

How to Live a Fruitful Life

Colossians 1:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- *When Paul prayed for the Colossian church he prayed that they would be “fruitful in every good work.”*

Genesis 1:27-28 (NKJV)

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- *When God created man He commissioned him with the words, “be fruitful and multiply and subdue and have dominion.” God created mankind so our lives would not only be enjoyable but purposeful, fruitful, and victorious.*
- *After man fell into sin, Christ came not only to save us from the penalty of sin, but to save us from the power and control of sin and restore man to God’s original purpose for us to be fruitful. Christ came so we could live victorious and fruitful lives and subdue and have dominion over those things in our lives that once had dominion over us, namely our fleshly, sinful, and selfish nature.*
- *Many Christians live unfulfilled lives and even lose interest in fellowshiping with other believers and seeking God because they become disillusioned. They have no eternal vision for their lives and are frustrated with their lack of spiritual fruitfulness.*
- *The Pharisees asked Jesus “when the kingdom of God would come” and Jesus answered them with these words. “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20-21).*
- *The Jews had been waiting many centuries for God to restore the kingdom to Israel and to send the promised Messiah to rule God’s kingdom.*
- *Many times when Christians experience spiritual stagnation, and feel they are unable to move forward spiritually they ask God similar questions. “When are You going to bring revival to my life? When is Your kingdom going to be*

manifest in me so I am no longer living a defeated and mediocre life? When will God's Kingdom become manifest on the earth?"

- *They are still facing many of the same habits and problems they battled with before they received Christ.*
- *Jesus' answer signified that the Pharisees misunderstood how the kingdom of God would be manifest. "The kingdom of God does not come with observation."*
- *The Greek word "observation" παρατήρησις paratērēsis means, "to stand beside and watch; closely watch, carefully observe" in other words to be an observer rather than a participant. We must be a participant, not merely an observer. We must be active and not passive.*
- *The Kingdom of Heaven does not come by observation but by participation.*
- *The Kingdom of Heaven does not manifest itself in its fullness suddenly. It is revealed through a process that requires time, effort, and participation by those who are willing to be co-laborers with God. (1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:2).*
- *Jesus revealed the secret to the manifestation of the Kingdom of God, "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."*
- *The Greek word "within" can mean either, 1) inside and could refer to being in us; or 2) in our midst or among us.*
- *For a non-believer, although the reality of God is all around them and in their midst, they will never enter into the Kingdom of God by mere observation. They must participate by taking a step of faith, repenting, and receiving Christ.*
- *For a believer, even though they are born again and the kingdom of God is within them they will not experience the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven, nor the victorious life He has for them, nor the fruitfulness He wants to manifest in and through them by just sitting passively by and waiting for God to change them. They must apply themselves to seek God and participate and co-labour with the Holy Spirit to work in and through them.*
- *"The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor." (Proverbs 12:24). As believers, if we choose to be only lazy observers and not diligent doers of the Word then we will continue to be under the forced labour of sin and habits that result in bondage.*

- *However, if we are diligent we will rule over our fleshly impulses that try to oppress us and we will experience the peace and joy of living a victorious life in Christ.*

Proverbs 10:4 (NKJV)

⁴He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

- *We can either be slack handed Christians who are spiritually impoverished or we can be diligent Christians rich in the fruit of the Spirit and empowered by the gifts of the Spirit.*
- *The Old Testament prophets, unlike the Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' time, were not simply passive observers but diligent participants actively seeking God. "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." (1 Peter 1:10-11).*
- *The Old Testament Prophets did not idly sit around. They participated and prepared the way for God's Kingdom as they interceded in prayer and prophesied of the coming Messiah who would be our Saviour. "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-things which angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:12).*
- *In the time before Jesus' birth God had faithful men and women who collaborated with Him through prayer and intercession to prepare the way for the Messiah. Simeon and Anna spent their lives in prayer waiting on the Lord for the birth of the Messiah, the Son of God.*

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (Luke 2:25-26).

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Luke 2:36-38).

