

## Fruit: From a Horticulturist

Several years ago a horticulturist attended where I preached and shared with me wonderful observations about fruit. With her permission I have shared her observations. I have provided some spiritual applications in *italics*.

**Growing fruit costs the plant an enormous amount of energy.** Think about the amount of calories/energy in an apple. Now think about eating the leaves or bark off the apple tree: terrible taste and you wouldn't get many calories for your efforts. Plants that produce fruit put much more energy, flavor, scent, design and color into their fruit than into themselves. Plants 'want' their fruit to be taken - whether by animal, person, wind or water - to where it can multiply and grow. It doesn't matter that energy is hard to come by, sunlight via photosynthesis being the only source. Plants that live year after year do store energy to survive the winter dormancy and come back in the spring, but fruit and seeds are the major channel into which collected energy is funneled.

*This illustrates the principle taught by Jesus in the parable of the lost sheep. A shepherd took great risks to find a lost sheep. As Christians, we must consider the great value that God places on people. He gave his only Son as for us. How much energy, time, and money will we give for lost sheep?*

**Fruit is a vehicle for seeds: future plants.** While the plant spends an enormous amount of energy on it, fruit is not the main focus. It is simply a means of transportation for seeds. The plant's 'goal' by producing fruit is to provide opportunities for more plants like itself to germinate and grow. The fruit itself is used up in the process: eaten or decomposed. It is not the lasting result; a germinated seed is the result of a 'successful' fruit.

*Did you ever think of yourself as the fruit of someone else's efforts in the Lord? While each Christian is directly connected to the vine, the Lord, others have taught, provided examples, and encouraged*

*you. God used other Christians to plant seeds of Christianity in the 'soil of your heart.' You, in turn, are constantly dropping seed on the many types of soil around you. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." (1 Corinthians 3:6 NIV)*

**The plant has no control over which fruit/seed becomes another plant.** Plants are not concerned with which specific fruits/seeds are successful; they focus on producing as much good fruit/seed as they can. The more fruits/seeds the plant produces, the better chance that some survive.

*Do you try to evaluate the 'soil' of other people's hearts? Jesus did not. He preached, taught, healed, and helped people in all walks of life. He never looked at someone and decided that they were not a good 'prospect.' He simply planted seed. Paul described how he adapted himself to different circumstances in order to win people to Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 9:19 NIV)*

**There are many kinds of fruit.** Each plant species produces a different kind of fruit. Each is well-adapted to its environment and designed specifically to be carried by a certain means. Whether by animal, wind, water, or person, each fruit/seed has a successful but often unique way of traveling and becoming another plant.

*You are the 'touch of Christ' in your world. You touch your family, friends, fellow Christians, co-workers, neighborhood acquaintances, and many others in a unique way. Just as the Apostle Paul was uniquely suited to carry the gospel to the Gentile world, you may be uniquely suited to plant the seed of God's word in someone's heart.*

*Like nature, our task is not to analyze conditions, past success, or probable future success. God asks us to plant and water. He will provide growth where the soil of the heart is fertile.*

Mark Stinnett

