



# Spirit of Grace Herald

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## Spirit of Grace Ministries

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## Thoughts on Fruit-bearing

As people reach their latter years, they face the question, “When it is my time to leave this earth, what good things will I leave behind?” And there are two categories of “good things” that really count. First, and most important are people – people who have been blessed, encouraged, helped, and brought to the knowledge of Jesus as a result of your years on this earth. The other category of “good things” we leave behind would include all the other stuff. And in the case of those of us who teach God’s word, this would include books, articles, recordings, videos, and so forth. We dare to hope that some of these things will outlive us by many years.

Throughout the course of my life I have been involved in many and varied forms of Christian teaching, preaching, and outreach. I started out in a tiny church in a small town in Missouri. I used to record my sermons on cassette tapes in those days. I couldn’t bring myself to ever throw any of them away. I suppose I hoped that at some point they might become a sort of legacy, but that never happened. But today, those original sermons, preached by me in my late twenties and early thirties, are long gone.

Of all the ministry activities I have been involved with since then, the one format that is still around and lives on in a format that is unfaded and undiminished is the “devotional” teaching. These began as articles which were the perfect size for the pamphlets that I sent out to our supporters. When I began a fifteen-minute radio program in 2011, I found that these articles fit perfectly into the time frame. I began reading them for the radio program and writing a whole lot more of them than ever before. And people seemed to really enjoy them. In fact, my supporters seemed to like them more than they did my “normal” preaching, which was to me a source of mixed feelings. I had always seen myself as a preacher, first and foremost. When I preached, I preached loudly, forcefully, and usually pretty long. But now, on these little devotional messages, which were neither loud, nor forceful, nor very long (usually around 12 minutes), people were responding better than they did with my regular sermons.

Once the radio outreach ended for lack of funds, I could not imagine putting a halt to these devotionals which God was surely blessing. And so I continued to create several of them every month, mailing them out on CD’s to the friends of our ministry. In time God revealed to me a new format for these devos. Around the year 2016 I developed a sudden interest in video production. I began to watch YouTube videos about how to record video, and audio, and how to employ lighting in creating quality videos. Eventually I began to put my



new skills to work and started creating videos, converting the devotional messages I had recorded as audio files into video teachings.

I learned about cutting out mistakes and covering the video with “B-roll” so that the mistakes would never be discovered. I studied using graphics and making pictures zoom in, zoom out, and roll sideways. I called this new form of teaching “The Video Devo.” But I realized that this video format would never work with the original length of the messages. In order to turn these teachings into effective video messages, they would have to be cut almost in half. It was painful to do this, but I discovered that as a result of this severe editing process, I was left with all the juicy parts of the messages, and was able to lop off the less interesting and weaker parts. It resulted in a far superior, much more interesting teaching.

# Thoughts on Fruit-bearing

And I found that this form of the devo, this new, cropped, condensed, fast-moving video format, was more popular still.

Finding a sweet spot where we function at higher levels can take years or even decades, and often it involves a lengthy process of elimination. We might wonder, “Why doesn’t God just make clear from the outset the specifics of how to do what He has called us to do? Why all these starts and stops, failures and semi-failures, trial and error?” It seems that in the process of seeking the Lord, making ministry efforts, achieving successes, failures, and mediocre results, we learn some things and we grow quite a bit. The result of the process, if we allow it to work, is spiritual maturity.

Jesus tells us: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). David writes: “His delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season...” (Psalm 1:2-3). Putting these two passages together we can see that the path to fruitfulness for the children of God involves: 1) abiding in Jesus, 2) meditating in His word, and 3) patiently waiting for His season. In between our first experience with Jesus and the season of His full blessing on our efforts to glorify Him there may be many false starts, frustrations, smaller victories, puzzling circumstances, failures, disappointments, and of course years.

But none of that should be of too much concern to us. It is not our job to determine the type of fruit we bear, or the amount of fruit, or the time and season for our fruit. Ours is to abide in Jesus, making use of whatever opportunities lie before us, and looking for greater opportunities still. Jesus says, “I am the good Shepherd.” As our Shepherd He will lead us from glory to glory, from one place of fruitfulness to another, always wisely keeping the end in mind, and working all things for the glory of God.

Looking back over around forty years of ministry, I am convinced that my devotional articles in their written, audio, and video forms, are probably the best things I have ever done in ministry. At this point I have written and recorded nearly 500 of them. They represent my little contribution to the knowledge of God in our world. My hope is that perhaps a few years or maybe a few decades after I am gone, someone in some remote village in Africa or India or China, or some major city in the U. K. or the U. S. may run across one of them on YouTube or a website and be blessed and encouraged to trust in Jesus, or to trust Him at a greater level than ever before. If that happens, I hope some angel will tell me about it. It would make heaven just a little bit sweeter.

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**It really helps to have regular supporters whom we can count on to fund not only our missions, but our day to day ministry, mail-outs, videos, audio recordings, and other expenses. We Help us to continue to reach out to our world with the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!**

