

BECOMING A HEALTHY TREE

TEXT: (Matthew 12:33 GNT)

³³ To have good fruit you must have a healthy tree; if you have a poor tree, you will have bad fruit. A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears. (Matthew 12:33 GNT)

I. PREREQUISITES FOR SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND GROWTH

A. Desire for the Things of God

1. “Be like newborn babies, always thirsty for the pure spiritual milk, so that by drinking it you may grow up and be saved. As the scripture says, ‘You have found out for yourselves how kind the Lord is’” (I Peter 2:2-3, GNT).
2. “As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for you, the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2, GNT).
3. “I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight” (Psalm 119:174, NIV).

B. Self-Denial

1. “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’” (Matthew 16:24, NIV).

C. Forsaking the World

1. “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33, NIV).
2. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.
He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 14:34-35, NIV).
3. “Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’
At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Mark 10:21-22, NIV).

D. Spiritual Steadfastness

1. “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples’” (John 8:31, NIV).
2. “Truth, wisdom, learning, and good sense—these are worth paying for, but too valuable for you to sell” (Proverbs 23:23, GNT).
3. “We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly” (I Corinthians 4:12-13, NIV).
4. “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 2:3, NIV).
5. “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father” (Hebrews 12:7, NIV)?
6. “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God’s throne” (Hebrews 12:2, GNT).

E. Live by the Spirit

1. “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16).
2. “For if you live according to your human nature, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death your sinful actions, you will live. Those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s children” (Romans 8:13-14, GNT).

3. "I must walk to day, and to tomorrow, and the *day* following" (Luke 13:33, KJV).

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD IN BECOMING A HEALTHY TREE

1. "I will never neglect your instructions, because by them you have kept me alive" (Psalm 119:93, GNT).
2. "Above all else, however, remember that none of us can explain by ourselves a prophecy in the Scriptures. For no prophetic message ever came just from the human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God" (II Peter 1:20-21, GNT).
3. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31, NIV).

A. Gives Life

1. "Jesus answered, 'It is written: "'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4, NIV).
2. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63, NIV).

B. Maintains Order

1. "But this is what the Lord says: I would no more reject my people than I would change my laws that govern night and day, earth and sky" (Jeremiah 33:25, NLT).

C. Molds Your Life

1. "I gain wisdom from your laws, and so I hate all bad conduct" (Psalm 119:104, GNT).
2. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).
3. "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25, NIV).

III. PRAYER IS THE SECRET TO CLOSENESS TO GOD

1. The LORD "hears the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29, NIV).
2. "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8, NIV).
3. "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17, NIV).
4. "In thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11, KJV).

A. Prayer Gives Perspective

1. "When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. 'Oh, my lord, what shall we do?' the servant asked.

'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'

And Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (II Kings 6:15-17, NIV).

2. "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God'" (Mark 1:27, NIV).

B. Prayer Meets the Needs of the Spirit of Man

1. "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7, NIV).