

## ***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*** *A Three-week Stewardship Program*

Thank you for downloading the *Bearing Fruit for Jesus!* sample packet. This packet includes:

- † **Samples of several of the resources provided so the reader can evaluate writing style, tone, etc.**
- † **The program instructions and timeline appear at the end of this packet, which provide a detailed description of the program, included program resources, and a timeline of program implementation.**

**If you would like additional information,  
please visit our website or call us toll-free at 888-320-5576.**



## ***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!***

*Lay Reader Presentation – Second Week of Program*

### **Fruitful Use of Talents**

Today is the second week of our series **Bearing Fruit for Jesus!** Our focus this week is on our talents. Have you ever stopped to consider the differences in people? *Why is it that everyone is unique in his or her own way? Some people are able to take apart engines of cars, while others hardly know where to add the oil. Some can build houses, while others can barely nail boards together. Some sew fashionable clothes for their families and buy their bread at the store, while others cook and bake beyond compare but don't even own a sewing machine. How wonderful is God who has so created and endowed us with varying gifts that we become interdependent! This was God's plan for the church. Together we form the Body of Christ where each part functions as part of the greater whole. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Paul, the Apostle, expounds on this whole idea. He reminds us that just as each physical organ or body part has its own importance and offers a unique contribution to the whole body, so does each disciple have gifts that are different, yet equal, and indispensable to the functioning of the Body of Christ, the Church.*

*There are thousands of occupations in today's world, each requiring a special talent. There are needs for carpenters, cooks, mechanics, tailors, pastors, teachers, farmers, servers, students, police officers, etc. The important thing to note here, however, is that God has given to someone the ability to fulfill every need. Here are many opportunities to let our lights shine among men that they may see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). As we are working using God's various gifts, it is important how we do our jobs, for work provides a beautiful opportunity to witness to those around us.*

*We read in 1 Peter 4:10, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various form." So, let's use the talents and abilities he has given us the best way we can. Paul said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23). Let's begin and live each day with the joy and vigor that come from hearts filled with thanksgiving to God for his love, his guidance, his presence, and his strength in whatever we do. The world does notice how we work, does hear how we speak, and does watch how we behave. Let us let people see the love of the Lord through us.*

## *Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*

### Letter from Pastor

*Letter to those who have not turned in a Commitment form  
to be sent two weeks after Harvest Sunday*

Dear Member,

*"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because...of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints"* (Colossians 1:3-4). Through the faithful stewardship of the Body of Christ here at \_\_\_\_\_ (church name) \_\_\_\_\_, we are able to proclaim the Gospel here and in the mission field, both in word and in deed.

During our recent stewardship program, **Bearing Fruit for Jesus!**, we have focused on how Christ enables us to bear fruit. Spiritual fruit characterizes the life of Christians. Jesus said, *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you ... If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:4-5). In this passage, Jesus did not say, "You should bear fruit." He stated that, when we remain in him, it follows naturally that we will bear fruit. We are the branches, and we must stay firmly connected to the Vine in order to be mature and fruitful. Jesus calls each of us to stay connected to him. Only as Christ lives in us are we enabled to bear the fruit of his character.

How can we respond to who God is what he has done and continues to do for us? Are you willing to make a commitment to him? Your commitment card has not yet been received. Perhaps you're still praying about it; maybe you've forgotten it; maybe it's been lost. We are enclosing another card and ask that you complete it and return it to the church office at your earliest convenience. In order to carry on the ministry that Christ has commissioned to us (Matthew 28:19-20), \_\_\_\_\_ (church name) \_\_\_\_\_ needs your support.

Thank you and may God continue to pour out his blessings on you as you bear fruit for Jesus.

In Christ,

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

those branches that are not bearing fruit (John 15:2), and he prunes the healthy branches so they can become even more fruitful.



“Remain in me,” Jesus said. “Abide in me, and you’ll be able to bear much fruit. Apart from me you can’t do anything.” “Love each other as I love you,” Jesus commanded. And then he promised to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit working through God’s Holy Word and Sacraments that we abide in Jesus and bear fruit that brings glory to the Father.

