

CLEAR VISION

CENTER FOR LIFE ENRICHMENT

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”
 - Galatians 5:22-23

Show Me the Fruit!

Soul Food

By Rich Blue

What is it that sets apart those individuals in history who have had the greatest impact for good? I believe that one of the key factors is their availability to be used by God. From the very beginning of time, God has been working through people who were empowered by His Spirit. In the same way Christians believe that God embodied Himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, so Jesus promised his disciples that

...that we are partnering with God to be increasingly more loving, joyful, peace-filled and more.

after his resurrection he would manifest himself to them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Our next series of feature articles in *CLear Vision* will be focusing on the

Fruit of the Spirit. This phrase is taken from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church at

Galatia. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22, 23) Paul referred to these character qualities as evidence of the Spirit’s work in our lives. We will be reflecting on how we can grow in the genuine manifestation of these dynamic qualities.

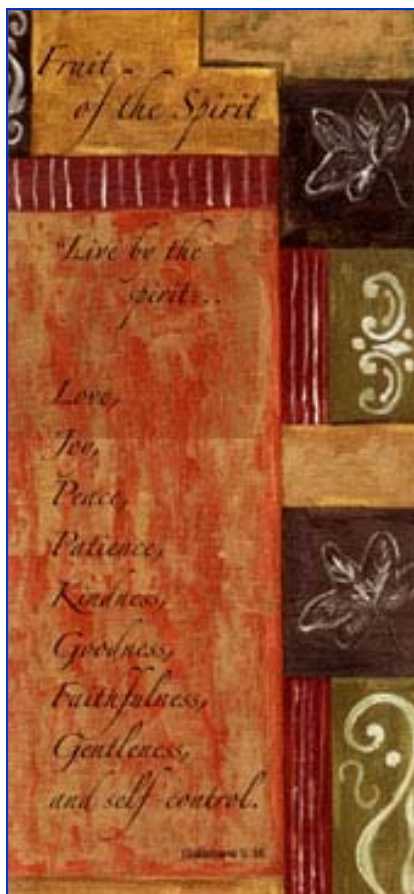
In the Gospel of John, chapter 15, Jesus spoke of our relationship with God being analogous to a grape vine and its branches. Jesus said that he was like the vine and we were like the branches. A branch is not responsible to generate fruit—instead

the branch is primarily responsible to remain connected to (abide in) the vine. If the branch abides in the vine, then the natural byproduct of that relationship will be fruit. The branch’s job is to bear the fruit not create it. The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence in our character that God is doing His work in us—that we are partnering with God to be increasingly more loving, joyful, peace-filled and more.

This process of bearing fruit is deceptively simple. Allowing God to work in and through us involves activating a dynamic balance, much like two people playing on a seesaw, where we alternate between relying on God doing His part while we are striving to do ours. Throughout this series of articles we will be exploring what it means to trust God and learning what can do to multiply our harvest.

There are times when each of us takes shortcuts in our attempt to “bear” fruit. We strive to appear

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Resolutions. Revulsions? Revolution!

By Bob Wright

In December if you talked to 10 people who made resolutions last January you'd be lucky to find one who succeeded completely.

What Are Resolutions?

Webster gives synonyms for resolution as: determined, conclude, fixed purpose, make up one's mind, decisive step. First of all, most New Year's resolutions aren't...that is, they are not resolutions. They lack the deciding qualities: instead of determining they are often desperations; instead of concluding they are generally confusing; instead of fixing purpose they fix indictments; instead of making up one's mind they become lies to ourselves; instead of decisive steps they are too often indecisive flops.

Why Resolutions?

There are still good reasons to make resolutions. The New Year is a time for review, renewal and looking forward. Resolutions are a natural conclusion to this process. An honest review of our past year including self-acceptance, understanding and compassion for ourselves, can lead to self-renewal, regeneration and a more fulfilling coming year.

Why Resolutions Don't Work

The primary problem in resolutions is failure to follow the process

of review, renewal and self-acceptance. Furthermore, people tend to make their resolutions in the negative. "I will not smoke." To not smoke is a 'non-thing.' It does not provide the person with a healthy activity to move towards or engage in. "Not eating sweets" is also a non-thing, however, eating more healthy foods, on the other hand, gives us something to sink our teeth into.

We also tend to make numerous and overly ambitious resolutions. This leads us to lose focus and to lose heart. For example, when someone who has not been able to quit smoking for more than a week makes a resolution to quit smoking forever, he or she diminishes the chances of success. A resolution to quit for a week and engage in some healthy activity instead offers a greater chance of success.

Effective Resolutions Are...

- ◆ A natural conclusion to the review, renewal, acceptance, forgiveness and looking forward process. Just as fruit ripens in its own time, certain resolutions can be ripe and appropriate for harvest;
- ◆ Do-able , realistic, manageable;
- ◆ Positive intentions communicated to others to allow encouragement and support.

