundant fruit of Christ listed here in verses 22 and 23. We too, each of us have the ability to bear abundant fruit due to Christ’ physical death, as well as our spiritual death through the process of repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands. A moment ago in Romans 6:4 we read of a newness of life.

This leads us to our fifth and final point of assuring abundant fruit in our lives; that of a new life. We have read of this new life in some of the previous verses. What then is meant by a new life as it pertains to bearing fruit?

Romans 7:4. *“Therefore my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you may be married to another; to Him who is raised from that dead. That we should bear fruit of God”.* (NKJV)

We've broken into context here in chapter 7. Here is a synopsis of verses 1-3: We find that a woman bound to her husband was released from the law of marriage once her husband died. This in turn allowed her to marry once again. The principle for you and I are that we were bound to sin, we were released from the penalty of sin...death if you will, when we died with Christ upon our repentance and baptism. Now that we have been released from the penalty of sin (understand the law is still in place) and the law, we are joined with Christ so that we, though this new life can produce abundant fruit acceptable to God.

John 15:4. (Christ' own words here) *"Abide in Me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit in itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in Me.*

5) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing." (NKJV)

So if we abide in Christ, we have a newness of life. We bear much fruit and as mentioned in our opening comments, that fruit is listed in Galatians 5:22, 23. Today we have seen 5 essentials that are our responsibility. Essentials that will help us write our own epistles. But it is the spirit that produces the fruit, because fruit just happens. We have seen that we are indeed a letter, a letter to those of whom we come into contact with. And the words of each letter are our works, they're our deeds, they are our fruits. Today we have reviewed 5 areas of our life in which abundant spiritual fruit is depended on. It's essential for each of us to be obedient, to abide in Christ, to put forth spiritual effort and to experience death; the death of being buried with Christ and to experience a new life, leaving behind the things of the past. Yet, it is the spirit, as found in Galatians 5:22, 23, that produces the fruit. As we read in John 15:12, the Father prunes and fruit happens...it just happens.

We'll close today with a short story about an Amish farmer. It's a story that I referenced in a sermon in February, 2013. The story is told of a group of evangelical Christians who were sent out to convert as many as possible to Christianity. In their travels they approached a small, Amish settlement. Seeing a farmer in the field they confronted him and asked "Brother, are you a Christian?" The farmers stopped what he was doing, took off his straw hat, dried the sweat of his brow, then mumbled a few words to himself as he pondered the question. Then said, "Wait just a few minutes". The farmer then took a small notepad from his bib coveralls and he began to write down a list of names. Upon completion he handed the list to the evangelical group. As he walked back to the field to resume his work he stated, "The list you have in your hands are the people who know me best. They can speak of my fruits. Please ask them if I am a Christian."

Here we find a farmer, knowing where he stands with God. Knowing his walk with God. Understanding the fruits of the letter of his life. Do we, brethren, understand the fruits of the letter of our lives? This farmer has assurance that those who know him, know his

fruits because of the choices he made in his life year after year after year after year, the epistle, if you will, the letter he produced year after year. The farmer was stating, "By my fruits, I am known."