- *Nehemiah's life provides insights into how to co-labour with God and participate with the Holy Spirit to see God's redemption manifest in us and through us so God's kingdom is established in our lives and in His Church.*

Nehemiah 1:1–11 (NKJV)

¹The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,

²that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

- *Nehemiah means "the Lord comforts." Nehemiah was raised up by the Lord to be one who would bring comfort and restoration to God's people who had been down trodden and oppressed.*
- *Hachaliah means "who waits for the Lord" or "whom the Lord enlightens." One of the attributes of those who co-labour with God is that we must be patient and wait on His timing for each step of restoration. Otherwise we will rush ahead and soon grow frustrated when things are not happening fast enough or we will grow weary when what we are trying to accomplish does not materialize immediately.*
- *Chislev means "confidence" (the ninth month of the Hebrew calander). Even in captivity Nehemiah and the Jews who were with him had to be confident that God had not abandoned Israel and had a plan to fulfill the promises He had given them in the proper time.*

“and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem”

- *Step One: Be attentive and open when God wants to show us something.*

³And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.”

- *Hanani brought the devastating news of the condition of those who had returned to Jerusalem.*
- *Hanani means "gracious." The words of the hardship and distressing circumstances that Israel faced were delivered to Nehemiah through a messenger named 'gracious.' Despite the great difficulties Israel faced the message contained grace which caused Nehemiah's heart to be stirred. The message did not produce hopelessness or despair but faith and a call to action.*

- *Only a truly gracious messenger can give an accurate report of such devastating news without ministering hopelessness.* “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Colossians 4:6).
- *We hear about the difficult conditions of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering persecution and even death in some countries. It is equally terrible to see the compromise and backslidden condition of much of the Western church. The gospel message is mocked because of the weak condition of the Western church. Many Christians are struggling under the destructive effects of bondage and sin. However, grace enables us not to become disheartened but to respond with faith and intercessory prayer.*

⁴So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

- *Step Two: Be responsive to what God shows us. We are not to allow it to be forgotten in all the busyness and cares of daily life.*
- *Nehemiah didn’t just shake his head and say, “What a pity,” and then go on with his daily activities. He was stirred into action.*
- *When Nehemiah heard the report of the condition of his fellow Jews he did three things:*
- *He sat down—he stopped all his other activities.*
- *He wept and mourned—he was touched by their needs. He allowed the suffering of others to touch him and allowed the compassion of God to stir his heart.*
- *Intercession—he fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven. He lifted his sorrow up to God. Unless we do this we will either be overwhelmed by the situation and feel hopeless or close our hearts to the suffering of others because it is too painful.*
- *We take the need beyond the natural realm into the spiritual realm. We must have a heavenly response. In the following verses (5-10), Nehemiah identified with the needs of the people, their humiliation, their failures, their sins, and their need for God’s mercy.*
- *What touches God’s heart must touch our hearts if we are to be effective in intercession.*

⁵And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your

commandments,

- *Prayer and intercession always begin with praise and affirming the faithfulness of God.*

⁶please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

⁷We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

- *In verses 6 and 7 Nehemiah not only confessed the sins of his people but he identified his own failures.*
- *He did not intercede from a position of self-righteousness but as one who had also failed to reach God's standard.*
- *He acknowledged how they had all fallen short of God's ways and disobeyed His Word.*

⁸Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;

⁹but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'

- *Nehemiah prayed out God's Word and prayed into God's Word.*
- *First, he declared the promises God had given to Israel.*
- *Then he prayed into God's promises.*
- *He waited and expected God to perform His Word. (Jeremiah 1:12).*

¹⁰Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

- *Nehemiah now identified himself and his people as the people of God whom God had redeemed by His great power.*

¹¹O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

- *From the position of being God’s people he had the confidence to ask God to be attentive to their prayers and to grant their requests.*
- *He described himself and those with him as “those that desire to fear His name.” He did not presume that his heart was totally right before God, but he desired that his heart would be totally right before God.*
- *Nehemiah ended his prayer with a specific request that God would grant him favour with the king.*
- *Step Three: Recognize that God has placed you in a specific place with specific gifts to meet a specific need in the kingdom of God.*
- *He asked God to prosper him this day. He recognized that “today was the day of salvation,” that today was when he needed to take the first step.*
- *He asked for favour with those God had placed in authority over him.*
- *“for I was the king’s cupbearer” — He recognized that God had put him in a unique position to meet a need in the Kingdom of God.*
- *Nehemiah recognized that God had placed him in a very special position and he now prayed from this position. Each believer has received a special calling and special gifts that are needed in Christ’s church and if we fail to use those gifts there is a lack in His Body.*

Nehemiah 2:1–20 (NKJV)

¹And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.

