

## More or Less



### Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law”.

(Photo by: Margaret A. Gargaro)

Yes, I am still in Afghanistan! My family and friends keep asking me when I am coming home. Soon I pray, but in the meantime; I need to grow more fruit.

The Lord is teaching me about the fruit of the Spirit and interestingly He has chosen Afghanistan as the training ground. (Ironically, I am living in a dry, barren land. God has a sense of humor doesn't He).

He has shown me that I am lacking maturity in some of the fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. I would like to say I am manifesting a lot of fruit in my life, but honestly, I have to repent more often than I want to admit. Being in Afghanistan is certainly a place to test your kindness and longsuffering (don't even mention self-control). Needless to say, I wasn't too excited when He began to speak to me about bearing more fruit.

This whole teaching started while I was sitting on the deck praying for the safety and protection of the troops and civilians. I wasn't thinking about the fruit of the Spirit; let alone whether I had more or less of them, but He began to use the tree in the picture above as an object lesson. He wanted me to see how lop-sided I am in the fruit I am bear.

If you look closely at the tree the left side has a lot of branches and green leaves. It also has a strong trunk and even the top has limbs and green leaves. Now look at the right side...it has very few branches and hardly any leaves at all. This is due to the north wind blows constantly here



*Dr. Jan McNutt, D. Min.*

and it strips away the leaves. We have what is called “120 Days of Wind” (it’s more like 365 days!). The gust can get up to 50 or higher miles per hour. It is a harsh hot wind during the summer months and a freezing hard wind in the winter. The side facing the north takes a beating and it is difficult for this tree to bear branches and leaves. This makes me think of the scriptures from John 15: 15-18 (NKJV).

15 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away; [a] and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, 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, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will[b] ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples”.

John 15 tells us that we can’t bear branches or fruit without being connected and rooted in the vine. Without a strong root system a tree can’t survive. The heat, wind, and lack of sufficient water can hindered and stop the growth of a tree. In some cases, if the tree isn’t deeply rooted, it will die. We too are like the tree above; we must be rooted in the vine Jesus.

I remember when I was a little kid I planted a bean in a cup of dirt. I would water it every day and check it several times a day to see if it sprouted. Day after day I would look and be disappointed because I didn’t see anything growing. Then one day, the ground broke open and a little bitty sprout popped out of the soil. Talk about being excited, but it wasn’t long until I was disappointed again. It didn’t grow as fast as I wanted it to. In my mind, I wanted to plant, sprout, and harvest overnight, but the reality is it takes time for a seed to produce a crop.

It takes time for the fruit of the Spirit to be developed in us. If we allow the process of seed time and harvest in our lives and do as the Lord instructs us by abiding in Him, then the fruit will come. There will be times during the planting, sprouting and harvesting that we will be uncomfortable. Especially when the hard ground of our heart is being softened; causing a spot to open for the seed to sprout. Without the planting, watering and sprouting there will be no fruit bearing.



*Dr. Jan McNutt, D. Min.*

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Even after the fruit begins to be produced in our lives, there will be challenges. There will be situations and people that will tempt us to walk outside of love. Our flesh will want to react instead of respond with joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Recently I was talking to my friend, Caroline, that works in another department. She was telling me how the Lord was talking to her about the fruit of the Spirit also and how she was determined to continue to bear fruit regardless of what was happening around her.

It seems God has seen fit to use one or two people in her environment to help develop more fruit in her. Especially one foreman that is extremely rude and mean to the employees. She continues to speak into his life even though he treats her badly. She is having an opportunity to bear the fruit of the Spirit under tough situations. I had to laugh when she said, "Today he is squeezing my fruit into juice". I can relate to that kind of squeezing, can't you? About the time I think there is more fruit in my life in one area, I am found lacking in another. I have more fruit juice than whole fruit.

To be continued.....