

## **Bearing Fruit That Lasts**

### **Ready:**

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." - John 15:16

### **Set**

Dan Wooldridge has been bearing fruit that lasts for over 8 decades! The former football coach, football and basketball referee and 21-year Commissioner of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference, was also instrumental in helping establish FCA in the Roanoke Valley over 50 years ago. His personal sacrifice, persistence and perseverance coupled with a desire to bring God's game plan into athletics is an excellent example of bearing fruit that lasts!

Wooldridge worked hard, very often behind the scenes, to bring sports and Christian faith together, going as far as taking out personal loans back in the 70's to send student athletes to FCA camps. His heart was set on making an impact for Christ in the lives of coaches and athletes and it still is to this day!

As Christian coaches and athletes, we desire to bear fruit for God's Kingdom, to be a contributor on His winning team. In John 15, Jesus tells us that He chose us and appointed us to go and bear lasting fruit. Not temporal or seasonal but fruit which lasts a long time.

One of the most important elements in bearing lasting fruit is the soil. In Luke 8 Jesus tells His followers the parable of the sower and the four types of soil. Consider what kind of fruit would be born from seed planted in these different soils. Clearly, the first two would not even bear fruit because the plant would die. The third soil would likely bear some fruit but it would not be healthy from being choked out by the weeds.

Sometimes as Christian coaches and athletes we see ourselves as the fourth, fertile soil; rich, fertile and bountifully fruitful. However, it's easy in today's culture to get caught up in the busyness, worries, pleasures and affirmations of the world. If we're not careful we end up becoming more like the third soil, bearing little or unhealthy fruit from being choked out by the world's ways.

God is the Master Gardener and He prunes us so that we can be more fruitful (John 15). Our goal and challenge is to stay connected to the life giving vine, Jesus Christ. We cultivate that rich, fertile soil by staying in God's Word (the Seed) daily, spending time in His presence, listening to His voice and being involved in fellowship and discipleship with other believers. That leads to tilling the soil of our hearts, planting good seeds, watering and establishing strong roots that will bear lasting fruit. Healthy roots lead to healthy fruit.

God is faithful! He does the growing and bearing of fruit that lasts when the soil of our hearts has been prepared. Yes, it does take sacrifice and hard work but if we are faithful and disciplined, persevering in the spiritual disciplines, God will produce a bountiful crop of lasting fruit through us.

Still bearing fruit that lasts, Dan continues to serve on the local FCA board! He also continues to use his experience and influence for God's Kingdom work to advance the ministry of FCA. The soil he cultivated and the seeds he planted over 50 years ago are still bearing fruit that has lasted through generations!

## Go

1. As a coach or athlete, which spiritual disciplines could you practice more to cultivate your soil?
2. How can you help cultivate good soil in the lives of the coaches and athletes that you serve?
3. Take an honest assessment of your heart and your life, what kind of soil do you see?
4. What weeds in your life may be choking out the fruitfulness God wants to produce through you?

## Workout

John 15:1-17; Luke 8:1-15

## Overtime

Lord, I confess to you that sometimes the world presses in on me and I allow worry, busyness and unhealthy priorities and pleasures to creep in. Forgive me Father. Help me to dig deep into the soil of my heart and cultivate it so that good, healthy roots are established and you can bear lasting fruit through me. I surrender my life to you, the Master Gardener. In Jesus name, Amen.

## Bible Reference:

John 15:1-17

Luke 8:1-15



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