- *Four months passed since Nehemiah had begun to intercede for Israel.*

²Therefore the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.” So I became dreadfully afraid,

- *Step Four: Allow the suffering in the lives of others to impact our lives.*
- *“So I became dreadfully afraid” – Nehemiah’s burden could affect his job security.*

³and said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?”

- *“Why should my face not be sad” - Instead of covering up the burden on his*

heart, Nehemiah explained why his sadness of heart was totally justifiable.

⁴Then the king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.

- *Step Five: Be constantly dependent on God—pray without ceasing.*
- *“So I prayed to the God of heaven.” The beauty of this statement highlights the simplicity and profound power of prayer.*

⁵And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”

- *Step Six: Come boldly before the throne with what God has put on your heart.*
- *Nehemiah basically asked the king to “give me a leave of absence from my job, continue to pay me, give me the authority to rebuild the city, (vs 7) and by the way I would like you to pay for all the work. (vs 8).”*

⁶Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

- *“The queen also sitting beside him” – This title could refer to the “queen-mother” who would hold greater influence in the kingdom with the king than even the king’s wife. Many scholars think this woman was actually Esther.*
- *God had put everything in place to see His plan fulfilled but Nehemiah had to be willing to step out in faith and obedience for that to happen.*

⁷Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah,

⁸and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

⁹Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

- *Things seemed to be coming together for Nehemiah. He had received all he requested from the king who even provided him with an army escort and royal letters to present to the governors of the region.*

- *There will be times when everything will just fall into place. These are times when God encourages us so that we can stand against any opposition that we will experience later.*

¹⁰When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

- *Step Seven: Be prepared for opposition.*
- *The presence of opposition does not mean we have somehow missed God. Being in God's will doesn't remove all opposition.*

¹¹So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

¹²Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode.

- *Step Eight: Allow the things that God has put in your heart to blossom fully.*

¹³And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.

- *He inspected the destruction from the Valley Gate up to the Serpent Well. The enemy was well entrenched in Israel and the walls were broken down and the gates burned so there was no way to stop the enemy from coming and going as he wished.*
- *We must identify those areas where the enemy comes in and wreaks havoc in our lives. We must learn to swiftly fortify those areas of weakness.*
- *The Refuse Gate (or the Dung gate). There was no proper way to deal with the refuse, the worthless garbage and the dung that was collected in the city.*
- *We must learn how to deal with the sin in our lives quickly and be constantly ready to repent from every attitude, thought, word, or action that is contrary to godliness. We must take out the refuse daily through the dung gate by confessing our sins or soon our souls can become a pretty stinky place!*

¹⁴Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass.

- *The Fountain Gate and the King's Pool were in such a sorry condition that the animal which Nehemiah rode could not navigate the path and he was forced to walk.*

- *We must rebuild our devotional lives so that prayer and meditation on the Word of God becomes second nature and is not a strain or a tedious effort.*

¹⁵So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.

¹⁶And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

- *As Nehemiah looked on the ruins of God's people he was not despondent. Within his heart his resolve grew to carry out the work of the Kingdom.*
- *Nehemiah studied the condition of the walls and gates and did not fool himself into thinking that the task ahead of him would be easy or without opposition, but his faith in what God had put in his heart did not waiver.*
- *Why didn't Nehemiah, when he first arrived in Jerusalem, tell the Jews what was on his heart or what he planned to do?*
- *He knew the people were down trodden and there would be plenty of skepticism and resistance at trying to take on such an undertaking after living in a state of failure and oppression for such a long time. The enormity of the task would have overwhelmed them.*
- *Nehemiah first of all strengthened himself so he was fully aware of their struggles and failures and could answer each one of their doubts with faith and vision.*

¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."