### **Chosen to Bear Fruit**

“*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit ... fruit that will last*” (John 15:16). God has chosen each of us to be fruitful. The Holy Spirit shapes and molds us, his chosen people, through a lifelong process of sanctification so we can become fruitful. He calls, gathers, enlightens,

and keeps us in the one true faith. “. . . *From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit . . .*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13b). St. Paul tells us that it is the Holy Spirit, who, through Word and Sacrament, brings us to faith and preserves us in it. He gathers Christians together as one body and gives gifts to each believer so that all the members might be strengthened. Again we read the words of St. Paul: “*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good*” (1 Corinthians 12:7). He enlightens us so that we can know what God’s will is, and he equips us to do it. He guides and directs our paths and is with us each step of the way. He has called us out of darkness into God’s light to declare his praises (1 Peter 2:9). God has chosen to create, redeem, and sanctify us “. . . *in order that we might bear fruit to God*” (Romans 7:4b).

# *Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*



*“I am the Vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit”*

John 15:5

## ***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!***

*Sermon - Third Sunday*

### **“First Things First”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. This is the third and final message for our stewardship series ***Bearing Fruit for Jesus! His Grace and Power at Work within You.***

The text is from **Matthew 6:33**: ***“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”***

“Which will bring you the greater return on your investment? [A] One dollar a week for 52 years, or [B] one penny a week doubled for 52 weeks?” Choose either option A or option B. This illustrates how people today are unsure, confused and unclear about the choices they make until they have by a process of addition or multiplication calculated the potential return on their investment. Option “A” sounds appealing, but adding the figures only nets you \$2,704. Now for option “B”, take out your calculators and you will soon realize that the power of multiplication would make you billionaires in less than 52 weeks! The difference is between addition and multiplication. Faithful investment of treasures to support the work of the kingdom of God multiplies ministry and reaps a fruitful harvest.

During a visit to Korea, two American businessmen were highly amused to see a young farmer hitched to a plow that was guided by his father. Later they learned that both father and son were Christians who had sold their only ox to provide money for a new church building. “What a stupendous sacrifice!” exclaimed one businessman. “Not really,” replied a missionary accompanying the Americans. “They were only sorry they had but one ox to give to the Lord’s work.” That’s the spirit of putting first things first. That’s what it means to seek first the kingdom of God! That’s what it means to live as fruitful stewards of treasures.

Yet, among Christians today, there are few willing to make such a sacrifice and commitment to the kingdom of God. (Instruct 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the congregation to stand and quote the following). In a 1995 stewardship survey of pastors and regional leaders in 16 church bodies, 90 percent agreed that in most congregations, 20 percent of the people contribute 50 to 80 percent of the financial support for ministry. (Those standing may be seated)

Why are the 20 percent willing to contribute so much and the 80 percent content to give so little? Some are content to have a little bit of God in their lives, to give a little bit to God in their offerings, and thereby represent the withering, sickly, infected, shriveling, fig tree which bears no fruit. The law says: “Cut it down. Why should it take up the ground?” The Gospel says: “Give it another year. Let’s fertilize, cultivate, water, and pray for fruit. If it bears no fruit next year, then cut it down” (Luke 13:6-9).

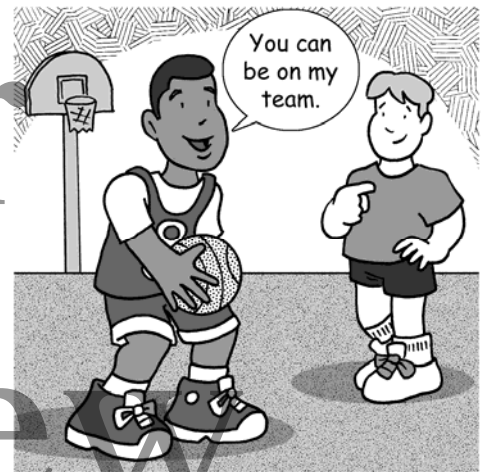
Too many Christians are confused and unclear about addition versus multiplication when it comes to

Dear Sunday School Student,

God wants all his children to be fruitful. Spiritual fruit is the love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control of Jesus that is seen in you (Galatians 5:22). You are also spiritually fruitful when you share your time, abilities, money, and yourself with God and others. You can do all these things because of the Holy Spirit who came to live in you when you were baptized.

In the book of John, Jesus explains to us how the Holy Spirit does this. Jesus said we must abide in him. That means stay with Jesus. How can you do that? By going to church and Sunday school, by reading and memorizing parts of the Bible, and by praying. This is how Jesus makes you a fruitful steward ... a person who wants to help others and who wants to share with others.

Whether you are at home, in school, or with your friends, you can bear fruit for Jesus. There will be times when you aren't loving and kind, when you get angry and say or do things that aren't pleasing to Jesus. Remember, then, that Jesus lived the perfect life in your place and that he died on the cross to take away your sins. Remember, also, that he loves you and wants you to try again. He will always be with you to help you be the person he's created you to be and to help you to bear fruit for him. Stay connected to Jesus!



