

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FRUIT

THE STORY

Mark 2:18-22

THE BACKSTORY

- Fasting in the **OLD TESTAMENT**
2 Samuel 12:16-18/ Esther 4:3 & 16/ Jonah 3:6-10
- Fasting in the **DAYS OF JESUS**
Luke 18:9-14
- Fasting in the **NEW TESTAMENT**
Acts 9:9/ Acts 13:3 & 14:23/ Matthew 6:1 & 16-18

SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

- (1) God wants **OBEDIENCE**,
we tend to give him **RITUALS**.
1 Samuel 15:22-23/ Isaiah 1:11-20/ Matthew 15:7-19
1 John 2:3-5/ John 14:15/ Matthew 28:19-20/ Colossians 3:17
- (2) God cares about the **FRUIT**,
we tend to focus on the **WATERING SCHEDULE**.
Micah 6:6-8/ 1 Corinthians 13:1-7/ Luke 18:9-14
- (3) Never turn your **TOOLS** into **RULES**.
Colossians 2:23

Life Group Study Questions

For the week of February 24, 2019

MY STORY

1 The list below contains some of the things we can do to grow spiritually. Which of these do you think could most easily become something where you just “go through the motions?”

- Going to church
- Serving/Volunteering
- Communion
- Life Group
- Daily Bible reading/Bible studies
- Giving/Generosity
- Fasting
- Prayer

Which 2 or 3 of the activities above have been most helpful or impactful in your relationship with God?

2 Fasting can be anything you give up for a period of time in order to focus more on your relationship with God. Can you think of anything you’ve fasted from? What was your experience with it?

3 Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching, what are some of the points, Bible verses, etc. that really stood out to you?

DIGGING DEEPER

1 God wants a relationship with us. He isn’t interested when we turn things that are meant for growth into religious rituals. [Matthew 6:1-18](#) does a great job illustrating the differences between a relationship with God and practicing rituals. As you read through the passage, what themes do you see?

Can you think of any modern day examples of focusing too much on rituals similar to what was mentioned in the passage above?

2 Larry mentioned we are to “look at the fruit, not the watering schedule.” Fruit is a great analogy for growth and productivity because the fruit of a tree is an important indicator of its overall health. In several places in the Bible, a tree is used as a metaphor for spiritual growth. After reading the passages below, jot down what it takes for us to be like flourishing trees with abundant fruit.

Luke 6:43-45 New International Version (NIV)

A Tree and Its Fruit

⁴³“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. ⁴⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Psalm 1:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

¹ Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 92:12-15 New International Version (NIV)

¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
 they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
¹³ planted in the house of the Lord,
 they will flourish in the courts of our God.
¹⁴ They will still bear fruit in old age,
 they will stay fresh and green,
¹⁵ proclaiming, “The Lord is upright;
 he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”

Jeremiah 17:5-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁵ This is what the Lord says:
“Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
 who draws strength from mere flesh
 and whose heart turns away from the Lord.
⁶ That person will be like a bush in the wastelands;
 they will not see prosperity when it comes.
They will dwell in the parched places of the desert,
 in a salt land where no one lives.
⁷ “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
 whose confidence is in him.
⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water
 that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
 its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
 and never fails to bear fruit.”

Have you ever been around a group of Christians that put an emphasis on a “watering schedule,” or a particular tool that caused you to feel less-than or not as spiritual?

While our “fruit” can be a sign of health, it could be tempting to think that we are better Christians because of the things we’re doing or not doing. What caution does Galatians 2:16 give on the dangers of thinking our “fruit” puts us in a better position with God?

Galatians 2:16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in ^a Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Was there ever a time in your life where you thought your fruit and good deeds made you more acceptable to God?

TAKING IT HOME

As you think about the spiritual growth practices we looked at in the sermon and discussion questions, are there any you may want to add, subtract or change in the next few weeks to help you grow in your relationship with God?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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