- *Step Nine: Impart faith and vision to others.*
- *When Nehemiah told the people why God sent him to Jerusalem he said two things:*
- *"I know your distress and how Jerusalem is in ruins and the defences of the city were burned with fire." He empathized and identified with their sorrows, losses, and heartbreaks.*
- *"Come and let us build the walls, we can do it together with God's help and remove this reproach that we have been living under all these years." He imparted faith and encouragement.*

- *Many Christians are waiting for God to move and bring revival but God is waiting for us to move so that He can send revival.*
- *Revival does not come without the people of God dedicating themselves to prayer and seeking His face.*

¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

- *Step Ten: Encourage others with testimonies of God's faithfulness.*
- *"So they said, "Let us rise up and build." – The people responded with an answer of faith.*
- *"Then they set their hands to this good work." – The people not only spoke a word of faith, they immediately put their faith into action.*
- *It is important that once we make a decision to move on with God that we act on it immediately.*

¹⁹But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

²⁰So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

- *Step Eleven: Answer the mocking of the enemy with a confession of God's faithfulness.*
- *"they laughed at us and despised us" – The enemy will mock us and try to make us feel like we can never change or make progress.*
- *"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us" – Speak a confession of faith to quench the voices of mocking and unbelief.*
- *"therefore we His servants will arise and build" – Continue to add action to our faith and not allow hesitation to stop us.*
- *If we hesitate we are in danger of losing our momentum. Don't allow discouragement or doubt to distract us from the task the Lord has put before us.*
- *"but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem." – Do not give room for the enemy to get involved in what God is doing in you. Keep the work God is doing pure and do not allow the flesh to get involved.*

- *Pride and the flesh want to get involved when God is beginning to do something in our lives. We must be led, empowered, and directed by the Spirit and not to depend on our fleshly strength or worldly wisdom but move only by the power and the wisdom of God!*

Nehemiah 6:1–4 (NKJV)

¹Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates),

²that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.” But they thought to do me harm.

³So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”

⁴But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

- *Step Twelve: Do not compromise or allow the enemy to distract us from the work God has given us.*
- “Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.” – *The enemy will use flattery or other means to distract us from the work God has given us to do. We can be so busy pleasing other people that we cease to please God.*

³So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”

- *Nehemiah kept his eyes on the goal and did not allow the enemy to distract or entrap him.*
- “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” *What a wonderful answer he gave to the enemies who tried to entrap him with flattery and distractions.*
- “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.” – *With true humility, faith, and resolve Nehemiah spoke a bold, vision-filled answer.*
- *Nehemiah didn’t exalt himself. He exalted the importance of God’s work.*
- “Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” – *Don’t stop the work of the Lord to engage the flesh.*

⁴But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

- *The enemy will continue to try to distract us and discourage us. That is why the Bible says, “don’t grow weary in well doing for in due season you will reap the reward if we do not lose heart. (Galatians 6:9).*

Nehemiah 6:15-16 NKJV

¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.

¹⁶ And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

- *Here was a nation that had been beaten down by their enemies. Yet Nehemiah’s response of faith and resolve not to grow weary in the work of God so stirred the people that they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in only fifty-two days!*
- *Not only were the walls of Jerusalem built up! The faith of God’s people was built up! Their enemies were crushed and disheartened as they saw what Israel had accomplished as evidence that God was with them.*
- *We can either continue to live the status quo or step into the purposes that God has for us.*
- *From Nehemiah’s story we can learn never to underestimate the power of one person to change the world! Our supreme example is Jesus Christ, who changed the eternal destiny of every born again believer. Most everyone is familiar with Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke who have led tens of millions of people to Christ, but how many people could name the people who led Billy and Reinhard to faith in Christ? Great fruitfulness can come from the smallest seed.*
- *We don’t need to wait on God to awaken us because it is God who is waiting on us to respond to Him.*
- *We don’t need to pray and wait on God until He restores us to our first love. He is waiting on us to stir up our first love by repenting and turning away from our distractions and turning our attention and hearts back to Him. “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:4-5).*
- *We don’t need to wait on God until He removes our lukewarmness. We simply have to turn to Him and remember and rejoice in all that He has done for us through Jesus Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection!*