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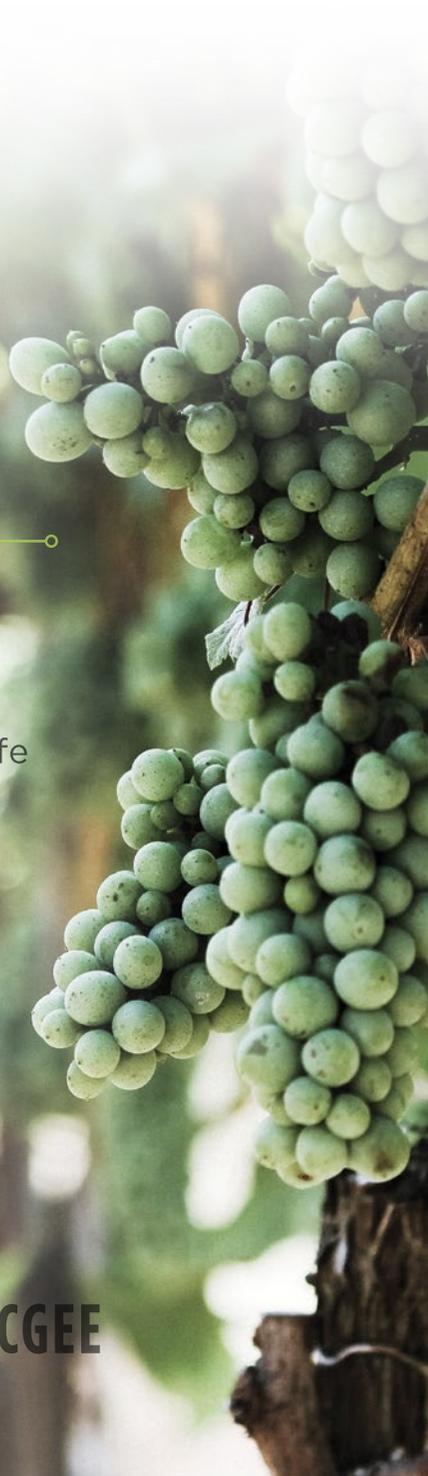


**THRU**the**BIBLE**

# Fruitful Living

Discover God's Purpose for Your Life

**DR. J. VERNON MCGEE**



# FRUITFUL LIVING

DISCOVER GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

Believer, God has a specific purpose for your life. Not only did He choose you for this purpose, but He keeps you in the world so you will accomplish it. It's so important, He even makes it a condition for hearing and answering your prayers. What is your purpose? The Lord Jesus Himself reveals it, saying to His disciples at their last meal together,

***By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples....You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*** –John 15:8, 16

If you are a child of God, your purpose in this life is to bear fruit.

What is this fruit? What proof characterize the life of the follower of Jesus? God's Word makes it as clear and easy as selecting a fruit tree out of a garden nursery catalog. But first, we need to understand a couple of things.

# LESSON #1:

## ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN PRODUCE FRUIT

What Jesus wants most in the lives of His children is not just fruit, but “much fruit.” How is that fruit produced in our lives? Only by the Lord Jesus using the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

The moment you trusted Jesus Christ for your salvation, you were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

***But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*** –Romans 8:9 (Also read Galatians 2:20.)

Think about that for a moment: God lives *in* you. So while your flesh may fail at times and you fall into sin, you can’t continue in that direction for too long because the Spirit in you is *holy*. The time will come when your new nature longs for His holiness to be manifested in your life, and you’ll turn from your sin. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 8.)

But Paul makes it clear even our new nature has no power to produce the fruit of the Spirit:

***For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*** –Romans 7:18

In fact, it's only in the power of the Holy Spirit that we're able to live for God at all—*"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16). We are not asked to live the Christian life on our own; it's Christ who lives through us. We simply can't do it by ourselves.

In case you're wondering, the Law can't produce this fruit, either. It was given to hold the flesh in check: *"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law"* (Galatians 5:18).

