
The Invisible Tree of the Heart

“For there is no good tree that bears bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree that bears good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil person out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

(Luke 6.43-45 NASB)

Nurturing the Tree of the Heart

Trees can be a temperamental thing. Conditions such as its soil, access to sunlight, and water intake are critical factors for trees to grow. Like all other living things, trees need food, water, and nutrients to survive and thrive.

Just as these essentials are necessary for the flourishing of a tree, so does the human heart need its own proper nutrients, sunlight, water, and sustenance. The heart within the soul must be submerged, dripping with the Water of Life, Christ Jesus. It must be watered daily with the eternal Word of God. It must have continual access to bask in the Light of the Lord. Naturally, this tree of the heart will thrive under prosperous conditions such as these. And eventually, by the grace of God, the heart will then bear the ripest, most luscious fruit known to a saved man or woman in Christ.

That is, the Fruit of the Spirit which “is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5.22). As a natural result, this fruit should then utterly characterize a believer’s actions, thoughts, and especially their words.

As Jesus stated in Luke 6.45, “Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (ESV). Which essentially means: a person’s conduct reflects the condition of the heart. Are the conditions of the invisible tree of your heart good – producing good fruit? Or are the conditions far below par, producing rotten, shriveled fruits, if any?

Fruit Starts at the Root

This month’s theme is the power of words. Proverbs taught us that a foolish person speaks gossip and reckless words, while the wise speak kind, thoughtful, and true words. If we are genuinely striving to transform our tongues by speaking words that are beautifully kind, thoughtful, and true, we will not try to solve the gossip or reckless speech issue by simply not cussing. Or being quiet while our friends are gossiping and leaving it at that. While those are certainly part of the process, wise speech will not only begin from externally refraining from cussing, gossiping, et cetera.

First and foremost, wise speech begins with the internal reality of the heart overflowing into the external. Jeff Vanderstelt, author of *Gospel Fluency*, wrote on the topic of paying close attention to the fruit of our lives or overflow of our hearts. In a chapter titled “Fruit to Root” he states:

“... Jesus was very clear that what defiles us proceeds from inside our hearts - our beliefs and our motives. The fruit of our lives comes from the roots of our faith. Just as a thermometer detects a fever, what we see or experience tells us about the gospel health of our hearts. So we need to learn to trace the fruit back to the root” (pg 118).

There is no other way to begin the transformative journey of wise speech and conduct - in other words, fruit - than beginning with an honest examination of the invisible tree of the heart. Where is your heart?

Rooted in Christ

As we ask ourselves this question, let us not forget what Paul told the people of Colossae in Colossians 2.6-7, “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude” (NASB).

This is the ultimate key to bearing good fruit: remaining rooted in Christ. Above all else, Jesus must be the root of our faiths. We do not pursue transformation of the tongue for the sake of being good, we pursue godliness in our words because that is precisely what the Lord calls His people to do. Kind, thoughtful, and true words are to be said out of the overflow of our hearts, all because it is the good treasure of Christ Jesus Himself that fills us.

The result of remaining firmly rooted in Christ is that the invisible tree of our hearts will naturally bring forth good fruit. If He is not that treasure or foundation, it will be impossible to transform our speech.

Digging to the Roots

Let us take the time this month to slow down and honestly examine our fruits. Ask for the Spirit to lead you in examining your speech as well as your conduct. If they are not characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, pick up your shovel and dig deeper. Examine your fruits and trace them back to the roots. Perhaps your tree is not getting enough nutrients, water, and food that is necessary for growth.

Mind Yourself Worksheet

For one full day, mind your conduct, specifically your speech. In order to examine our fruits, we must be mindful in looking for them and understanding where exactly they are coming from.

For example, we can note how we start getting reckless with our words in the middle of the day when we're most irritated. Or we can jot down how we partook in edifying conversation with a loved one over dinner. Every interaction or instance, whether it be big or seemingly small.

Whatever it may look like, take note or record your speech throughout the day. The key for this exercise is understanding the patterns or habits that your speech has and running a diagnostic on the health of your heart.

At the end of the day answer these questions and honestly reflect on your findings:

1. What did my wise speech look like? How were my words kind, thoughtful, and true? Was Christ magnified in my words?

2. What did my unwise speech look like? How were my words gossiping or reckless? What was the reason for my use of unwise words?

3. What was the overall condition of the fruit from the invisible tree of my heart? Were there any patterns or similarities?

4. How can I improve or what are some practices I can implement to start nourishing my roots in Christ?
