

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 thank those who have
turned in a Commitment form*

Dear Fellow Christians,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus!

Thank you for your commitment to [Church Name]. Your commitment will further God's work at our church. The generosity of so many people supports our ministries for children and youth, the elderly, the sick, the shut-ins, our staff, and our facilities, along with outreach and missions.

Our **Bearing Fruit for Jesus!** stewardship program helped us understand that in order for us to bear spiritual fruit we need to stay connected to Jesus (John 15:4-5). Giving is one of the special ways we bear fruit for Jesus as we put our faith into action. Through the fruit of giving, we give honor and praise to God, extend God's kingdom, and support those in need.

We will keep you and the entire congregation informed on the work of our ministries throughout the year so you can see your contributions in action.

Thank you again for sharing your blessings and being a partner in this journey of faith. May God's blessings be with you as you faithfully manage all that he has entrusted to you.

In his love,

Pastor _____

fishermen James and John to spread the Gospel, impulsive Peter's confession upon which to build his church, and an unhealthy Paul to be the first great missionary of the Christian church. God uses imperfect people, those whom the world considers weak and flawed, to extend his Kingdom. We read about them in the Bible, and we are inspired by their examples. Like them, when we allow ourselves to be used by God in whatever way he chooses, as he takes our meager talents and blesses them, we become examples for others.



We have also been charged by him to use those talents to serve others and bring them the love of Jesus. *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). We are not perfect, nor do we know all there is to know about God's Word. Yet we, like Moses, James, John, Peter, and Paul, are privileged by God's

grace to participate in the work of his Kingdom.

Open to the Possibilities

God has blessed us with gifts and talents, but the decision is ours whether or not we will use those talents for the work of the Lord. If we decide to use them, then we are free also to choose how best to serve him. Are we open to the possibilities before us? Are we willing to explore and grow? We should be, because we are redeemed people who depend on the Holy Spirit daily to empower us to use our God-given talents for God's kingdom. God created and blessed us so that we may make a difference in our churches, communities, and the world. God will always equip us for the tasks he gives us to do. With his help we will find ways our talents can glorify him, and we will each hear God's words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* (Matthew 25:21).

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Fruitful Use of Talents



***"For we are God's
workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus to do good
works, which God
prepared in advance
for us to do."***

Ephesians 2:10

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 1/5th 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).

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.**

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

Being Fruitful

Fruit characterizes the life of Christians. The Apostle Paul tells us what that fruit is: *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit will be evident in the lives of Christians as a natural outcome of Christ’s living in us.

Jesus said, *“If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5b). It is interesting to note that Jesus did not say, “You should bear fruit.” He stated that when we abide 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 abide in him.



Only as Christ lives in us are we enabled to bear the fruit of his character.

Christ left the task of spreading the Gospel to his apostles, a small number, but, empowered by the Holy Spirit, a virtual army. Through the ages, we, Christ’s disciples, strengthened by Word and Sacrament, have continued to be fruitful as we persist in carrying out the purpose for which we remain on this earth.

Abiding in Christ, we minister to the needs of others as Jesus, the Vine, did during his life on earth. We feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, entertain the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the prisoner (Matthew 25:37-39), all in the name of Christ.

Through prayer and study of his Word, we seek to discover God’s perfect will for us, and we ask, as the Apostle Paul did, that God would *“... fill [us] with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding ... in order that [we] may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work...”* (Colossians 1:9-10).

How Can We Bear Fruit?

Fruit is not an attitude we psych ourselves up to attain. We are incapable of training our minds to think only good and pure thoughts so that our resulting actions can be then applauded as well. We know that, try as we might, on our own we are unable to bear fruit. Yet we are told to *“bear fruit ... fruit that will last”* (John 15:16). Through Christ, we can fulfill that command. He stated, *“I am the Vine; you are the branches”* (John 15:5a). Jesus is the Vine who bears the weight of the branches, who provides the needed support, who gives life-giving nourishment and energy to us his branches. Connected to Christ, the Vine, we branches do what comes naturally to any healthy fruit tree: we bear fruit.

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 (7, 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

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

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

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.

Parish Publishing, LLC

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Special thanks and acknowledgment to R. Chewning

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