The fruit of the Spirit is entirely different from the works of the Law:

***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*** –Galatians 5:22, 23

That is certainly a lovely list. But not a single one can you produce on your own. We are totally incapable—this fruit can be produced only by the Holy Spirit.

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## LESSON #2:

### ANYTHING YOU PRODUCE ON YOUR OWN IS NOT REAL FRUIT

If you were raised in the country like I was, you know that right alongside trees in an orchard grow something else—competitors trying to crowd out the fruit. Weeds in a believer’s life can grow so vigorously that fruit is not produced at all. Paul spoke of that very thing:

***For the flesh lusts* [“wars”] *against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.* –Galatians 5:17**

The flesh wants to have its way and is in competition against the Holy Spirit. So the danger is in producing something besides fruit, and it’s an ugly, loathsome brood:

***Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ....* –Galatians 5:19-21**

Whatever the flesh produces on its own is not something God can use; it's not fruit at all. Paul himself experienced the struggle: "For what I will do [the new man wanted to produce fruit], that I do not practice [the old nature would not do it]" (Romans 7:15). You can be a child of God and still produce works of the flesh in your life, but I can guarantee it brings nothing but discontentment. Because if the works of the flesh are appearing in your life, you are not living by the Spirit of God. Paul was speaking to believers when he said:

***Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*** –Galatians 6:7, 8

This law of God is just as sure as the law of gravity. If a farmer sows corn, you can be sure he'll reap corn. If you are sowing to the flesh, you "will of the flesh reap corruption." No way around it.

# ARE YOU SEEING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE?

Do you want to know if you are fulfilling God's purpose for you, living in the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit? Examine yourself and see if He is producing these fruits in your life.

## LOVE

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love."* He didn't mean to say the fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, and so on. It *is* love, because from love stem all the others. Love is the most important one of all. Our Lord said, *"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35)—it's not by being a member of this or that church. No. *"You have love ..."* Only the Holy Spirit of God can give you this kind of love—love not only for God, but for other believers.

Believer, your salvation is secure in Christ Jesus. But a great many Christians do not have the *assurance* of their salvation. Why? One of the reasons is they harbor in their hearts criticism, bitterness, and hatred of other believers. John wrote, "We

*know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death*" (1 John 3:14). Can it get much clearer than that? If you are a child of God and you hate another believer, you're in death. Because when the Holy Spirit indwells a believer, He produces love in the heart for every other believer.

That ought to give us something to search our hearts over. If only this lovely fruit was on full display in churches today! How about you? Is it on display in your life?

## JOY

This kind of joy does not depend on circumstances, but on the working of the Holy Spirit within. When Paul was in prison in Rome, he wrote to the Philippians, "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice*" (Philippians 4:4). Many of us lose our joy as soon as the way gets difficult. As a child of God, the most valuable thing in the world you can have is joy in your life produced by the Holy Spirit.

This joy is not some "just smile" philosophy—smiling doesn't prove anything. Joy is not something rubbed on the face; it's something in the heart. Actually, we can be in deep sorrow and at the same time rejoice. Look at our Lord, who was "*a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53:3), and yet He was anointed "*with the oil of gladness*" above His companions (Hebrews 1:9). He even said to His own disciples on the last night before the cross, "*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*" (John 15:11).

God wants you to rejoice, and you can't rejoice in the circumstances down here unless the Spirit of God is producing fruit in your heart and life. Is He doing that in yours?



ANYONE CAN SLEEP ON A CALM SEA,  
BUT WE NEED THE *kind of peace*  
THAT CAPTURES OUR HEARTS  
*when the storm rages.*

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## PEACE

Peace of heart, peace in the storms of life—this is the kind of peace our Lord gives.

***Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*** –John 14:27

Oh, that’s the kind of peace we all want.

There was a storm on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples—who were fishermen accustomed to storms at sea—cried out in a panic, “This little boat cannot ride out this storm!” Where was Jesus? *Asleep in the boat.* (See Mark 4:38.) Anyone can sleep on a calm sea, but we need the kind of peace that captures our hearts when the storm rages.