**Read John 15:4-6**

Why can you bear much fruit?

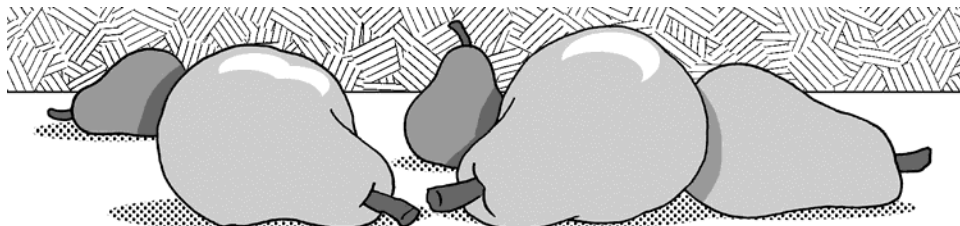
Jesus is the vine, you are the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Read Romans 8:9-10**

Who lives in you and gives you the ability to bear fruit?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:17, "*Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*" What kind of fruit do you bear?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for loving me so much. Help me to love you above all things. Grant me your strength so I can bear fruit. In your holy name I pray. **Amen.**



# Fruitful Use of Money

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Matthew 6:21

## Serving God or Money

Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21). Will we choose to serve the Lord with our lives and resources or be choked by the materialistic ways of the world? (Matthew 13:7, 22). There is no middle ground. Jesus didn't say it is difficult to serve both God and money. He said it is impossible to serve both (Matthew 6:24). Our treasure is either in heaven or on earth. We can't live our lives with a disclaimer that says, “Lord, I'll serve you with my heart but not with my money.” Our relationships with Christ should impact everything we do, including how we handle our money. Jesus encourages us to *“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to [us] as well”* (Matthew 6:33).



## God's Ownership

It is easy to adopt the attitude that we, rather than God, own the things we possess. We may believe that our cars, our houses, our computers, and our money belong to us. After all, didn't our hard work and sweat make it possible for us to acquire all we have? Only through God's gift of faith are we able to understand the words of Deuteronomy 8:18: *“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth . . .”* All we own and all we accomplish are gifts of God's grace.



Scripture is clear about God's ownership. *“The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the Lord Almighty* (Haggai 2:8). In the words of King David, *“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”* (Psalm 24:1). In Psalm 50:10 we read, *“. . . for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.”* Clearly God is the owner, and we are humble, fruitful stewards, we pray, of what he entrusts to us.

## Seek God's Wisdom

God, who lavishes us with his love, grace, and mercy, also wants to fill us with his wisdom. *“For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding”* (Proverbs 2:6). Even with God's wisdom, money issues will cause life to be challenging and confusing. Because we live in a fallen world, God's wisdom will not eliminate setbacks, problems, and disappointments with our money, but we know that he is in control and provides for us. He will

***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!***  
*A Three-Week Stewardship Program*



*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

John 15:5

***Overview and Instructions***



***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*** is a three-week stewardship program emphasizing the three themes of: Fruitful Use of Time, Fruitful Use of Talents and Fruitful Use of Money.

### **Program Goal**

The goal of this three-week stewardship program is to address whole life Christian stewardship: time, talents, and treasure. There is a focus one week on time, another on talents, and another on money. Through this program, the members of your church will grow in their understanding of Christian stewardship and grow as stewards.

### **Bible Study Participation**

To grow as stewards, we need to be reading and studying God's Word. Every effort should be made to increase Bible study attendance. Personal invitations will be helpful. To show the importance of Bible study, council members and other church leaders should be encouraged to attend. There are three studies to be taught during the three-week program. You may choose to start the studies prior to the start of the program or go beyond the program. Either plan is acceptable, although I like the idea of the study continuing after the three-week program.

### **Apple Day:**

You may want to consider having an Apple Day (first Sunday of program is suggested) when you either distribute apples to people as they leave worship or decorate the church with apples. Another option would be to place apples in bushel baskets and on counters, etc., instead of handing out an apple to each person. An Apple Day flyer should be given to each person.

This activity will serve as a reminder to members to go and bear spiritual fruit. An Apple Day flyer can be found at the *Parish Resource Center*.

### **Time and Talent Survey**

With the focus of the first two weeks on time and talent, you may want to have your members fill out a time and talent survey. Include a time and talent survey in each worship bulletin or folder. During the worship service give members a few minutes to complete the survey. Those who are unable to finish may bring them to church the following weekend. There is a time and talent survey at the *Parish Resource Center*.

