

LIFE

JOHN X:X
LIFE MINISTRIES TODAY INC

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WORDS FROM OUR PRESIDENT....

"Producing or Bearing Fruit?"

There is a significant difference between **producing** and **bearing** fruit. The former focuses on my work for God, the latter on God's work through me.

John 15:1-17. In these 17 verses, 7 distinct times Christ communicates we are to "bear Fruit." Christ tells us that His Father is glorified by us if we "bear much fruit" (vs 9). Furthermore, in "bearing fruit" Christ's joy would be in us, and our joy will be made full (vs 11).

Amazingly, the "church" has misconstrued "bearing" fruit with "Producing" fruit. There is a significant difference between producing and bearing fruit. The former focuses on my work for God, the latter on God's work through me. "Producing" leads to spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical burnout.



Correctly understanding "bearing fruit" is the prerequisite to Abide. In the 17 verses, Christ says 11 times we are to Abide. Abide communicates an intimacy in relationship. Christ illustrates this in verse 9, "you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. The celebration of Christmas is the celebration of the invitation to humanity of a restoration of intimate relationship with God that was lost in the garden. God communicates this in 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18 (Amplified version).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior, he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual awakening brings a new life]. But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] ...”

Years ago, (1985) I attended a conference in Texas and was privileged to listen to Peter Lord, a pastor from Titusville, Florida. He was a unique speaker. One thing he said, and I quote “Remember, whatever your goal, wherever you go... Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole! In other words, Keep the main thing the main thing!” The “main thing?” Abide in His love.

The heartbeat of LMT is coming alongside those who are “frustrated and worn out.” Sharing with them the glorious truth that we are to be **“Bearing Fruit”** by **“Abiding in the vine, who is Christ”**.



A good friend and board member of LMT has shared with me a book that I would highly recommend to you. The author of the book, Rick Lawrance, in my opinion captures so well the difference between producing and bearing fruit. “Editing Jesus: Confronting the Distorted Faith of the American Church” by Rick Lawrence. Here are a few quotations from his book.

“By setting our sights on mastering biblical principles, embracing the understand-and-apply mindset for “personal transformation,” we are unconsciously “trying to do Christianity without Him” by investing ourselves in try-harder-to-do-better mechanics, ... When we do, we edit out Jesus’ central mission in our life—the restoration of relational intimacy with the Trinity.

“Jesus didn’t come to help us perform better in life; He came to reestablish a bride/ bridegroom relationship with His beloveds. As intimacy is restored, we gain access to the life of Jesus, which naturally produces a bumper-crop of fruit in our life. This is the fruit that understanding and applying our principles promises to produce but can’t apart from a source of strength that is far beyond our own.”

“
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“When we “yoke” ourselves to the understand-and-apply strategy, we are trying to pull an over-filled oxcart (piled with moral and religious expectations) in our own strength—our poor “performance” is no surprise, because our willpower is not up to the task. But Jesus is not prodding us to try harder to be better—He’s inviting us to abide in Him, living out of His strength as we “take on His yoke.”

“He says: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light” (Matt. 11: 28–30).”



A focus on mastering principles, in contrast, means we try harder and harder to master our human will. It’s a test of our core strength, with each new principle added to our oxcart making it harder to pull. But this willpower-based approach to achieving goodness, fueled by demanding disciplines that are impossible for us to maintain, is the very practice Jesus lambasted in the Pharisees, over and over: “[Religious leaders] crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden” (Matt. 23: 4). The Pharisees, Jesus makes clear, have replaced worship—or beholding the beauty of God—with “religious demands.” They have made religious performance, or trying harder to be better, into a god.”

As you celebrate Christmas this year, remember that Christ’s purpose in his birth, was to restore us to an intimate, “abiding” relationship with him that we celebrate every second of every day.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28–30 Message bible.

In Him,
Bruce Hogarth

Deliverance is Coming

BY : JAMIE ODEM

"I turn forty next week," I mentioned to Bruce as our session was closing. "Forty will be your year of deliverance," he said. I scoffed and rolled my eyes. The last thing I believed is that I would find deliverance in the next 12 months.

I had been meeting with Bruce weekly since the summer, and we were diving deep into my emotional past to understand why I felt so defective, so broken, so loathsome. I hated myself, and that had become a rampant problem in my marriage and in my relationship with my son. I wrote in my journal "I'm hideous and worthless and angry, and I'm a cancer to my family. And maybe there is freedom and deliverance but I can't see it, I can't find it. I'm hurting those I love the most. HELP!!"

"And help was there – Bruce Hogarth was my counselor, my guide, my professor. Week by week, we uncovered the reasons for my shame. He taught me the truth about who God is.

The process was grueling, to be frank. I learned about codependency and narcissism. I learned the definitions of grace and mercy. I learned how others' actions had shaped my identity into its shame-based core. And I learned how to forgive them.

"Full
surrender is
full peace.
Surrender is
the source of
true peace."



Out loud, in prayer, in detail forgiveness. In February, I started to gain some momentum with my new identity, with a deep dive into Ezekiel 36. In April, blessed relief, I forgave myself. In July, the Lord brought me to a place of surrender: the most joyful place, the Garden of Eden. I was the prodigal who returned home.

I turn 41 this week. Guess what? Bruce was right. The Lord delivered me in my fortieth year. From loathsome to beloved. "And they were lovely because he loved them" is how the Jesus Storybook Bible describes creation. I claim that for myself now. I am lovely because He loves me. And I know deeply that "Full surrender is full peace. Surrender is the source of true peace."

Here's the best part: as I continue to struggle with various issues, I understand how to help myself. Bruce Hogarth, through his work at Life Ministries Today, was the professor who taught me the theology and the process. He was the counselor who held me accountable for the false things I believed about myself. He was the guide who pressed ahead on the rocky terrain of facing my demons and finding Christ on the other side. I am different now. Don't hesitate to do the same work with Life Ministries Today, though it will be daunting. **Deliverance is waiting.**



Meet Our Team

Discipleship Counselors

- Bruce Hogarth, President.
- Connie Cobb
- Larry Watkins
- Ginny Johnson

Office

Administration • Teresa Hogarth

REASONS TO CELEBRATE



219 clients
seen



48 NEW clients
out of the 219



1,249 Hrs of
counseling



2 couples
Pre-Marital
sessions



2 weddings
officiated



AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTNER WITH LMT

OUR MISSION

To walk alongside individuals, couples and families through the process that encourages them to know and experience freedom in Christ as proclaimed in *John 10:10*

Countless lives are being **transformed**, families **restored** and relationships **healed** through discipleship counseling and small group relationships. We humbly thank each of our supporters for your generous gifts to this ministry.

Life Ministries Today is a 501(c)(3) non-profit ministry. Donations may be made online or mailed to the LMT address.

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consider a financial gift?**

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Thank you!**