Years ago, there was a contest to find a picture that best depicted peace. One submission was of a boat on a calm sea, its sails unfurled. Another artist painted sheep grazing in a meadow without a thing to disturb or bother them. Peaceful scenes, yes, but they did not win the prize. What did win was a picture of a craggy mountainside with a fierce storm blowing all around. A scrawny bush stuck out of a rock. In the little bush was a nest, and in the nest was a mother bird sitting on some eggs, calm as you please, riding out the storm.

That’s the kind of peace the Holy Spirit produces—peace that endures when the storms beat upon our little boat. Every follower of Jesus needs this kind of fruit. And every follower of Jesus has access to it though the Spirit that lives in them.

## LONGSUFFERING

Another word for longsuffering is patience, and the Word of God says a great deal about it.

***Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*** –James 1:3, 4

Patience is evidence you've become a full-grown Christian, but you will never become patient simply by trying. Patience comes through suffering and testing.

***And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*** –Romans 5:3, 4

God has a purpose in your trials, you see. God allows testing so we'll stop being babes in Christ and become full-grown children of God. And that happens when patience is produced in our lives.

## KINDNESS

A real born again child of God is kind. That little word may be simple, but it encompasses a lot of things; it means being gracious, courteous, well-mannered. And because it's a fruit of the Spirit, it can't be mustered out of one's own will or taught in charm school.

Don't be mistaken—kindness is not weakness by any means. Paul told the church at Corinth, “*Love suffers long and is kind*” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Love without kindness is like a fire without heat—it's just not possible. He mentions kindness again in admonishing the believers at Ephesus, “*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32). That ought to convince us there is strength in the word “kindness.”

## GOODNESS

Like kindness, goodness does not equal weakness. It means to be kind but firm.

Many believers have never done anything spectacular—never served on a board, never occupied a prominent place, never been leaders—but they are simply good, upright, moral people. That’s a fruit of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in their lives.

## FAITHFULNESS

The writer of Hebrews laid out evidence proving Jesus was superior to all others, including Moses. The writer began by saying the Lord Jesus “*was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house*” (Hebrews 3:2). Moses was called to do something, and he was faithful—dependable, reliable—in doing it.

Of course, Moses made mistakes. His temper got him into trouble. But when it was all said and done, God didn’t remember Moses’ mistakes—He remembered his faithfulness. The Lord Jesus will commend His own people’s faithfulness by saying, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matthew 25:21).

Regardless of what work or task the Lord has given you to do, are you faithful in completing it?

## GENTLENESS

Many think being a Christian means having to compromise on everything. My friend, a child of God stands for what is right. That is what meekness really means—to stand strongly for what God stands for, but without brutality or cruelty.

The Word of God labels two men as meek: Moses and the Lord Jesus Himself. Imagine Moses coming down from the mountain and throwing the tablets of Law against the rocks, shattering them

into bits of rubble. Does that sound like our modern impression of meekness? But according to the Word of God, Moses was meek.

What about Jesus entering the temple full of merchants, swinging a whip He made of rope? When He said, “Get out of here,” I can tell you those people got out. And yet He said of Himself, “I’m gentle and lowly in heart” (see Matthew 11:29). He was meek, and He was anything but weak. This is God’s definition of meekness, and only the Holy Spirit can produce it in you.

## SELF-CONTROL

What we call self-control, the Bible calls “temperance.” Paul said:

***Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*** –1 Corinthians 9:24, 25

An athlete in training for an event will refrain from certain things—not because they are wrong, but because the training demands discipline. Paul said, “As a Christian, I am in training. And since I want to win a crown, I don’t do certain things.”

It’s tempting to make lists of “wrong” things and “right” things. But that’s not the standard for a child of God. The standard for a believer is, “Do I want to please Jesus? Do I want His approval? Do I want to lay aside everything—every weight and sin—that holds me back, and run with endurance the race that is set before me, looking to Jesus (see Hebrews 12:1, 2)?”

