

# 4 SPIRITUALLY UNTRUTHFUL

John 15:1-7

## Introduction

The bitternut tree does not bear fruit every year. It only bears fruit every three years and sometimes only every five years. The beech tree bears fruit every eight years. The white oak can go ten years without bearing fruit. But the champion in delay is the bamboo, which bears fruit only every 120 years! Most Christians don't live to be 120, but if they did, some would still bear no fruit for the Lord Jesus.

The key to bearing fruit in your spiritual life is not in your good looks, talent or charm. It is about staying connected to the vine. According to research reported in the book Unstuck, there are significant differences in the moral behaviors and spiritual maturity of believers who read or listen to the Bible at least four times a week compared to those who receive Scripture less often or never at all. They call this the “Powered by Four Solution.” In fact, daily Bible engagement motivates believers to serve God and to impact the world for Him—helping out in church, loving the unlovely, reaching out to the needy.

Daily Bible engagement is how we stay connected to the Vine and maintain fruitfulness. Engaging the Bible includes at least these three elements: Receiving, Reflecting and Responding.

## I. Receiving

The vine is a great illustration of the means by which God's grace flows. So often we pray for God to change our lives but then “cut off” the means by which God desires to answer our prayer: His Word. The Powered by Four Solution is confirmation of the need to stay connected in order to receive the grace to live fruitful lives. There are two keys to wanting to stay connected.

### A. Love Truth

In order to receive God's word, you need to choose to love the truth. Facing the truth is really just facing reality. Following our own judgment is following fiction, what I would like life to be. The truth may make us feel uncomfortable. It may upset our "make believe" world where we can lie and think it will get us out of trouble. The truth always sets us free. When we read the Bible, the truth begins to challenge what we think and how we live. We may suddenly find lots of good things to do with our time rather than read the Bible. We may want to avoid the reality. What if we made the choice to embrace truth above our own opinion? What if we saw our own opinion leading us astray?

Illustration: What if you had a map in the car but you chose to trust your own sense of direction instead of looking at the map? Have you ever regretted saying, "I don't need the map, I know where I am going?" You might have found yourself in dangerous territory or even at a dead end.

In order to receive God's Word on a regular basis, we need to choose to embrace truth.

### B. Know Him

We need to choose to love God, to want to know him. The Bible is not a book of facts or a list of truisms to be memorized. Too many people see the Bible as merely an instruction manual. It is a revelation of the person and passion of our Creator God. Have you ever read an historical biography?

## II. Reflecting

This is inviting God to be the loving gardener in our life. What needs to be pruned in my life? A mirror can function two ways. It can reflect my image so that I can see the real me. It can also be used to reflect light and give of a signal to those around me.

### A. Reflecting Inward

As we read the Bible, we should anticipate being personally drawn into the characters and situations described. Placing ourselves in the story allows the scripture to expose just how far we have drifted from the truth. Regularly hearing the truth through reading the Bible immerses us with truth and makes the false more evident. The Scripture becomes a means by which God's pruning increases my fruitfulness.

Illustration: The way bank tellers are often trained to identify counterfeit bills is not the way you think. They are trained by handling real bills for days. Then the teacher secretly places a counterfeit bill into the money the trainee is handling. The counterfeit bill suddenly stands out to them and they stop to examine it.

## B. Reflecting Outward

Spending time with the Word includes allowing the truth to shine into the world around me. Our perspective on friends, fellow workers, family and neighbors will be transformed as God's Word makes clear the way I should respond to those around me. The same takes place concerning the circumstances of my life. My attitude is changed as I allow the Word of God to give me God's perspective on my circumstances.

Meditating on the Bible is simply allowing time for the truths I am hearing to permeate into all the areas of my life.

## III. Responding

A. Confession – An acknowledgement of agreement with God about how he views my life and what He says is true.

This is how we personally own the truth. We give voice to what is true about us according to God. This is a physical means of aligning our will with the truth. Our tongue is referred to in the book of James as the “rudder of the ship.” When we confess we are using our tongue (our voice) to align our will with the will of God.

B. Repentance – To turn from one direction and take a new direction.

This is the action step. It is a decision to change. What has to change to realign my life to the truth of God? True repentance requires our will, reason and emotions. Without all three, we won't experience the full change God's Word is bringing to us.

“Repentance, like every religious act, concerns the three cardinal modes of being conscious—knowing, feeling, willing. Sin is recognized, it is disliked, it is disowned. **Recognition of sin by itself is not repentance**; it may be defiance. **Nor is sorrow for sin repentance, if it is alone in the mind**; it may be remorse or despair. **Abandonment of sin, by itself may be not more than prudence.** The regenerating fact is all three, as a unity, baptized in a sense of God's personal grace to the sinful.”

– H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, p.237, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1927.

## Conclusion

Too many of us know someone who has become disconnected from the Vine. You could almost see them wither as they ignore God's Word. We all think it could never happen to us. As we look at our habit of engagement with the Bible, could God be alerting us to the subtle ways we are allowing unfruitfulness to take over our lives?