

## Barren or Bountiful? <https://wp.me/p7jDK1-9W8>



When I hear the word barren I think of Abraham's wife Sarah. The word barren means not producing, sterile, unproductive, and unfruitful. Lands that produce no crops are barren lands. Fruit trees not bearing fruit are barren. We say of women who cannot become pregnant that their wombs are barren. To be barren implies failure. Things which are supposed to bear fruit can be barren...and so can believers in Christ.

If something is supposed to bear fruit and it doesn't it is a disappointment. The problem may be in the tree itself. It may have been damaged or the soil in which it has been planted does not have the nutrients the tree needs to be able to do what it is supposed to do. Or the tree and nutrients might be present but there is no water which makes the whole system work. Christians are meant to be bearing fruit. There are attributes or character qualities that we expect we should see in a believer. In fact, Jesus said these very words in John 15:16...

***“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...”***

These were not just words for the 11 men with Him in the Upper Room. They are words for us as well. Jesus chose you and He chose me. And we have an appointment. We have been chosen and appointed to go and bear fruit...and the fruit that He bears in our lives is the fruit that will last. Not like a banana that cannot survive on the countertop for more than a week or like apples getting mushy in the refrigerator.

There is no “shelf life” for the fruit that Christ wants our lives to produce. His fruit is produced in us is meant to last...it can, and it will. And you will probably never guess what Jesus says about the fruit He wants us to bear for Him...

***“...and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”***

Now for some, that sounds like a blank check. What He says is NOT “...whatever you ask the Father will give you.” The key phrase is whatever you ask “...in my name...” which means according to His will.

So, do you feel like your Christian life is barren or bountiful? Are you seeing the fruit of His life-changing you and making you a more Christ-like man? Or are you just going through the motions of pretending to be a Christ-follower by your words only and not by your actions? Wow, that is convicting, isn't it?

Where do you see the fruit that Jesus says He will develop in our lives? What fruit is remaining as a consistent part of your Christian life? If the tree is not producing fruit then there is something wrong with the tree, the soil, the water, and or the sunshine needed for the process to be producing the fruit the gardener expects.

Here is where I think the problem lies. Here is why I believe that so many Christian men and Christian women have been caught up in their addiction to porn and sex. Part of the problem

is what has happened in the Church. The church has become something I think God never intended. In its initial stages, it was created to be a place where others who believe Christ to be their Savior gather to be with one another and to help one another. They saw their role as being a place where broken people could find healing...a place where those who have abundance share with those who have the basic needs lacking. A place where they will not only hear the Gospel...but see the Gospel in action.

The Church was meant to be a hospital with a well-staffed Emergency Room with people skilled in dealing with the broken lives that are being brought in. However, it is also meant to be a nursery. A specific climate where seeds that begin to grow get the nutrients, soil, water, and sun for them to be able to grow.

Jesus called for His disciples to...

***“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”***

This command is not to just go into the world sharing the gospel of Christ, having new Christians being born again, and then moving on to the next person. No, the church is to be the place where these newborn believers are cared for. They are to be taught everything that Christ commanded His disciples.

And so, I must ask the question...is this what churches are trying to do? Has the emphasis been to take these new saplings and put them in a place where they can grow, develop Christian maturity, and bear fruit that will last?

How much of a church's budget is designed to do that very thing...teaching them to obey everything Jesus taught His disciples. I think that the model many churches are following these days is broken. Maybe excelling in giving people the Gospel of salvation...but failing miserably in helping those newborn babies to grow up and mature.

It seems to me what is more important is putting on the show. Having the stage and lighting just right so the people are amazed by the music but lacking in worship. How good is the band and is the preacher clever enough and entertaining enough to hold our attention...at least until the pangs of our stomach begin longing for the nearest restaurant blue plate special.

We will have a nursery for baby children but fail in teaching and disciplining the adult babies in Christ so that they will grow strong and healthy and begin to bear fruit of their own.

We are failing to disciple those who come to Christ. We all live in this sinful and enticing world with our own well-developed sinful nature and porn is being worshipped more than God. Oh that we would be doing the work of growing Christians into Christ-like followers by teaching them everything Jesus taught his disciples

More tomorrow on how we can do this...