If you do not forgive and accept yourself, your internal self will likely rebel. If you do accept your shortcomings, you likely will avoid setting up internal conflict.

We see this in weight problems. Frequently overweight people torture themselves year after year promising new wardrobes when they lose enough weight. Failing to lose the weight required and despairing, some people give up and buy the clothes anyway. (continued on page 3)

How To Make Successful Resolutions

Prepare. Review ahead of time.

Consider and discuss possibilities **Identify** stumbling blocks and ways you would sabotage those activities.

Discuss this with friends and enlist their support in your success. Let them know they are not responsible for your success. You want encouragement and help to stay conscious and accept yourself.

Examine your solutions for the way that they follow the natural flow of review, renewal and forward focus. Have you forgiven and accepted yourself for not doing them earlier?

Groups

CLE has a variety of groups to choose from. Please contact Christina at (847) 272-3684 ext. 10 if you would like more information about a specific group.

Graduate <i>(4th Wed. of the month)</i>	Assignment <i>(Mon. & Tues.)</i>	Couples <i>(2nd Fri. of the month)</i>	Career Enhancement <i>(every other Tuesday)</i>	Men's <i>(Friday)</i>
Mom's <i>(Tuesday)</i>	Pastor's <i>(every other Thursday)</i>	Running Club <i>(1st Sat. of the month)</i>	Sage Sisters <i>(3rd Sat. of the month)</i>	

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When they do this for their heavy bodies rather than waiting for the promised day of skinniness they give themselves a sign of self-acceptance and unconditional acknowledgment. It is not uncommon following this to see people easily and naturally lose weight.

When Not to Resolve

- ◆ When the issue is not ripe or support is missing.
- ◆ When the chances of success or risk are not balanced by an equal or greater potential for gain.

How To Keep Resolutions

- ◆ Write them down.
- ◆ Review them regularly. Some people keep a journal.
- ◆ Anticipate slips and plan how you will re-orient when you falter.
- ◆ Genuinely reconsider your

commitment when you achieve these milestones. Be open to the possibility of declaring yourself a success to-date and discontinuing the activity. Without the right to choose, your internal self will feel forced and likely rebel.

- ◆ Include others not only in your original analysis but in ongoing coaching at your milestone reviews.
- ◆ Use affirmations. Affirmations are sentences or phrases of meaning or encouragement that you repeat to yourself. People frequently use affirmations to get themselves over difficult humps. For example, dieters will write affirmations on their refrigerator such as "I love and accept myself". Underneath that, they might write a question "Is the food you are about to eat really nourishment or is it self-rejection?"

What Is Success?

If you achieve your goal, this is success. Review, learn your lessons and celebrate. If you missed your goal, succeed by reviewing the process and learning the lessons available. Celebrate your positive intention and effort. No matter how short you fall of your goal, you make progress. You have moved toward your ultimate heart's desire in some way.

A story is told of Thomas Edison whose friends poked fun by asking if he had invented that electric sun he had been talking so wildly about. In good humor, he would respond to them, "No, I sure haven't. But I found five ways not to do it today." Be like Edison...

Discover the victory in everything you do as you learn and grow.

Show Me the Fruit! Continued from page 1

more spiritual than we are, putting on masks of patience or joy when we are actually feeling angry or sad. Every fruit of the Spirit has its counterfeit and we must first acknowledge the truth of where we are before we can get to where we want to be. Many times we are unable to see our own incongruity and need the loving feedback of others to detect our hypocrisy. One of the most powerful tools we use at CLE to increase our fruitfulness is to share **truth** with one another. As my mentor, Bob Wright, believes, *"Truth is love."*

We are experiencing a bountiful harvest resulting from diverse people joining together in groups and sharing truth with each other about how they see themselves working with and against the Spirit. This truth-telling crosses all boundaries of faith, race and socio-economic

standing. Jews are sharpening the spiritual swords of Evangelicals and vice-versa. *When we are telling truth to one another we are swimming with the current of God's Spirit and increasing the harvest of personal, spiritual and societal transformation.*

Jump in—Join us—Taste and see the amazing exhilaration of God transforming our lives and our world!

"When good men die, their goodness does not perish but lives, though they are gone. As for the bad, all that was theirs dies and is buried with them." Euripides



Men's Morning

Men of Character

(three part series)

Courageous to Risk

The second workshop in this Men of Character series is entitled, "Courageous to Risk." In the first workshop we examined who our life heroes were and identified the core values we want to exemplify in everything we do in our lives. With these core values in mind, in this next workshop we are going to learn how to use BHAG's (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) to inspire us to go for more in our lives. We are going to band together as men to support each other in going for what we have only been willing to dream about—to risk the impossible and thus unleash the supportive power of providence.

COST: \$125

Includes continental breakfast

WHEN: Saturday January 20, 2007

7:30 – 10:30 am

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