Believer, self-control is not a question of right and wrong, it’s a question of whether or not you’re under the control of the Almighty. Does your life illustrate that you want to please and live for God?

A close-up photograph of two hands, heavily stained with dark brown dirt. The hands are positioned as if about to shake or hold something. The skin texture is visible, and the dirt is thick and unevenly distributed. A simple black ring is worn on the ring finger of the right hand. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting like a field or garden.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT  
WORK OR TASK  
THE LORD HAS  
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# WHAT KIND OF FRUIT ARE YOU KNOWN FOR?

Some have said the fruit of the Spirit present a mini-biography of the life of Christ. That is true, but He wants the lives of His children to show them off.

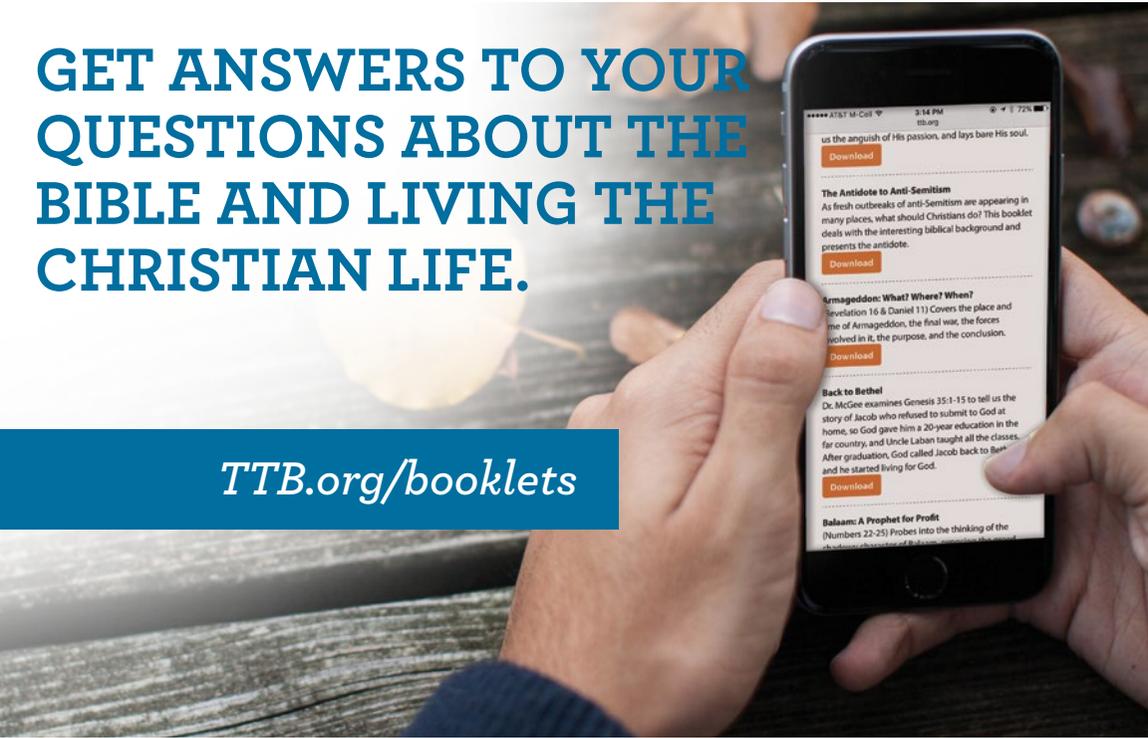
***You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*** –Matthew 7:16-20

Fruit-bearing is not the same as soul-winning, but winning souls to Christ is a by-product of the Spirit producing fruit in your life. The world outside may not be interested in the Word of God or where you go to church, but they see what kind of fruit is coming out of your life. If you're producing fruit of the Spirit, you will bring men and women into the presence of God by your very life.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and greenery.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from TTB.org. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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