

Bearing Fruit

THE LORD'S GARDEN

The books in this series are collections of devotional stories written for children. The stories are based on true happenings gleaned from a variety of sources and rewritten for contemporary readers. Most are culled from books of the nineteenth century, including several by Richard Newton. Modern presentations of these stories were originally published in *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* magazine and are now arranged thematically for the purposes of these volumes. Each story accompanies a passage of Scripture and is intended to illustrate that particular biblical truth. Some stories are shorter, some longer. However, all will capture the attention of children and hopefully their hearts.

Books in the Series:

Vol. 1 — *Taking Root: Devotional Stories about Conversion*

Vol. 2 — *Bearing Fruit: Devotional Stories about Godliness*

Vol. 3 — *Sowing the Seed: Devotional Stories about Sharing
the Gospel*

Bearing Fruit

Devotional Stories about Godliness

Diana Kleyn



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Bearing Fruit

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Introduction

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

—PSALM 1:3

In the Bible, God uses many examples of things in our lives to help us understand more difficult things. God wants His Word to be clear and simple so that even children can understand it. In Psalm 1:3, God uses the picture of a tree that bears fruit as a way of showing us what a godly person is like. Just like trees and plants bear fruit, so must the Christian bear spiritual fruit. Some plants and trees are meant to have only branches or stems and leaves, with no fruit. But there are others that produce fruit: apple trees, tomato plants, and blueberry bushes. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, describes the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,¹

1. Patience..

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”² (Galatians 5:22–23). Through the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s heart, this person begins to produce the fruit of the Spirit. This means that a person shows by his lifestyle that he walks in the ways of the Lord. Like an apple tree shows what it is because of the tasty apples it carries on its branches, Christians should be recognized by having a godly character.

Did the believer always produce this fruit? No, for by nature we are born in sin, and we produce the fruit of sin. Many people who read the Bible and attend church forget something of utmost importance: there can be no fruit without life. Fruit cannot grow on a dead tree; it’s just not possible. In other words, we cannot bear good, spiritual fruit unless we have been made alive by the work of the Holy Spirit. How can we receive this gift of life? Just as God makes the grass, plants, and trees grow, He gives the gift of eternal life in the hearts of His people. In John 15, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples that He is the vine. He was alive from all eternity. Only in Christ can we live too. That is why Jesus explains, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Picture a vine or a tree, healthy and strong. A farmer cuts a branch from another tree and carefully grafts this branch into the healthy tree. Then, with God’s blessing, this branch will live and produce much fruit. But if the farmer cuts off the branch and does not graft it into a living tree

2. Self-control.

or vine, the branch will die. In the same way, a person cannot be saved unless he or she abides in Christ. Because we are completely dead in sin, we cannot make ourselves alive. The believer is alive only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin and Satan bring death and destruction; God gives life and salvation because of the sacrifice for sin that Jesus made when He died and rose again. To be alive in Christ means that you have become aware of your dreadful danger and have fled for safety to the Lord Jesus; He has spared your life and given you the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him.

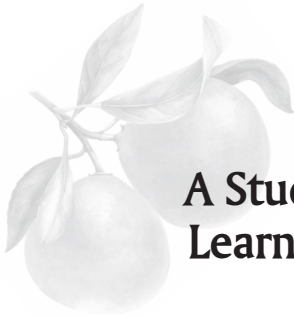
Does the believer change completely from someone who has brought forth evil fruit to someone who produces only good fruit? Sadly, no. As long as the Christian remains on this earth, he must battle against the sin that still remains in his heart. There are also many temptations in this world, and Satan is quick to try to get the Christian to stumble and fall. But because the Holy Spirit lives in the believer's heart and because the Lord Jesus has paid for the sins of every believer, there is the beginning of fruit-bearing, or holiness, in this life. The Christian often sins, but the Lord is faithful and will turn him back again and again. Each time, the believer must repent and confess his sins and be cleansed again.

Do you remember the story in the Old Testament about Aaron's rod? Read Numbers 16 and 17 with your parents. The Lord commanded the families of Israel to take rods, or branches, write their tribe's name on them, and lay them before God in the tabernacle. The rod of the man whom God had chosen would blossom. "And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness;

and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds” (Numbers 17:8). God made a dead stick produce buds, blossoms, and fruit in one night!

This is a picture of what the Lord does in His children. In themselves, they are only like dead sticks, but when the Lord gives life, they bring forth fruit. Are you a plant growing in the Lord’s garden? Are you a branch grafted into the true vine? Or are you still a dead stick? Has the Lord blessed you with new life? Have you come to realize that you are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1)? Have you already fled for safety to the Lord Jesus? Jesus warns us, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).

Dear children, it is important for us to see if we are firmly planted in Jesus Christ. One of the ways we do this is to look to see if the spiritual fruit of godliness is growing in our lives. So as you think about what God says about bearing fruit and read these stories about how God makes His people grow in godliness, pray to God and ask Him to be a good farmer and help produce these fruits in your life. Do not delay, but bend your knees now and ask the Lord to save you. He will never turn away those who ask Him for new life in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God be pleased to make you a fruitful plant in His garden!



—1—

A Student Artist Learns a Lesson

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

—ROMANS 8:28

Our heavenly Father deals with His people somewhat like the painter in this story dealt with his pupil. The student artist produced a beautiful picture which was admired by all. His young heart swelled with pride. He laid aside his palette and paints and sat daily before his easel, admiring the work of his hands.

One morning, however, he found, to his horror, that his canvas had been scraped clean. Gone was his masterpiece; only smudges of paint remained. He wept and shouted in anger and disappointment.

A little later, the master appeared in the studio. “What happened to my beautiful painting?” cried the student. “Who could have done such an awful thing?”

The master was silent a moment as he looked kindly into his pupil’s tearstained face. Then he said, “I did this.”

“What!” the young man exclaimed. “Why? It was my best painting ever!”

“I have done this for your benefit,” the older man explained. “That painting was ruining you.”

“How? It was so good! I was so proud of it!” moaned the student.

“Exactly. In the admiration of your own talents, you were losing your love of the art itself. Now take up your pencil and your paints, and start again.”

The young man sat stunned as he thought about his master’s words. Shame rolled over him. How vain and proud he had been! As his anger disappeared, his heart was filled with thankfulness and admiration for his wise teacher. He dried his tears, picked up his pencil, and produced a masterpiece. If it were not for this harsh test, this young man’s talents would have been hindered and stunted by his sinful pride. He never forgot what his master taught him that day.

Children, remember this valuable lesson. Sometimes, like Jacob in the Bible story when he faced troubles, we think that “all these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36). But if we are asking the Lord to bless us with eternal life, then He will work all things for our good. Sometimes things seem to go all wrong, and it seems that God has forgotten us, but if we are His children, then He will never forget us. We may not understand His ways while we live on this earth, but in heaven everything will make sense, and we will finally see that God’s ways are best.

QUESTIONS

- Why was the student artist pleased?
- What happened to his painting?
- Who did this? Why?
- Why was the student eventually thankful for this?

THINK

- Why does God send trials to His children whom He loves?
- What are some things to remember when sad or painful things happen to us?

PRAYER

Humble me before Thee.