(41) Live, Give, **Grow**, Go GROW: Bearing Fruit

The Bible talks about many types of Growth using the metaphor of “Fruit”:

* *The Fruits of Repentance & Rebirth*
* *The Fruit of the Spirit*
* *The Fruits of Righteousness*
* *The Fruit of Our Lips*

But very often Jesus and the Apostle Paul speak of the fruit directly related to *Evangelism*. In other words, **fruit is often defined by our call and purpose to reproduce Spiritually…**

**(See Genesis 1:11 & John 12:24-25)**

In our parable of the Sower, this is certainly the meaning…

**Matthew 13:8-9, 23**

And others fell on the good soil and \*yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. **9**He who has ears, let him hear.”

**23**And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Jesus’ use of the metaphor of *harvest* is closely associated…

**Matthew 9:36-38**

**36**When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**37**He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. **38**So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

**The Dilemma**

In regards to Church Growth I often struggle in processing **three equally undesirable alternatives**…

* **Reducing Church / Evangelistic Growth to Human Effort**

Endless Books Equating Church Growth to Formulas, Statistics; Targeting Certain Age Groups or Demographics; Designing and Structuring Around Appeal

* **Church Growth Characterized by Competition**

Real Growth is Not about Providing Superior Appeal to Frustrated Christian Consumers who move from church to church until they’re comfortable and pleased…

* **Ignoring Our Role Completely**

The other trap is to pretend that our exemplary lives, or our creative, fresh, “relevant” and entertaining services and programs will automatically draw unbelievers into a loving relationship with Jesus, committing their lives to Him. **It’s an avoidance tactic that keeps us busy with the wrong things**, and **keeps us from asking the hard questions.**

**The Hard Questions**

**Romans 10:14-15 (MSG)**

**“How can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it?** That’s why Scripture exclaims,

A sight to take your breath away!  
Grand processions of people  
    telling all the good things of God!

**How Many Times This Past Week, Month, Year…my Lifetime have I intentionally shared who Jesus is and the immeasurable difference He makes in my life?**

**How many people has my sharing been a catalyst to their conversion?**

**Who is on my list to share with next? Do I, or have I ever had “a list”?**

**Am I aware of the daily opportunities that the Holy Spirit brings across my path to share the Good News?**

**Honest With Ourselves…It’s Difficult, Intimidating, and Frightening…**

**Romans 10:16-17 (MSG)** But not everybody is ready for this, ready to see and hear and act. Isaiah asked what we all ask at one time or another: “Does anyone care, God? Is anyone listening and believing a word of it?” **The point is: Before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ’s Word is preached, there’s nothing to listen to.**

**2018 New Testament Challenge**

* **Primarily an Outreach Tool** 
  + **Diffuses the Difficulty, intimidation, and fear**
* **Provides a Platform for Sharing that Fits Our Culture**
  + **Relies On the Spirit Instead of Relying on Solely Human Effort**
  + **It’s Kingdom Focused**
  + **It Takes Seriously Our Call and Purpose in Bearing Fruit**

1. **Honestly Answer the Questions Above, and Talk with the Lord About it.**
   1. **Write Down What He Says To You About It…**
2. **Make a List of People You Will Ask to “Take the Challenge”**
   1. **Let the Spirit Help You Make that List…**

**John 15:16** You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain…

**Other notes not used in this sermon:**

**Assessing our individual and corporate evangelistic performance is tricky. There’s no simple way to do so. Yet we still need to try.** One reason it’s so important is the consistent New Testament theme that when we regularly invite people to follow Jesus there will be some positive responses. Paul describes “the gospel” as “bearing fruit and growing throughout the world” ([Colossians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Col%201.6" \t "_blank)), and urges his readers to speak to others about Jesus in the expectation that these conversations will trigger more of the same. He asks:

**Matthew 7:15-20** 15"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.16"**You will know them by their fruits**. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?  17**"So every good tree bears good fruit**, **but the bad tree bears bad fruit.**  18"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.  **19"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**  20**"So then, you will know them by their fruits.**

**John 15:1-5** 1"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.  **2"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**  3"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4"Abide in Me, and I in you. **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

**16**You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

**Galatians 5:22-25**

**22But the fruit of the Spirit** is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law**.  24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.  **25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

**Matthew 28:19-20**  
‘Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21**  
‘Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others…For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again…

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.’

The Tension

Graphs of Growth; Targeting;

Lots of people feel caught in a similar dilemma. They want to hold themselves and their communities accountable for their evangelistic practice and fruitfulness. But it’s difficult to figure out quite how you do that without falling into the twin traps of either reducing evangelism to pure human effort or overlooking our role completely.

**Assessing our individual and corporate evangelistic performance is tricky. There’s no simple way to do so. Yet we still need to try.** One reason it’s so important is the consistent New Testament theme that when we regularly invite people to follow Jesus there will be some positive responses. Paul describes “the gospel” as “bearing fruit and growing throughout the world” ([Colossians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Col%201.6" \t "_blank)), and urges his readers to speak to others about Jesus in the expectation that these conversations will trigger more of the same. He asks:

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Daniel 12:3

**3**Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Matthew 9:36-38

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