

Bearing Good Fruit

Why are we doing good deeds? Is it so people may be helped? Is it so we may have meaningful lives? Is it so we can grow? No doubt, each of these happens when we are zealous for good deeds. These things, however, are by-products of our good deeds; they are not the goal. The goal, as seen in **John 15:8**, is to bear fruit that glorifies God. This goes along with **Matthew 5:16**, which says we should let our lights shine so people may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

You see, the issue is that our Father is in heaven. Our neighbors cannot see Him. Our co-workers cannot witness His work ethic. Our friends cannot watch His care and concern. Strangers with whom we come in contact cannot look at God's love. They can only see how God acts through us. They can only see how following Him impacts us.

I certainly recognize the general principle often expressed saying, "Folks don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care." The real point however is we are not trying to glorify ourselves. We aren't trying to let others know what wonderfully caring people we are. We want them to know what a wonderfully caring God we serve. We do that by modeling for them the care of God.

Don't misunderstand; this is not saying the local congregation's work should suddenly become social welfare to let folks know how much God cares. Rather, each of us as individuals must live in ways that shows God's concern, care, and love. That doesn't always equal material welfare or financial handouts. Most often, it equals words of concern and love. It sometimes mean weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice. It means showing patience as we work with someone in the gospel. It means demonstrating joy when others have good times in serving the Lord, but also mourning when others disregard serving the Lord.

No doubt, we all mess up and don't live a God-glorifying life before others. Don't spend too much time beating yourself up. Rather, recognize this as another opportunity to give God the glory and show the world that Jesus's disciples aren't perfect just forgiven. In this situation, perform the God-glorifying good deed of confession and making amends.

I heard a story about a guy who runs a rock climbing gym. On a particular night, he gives half-off the individual price, but group rates are regular price. He began to pick up that about 15 people in his gym who had acted like they were separate were actually there as a group. When he asked one, he was convinced they were separate. The next morning, however, the guy who had told him they were separate came back, confessed that he lied, apologized, and then single-handedly covered the amount they had ripped the gym owner off plus more. The group was a Sunday School class.

I'm not suggesting we lie so we can repent and make up for it. But the penitence and amends said a great deal about this man's God. It also said a great deal to the guy who ran the gym about this man's God.

May we always bear fruit that shows what a wonderful God we serve. And when we mess up, may we bear the fruit of repentance even before the world that shows what a forgiving God we serve.

—Edwin L. Crozier