### **Harvest Sunday**

Members are encouraged to make financial commitments to the Lord through their church. Commitment forms are to be mailed out just prior to the start of the program along with a commitment letter and the theme essay "Bearing Fruit for Jesus!" Commitment forms should also be distributed with the bulletins/worship folders on Harvest Sunday.

Every effort should be made to make Harvest Sunday a special and meaningful day. To show the joy and importance of making a commitment to the Lord, you may want to have balloons and/or other decorations. You could provide some special snacks. Some churches have found that inviting a special guest preacher is helpful. You may want to celebrate Harvest Sunday with a special catered luncheon or have a potluck luncheon.



***Bearing Fruit for Jesus!***

# Program Resources

Downloadable at the *Parish Resource Center*

## Resources – General

- ✠ Program Instructions and Timeline
- ✠ Program images (3, high-resolution)
- ✠ Follow-up letters

## Resources to Launch Program

- ✠ Theme Essay *Bearing Fruit for Jesus!* (Kick-off with commitment form)
- ✠ Commitment form (2)
- ✠ “Fruit” Stickers (To be printed on 2 x 4 inch label sheets)
- ✠ Newsletter articles (2)
- ✠ Bulletin cover
- ✠ Bulletin message
- ✠ Kick-off Letter

## Resources for EACH of the Three Weeks of the Program

- ✠ Theme essay:
  - Fruitful Use of Time (Week 1)*
  - Fruitful Use of Talents (Week 2)*
  - Fruitful Use of Money (Week 3)*
- ✠ Bulletin cover
- ✠ Bulletin messages
- ✠ Children’s handout
- ✠ Children’s message
- ✠ Lay reader presentation
- ✠ Sermon
- ✠ Worship suggestions

## Additional Resources

- ✠ Apple Day Resources for first Sunday
  - Apple Day flyer
  - Apple Day bulletin/email messages
- ✠ Time and Talent survey for second Sunday
- ✠ Bible studies (3)
  - Includes answer book
- ✠ 33-page Daily devotions book to be printed or emailed



*Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*

# Program Time Line

## *Launching the Program*

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### **Bible Studies & Devotional Book**

Either print or prepare to e-mail the Bible studies and devotional book.

### **Newsletter Articles**

Publish “Bearing Fruit for Jesus” one month prior to program.

Publish “Coming Soon ... Bearing Fruit for Jesus” in the newsletter just prior to the start of program.

### **Lay Readers**

Identify and prep three Lay Readers.

### **Letter from Pastor, Commitment Form, and Theme Essay “Bearing Fruit for Jesus”**

Mail to members so they receive them immediately before the beginning of the program.

### **Bulletin Messages**

Place clipart “Coming Soon! Bearing Fruit for Jesus” in bulletins two to three weeks prior to program. There is a bulletin message for the week prior to the program plus one for each week of the program to be placed in the bulletin.

### **“Bearing Fruit” stickers**

Print on 2 x 4 label stock (Any Avery 10 per page sheets)

## *The Three-Weeks of the Program*

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### **First Week**

*Apple Day recommended*

Distribute Devotional booklets (one per household)

Publish bulletin message (and cover)

Distribute theme essay “Fruitful Use of Time”

Create Apple Day theme and distribute flyers

Distribute “*Bearing Fruit*” stickers

Lay reader presentation: “Fruitful Use of Time”

Teach children’s message

Use Sunday school handout

Worship suggestions

Preach sermon: “Living with the End in Mind”

Teach Bible study

### **Second Week**

*Time and Talent survey recommended*

Publish bulletin message (and cover)

Include Time & Talent Survey in bulletin

Distribute theme essay: “Fruitful Use of Talents”

Lay reader presentation: “Fruitful Use of Talents”

Teach children’s message

Use Sunday school handout

Worship suggestions

Preach sermon: “Using What You’ve Got”

Teach Bible study



*Bearing Fruit for Jesus!*

### **Third Week**

*Commitment / Harvest Sunday*

Publish bulletin message (and cover)  
Distribute theme essay: "Fruitful Use of Money"  
Lay reader presentation: "Fruitful Use of Money"  
Teach children's message  
Use Sunday school handout  
Worship suggestions  
Preach sermon: "First Things First"  
Collect Commitment forms

### **After the Program**

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Letter to those not returning a commitment

Send reminder letters to members who failed to return their commitment forms.

Letter to those who turned in a commitment

Send thank-you letters to members who returned commitment forms.

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