

Module 1: Fruitfulness in Service

Holy Spirit Brings the Fruit

The Lord told the disciples "go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**." Imagine being a disciple and hearing this command... all nations? How? We can't even speak their language. The Lord answered them on Pentecost and they spoke in tongues.

But how can they minister to all nations if there are only twelve of them? So the Lord on Pentecost had 120.

Did the disciples forget when the Lord told them to cast their net and they caught hundreds of fish? The same on Pentecost when St Peter cast his net and with one sermon brought 3000 people. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in St Peter.

The Servant is the first-fruit of his service

Many times when we think about fruits in service, we become frustrated... I am serving for so many years and until now, I don't see any fruits.

The person trying to move the huge rock... maybe the rock doesn't get moved, but the servant becomes stronger. The first fruit of the service is the benefit the servant himself gets from the service.

When I feel this frustration in service, I need to pray and God will move the rock in front of me.

If you want to bring fruits, you need to have trust in God and obey Him even if His commandment doesn't make sense to you.

Look at the fruit in your heart.

How do we measure the fruit in our ministry?

How do you measure the fruit in your ministry? Effort? Faithfulness? Fruit? - If you are measuring the success of your ministry based on the fruit, it will be a big dissatisfaction for you.

Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life

Others labored before you and you are reaping what they are sowing... so if I am reaping fruits now, don't think these are your fruits and fall in vainglory. Maybe these are the fruits of another faithful servant who planted and watered before you. If you are serving and planting and watering and not seeing fruit, don't be frustrated - someone may come after you and reap the fruit that you planted.

Faithfulness in service is the measure of success. Not the fruits.

The story of the Tree of Obedience? St John the short planted a stick and was faithful in watering it for three years. At the end it became fruitful. He was faithful in watering it every day, regardless of whether it would bring fruit or not.

I may think a youth in my class is a hopeless case (like this tree). I called him several times, I tried to visit him, I texted him, he never answered. **Continue to be faithful.** As the Lord was able to bring fruit from this stick after three years, He will be able also to bring fruit from this person even after so many years.

There is an example in the TCR (Triumphant Christian Retreat) of many cases that were "hopeless" in our eyes - but not for God. People who testify of themselves that they came without any hope, but the Lord restored them.

For a tree to bear fruit, it must have deep roots to absorb the water and nourishment for the tree. You, and your faithfulness in God, are the ROOT of the barren trees. Maybe he doesn't believe in God, or angry with God, or disappointed with God - but you, as the servant, can be the root that connects him with the True Root (God) in his life.

Bearing fruit takes time. Be patient.

Three Stages of Working the Land

1. Plowing the Land

- Sometimes the land is very dry, and the Lord prepares the Land
 - e.g. St Moses who said "maybe there's a God" - "maybe the sun is God" - "maybe the moon is God"

2. Sowing the Seed

- The parable of the sower, he sowed the seed everywhere (as St Paul said - neither he who sows nor he who waters, but God brings the fruit)
- Some servants sow only in the good land and neglect the "bad" land or the "difficult" land
 - The Lord met the Pharisees, the Gentiles, the tax-collectors, lawyers, scribes, etc. and talked to all of them

3. Watering the Land

- How to follow-up
- It's not enough to speak to someone just one time about God... that's the seed. But this seed needs to be watered.
- Pray for them, speak with them, and see what kind of nutrients they need

- St Paul gave milk... and then later solid food.
- Can't just quit a bad habit, but it must be replaced
 - E.g. if you're speaking to someone about smoking, but you don't speak to him about connecting with God and spiritual habits, it will be impossible for him to quit smoking (or any bad habit)
 - Speak to him instead about the Living Water
 - The Lord, with the Samaritan woman did not even mention lust, fornication, destruction to the soul, etc. But He spoke to her about the Living Water and how these other things are like salt water... you drink for a long time, but you are still thirsty.

4. Reaping the Fruit

- The reaper may reap what he did not sow
- "The hardworking farmer (plowman) must be first to partake of the crops." (2 Timothy 2:6)
- Reward is not based on the fruit, but based on your effort
 - "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor 3:8)
- Sometimes we think "if I serve high school, I am higher/better/greater than the one who serves elementary" - maybe that servant who is serving elementary is the one who planted and sowed and watered, but you are just the one who is reaping the fruit of their labor.
- Even the Lord Jesus did not reap the fruits, but He left the reaping for the disciples after His ascension. He was the plowman, the Sower, the waterer but not the reaper.
- Noah did not reap the fruits
 - "and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;" (2 Peter 2:5)
 - He preached for over 100 years
 - How many fruits did he get? The seven members of his family
- Jeremiah labored a lot, with little fruit
- Some prophets did little effort and their fruit was plenty
 - Jonah

If the fruit is much, it doesn't mean you worked hard. And if the fruit is little, it doesn't mean you worked little. Just be faithful in your ministry.

We are members of the Body of Christ and in your body, every member has a role. Not only SS Servants should be preachers of righteousness, but every member should use his talents to be a preacher of righteousness

If a family loses a child, how happy are they when they find him again? The same when a Lost Sheep is found

"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" (Luke 15)

Principles of Fruitfulness

1. Fruit comes from the same type as the seed
 - If you sow spiritual seed, you will reap spiritual fruit
 - If you sow social activity, you will reap such
2. One seed brings a lot of fruit
 - This is the power of the Word of God... one word can capture many hearts and bring them to the Lord
 - HH Pope Kyrillos did not preach a lot; we don't have many sermons by him. But he brought many many fruits (many of which came after his departure)
3. Planting or Sowing sometimes happens in secret, but the fruit is usually public
 - You see good youth in the Church but you don't know how many hours the servant spent with them; how many times Abouna remembered them on the altar; how much they were served
4. The time between sowing and reaping can be very long
 - Palm Trees take many years before you get fruits from them
 - "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)
 - Don't lose hope
5. The fruit is very precious in the eyes of God
 - When God sees us working hard, faithfully, trusting in Him, He will bring fruit
 - As the Lord told St Peter "I will make you a fisher of men" and as you caught fish today, so shall you catch men

Q&A

Fruits are easy to measure... but how do we measure faithfulness?

1. Do not resist the voice of the Holy Spirit
 - Know that it is the Holy Spirit Who moves our heart if we are not faithful
 - The Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, righteousness and judgment
 - So do not resist Him when He tells you that you are not visiting your children, or praying for them, etc.
2. Some parameters
 - Are you preparing lessons
 - Are you reading
 - Are you doing visitation
 - Are you praying for your class
 - Are you attending the Servants Meeting
 - Be faithful in your own spiritual life (the servant is the Root)
3. Feedback from the servants, from Abouna, from the students
 - Sometimes when I Get feedback, I get defensive. This is very destructive and we lose the opportunity to learn. The Holy Spirit will speak to us through Abouna, a servant, a student, a colleague
 - I need to take the feedback seriously

4. Self-examination

- Through my own reading and listening to sermons, the message of the Lord will touch my heart
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