

# Moving the Needle

## Part 2: The Value of Fruitfulness

PETER DEWITT  
AGATHOS CHURCH  
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### Full Text (for reading on your own)

#### *Stepping out in Ministry*

When you step up, the Lord steps up. When you step out to minister to someone, He steps up. That's a key to ministry. You have to "do it." And when you "do it" He meets you in it. That's one of the ways you stir the prophetic. The more you speak to people about the weather, their careers, about being a father ... speak to them about something with a heart of love and watch what the Holy Spirit gives you! You have to step out!

#### *A Measurable More*

It's time to move the needle! That means that it is time for more. If you think of a speedometer or a pressure valve, there's a needle and when that needle moves it means "increase" in speed or pressure. So, when I heard the Lord say "it's time to move the needle" I knew what He was quickening to my spirit ... it's time for more! It's time for increase! The other thing that it told me was that it is time for "a measurable more" because a speedometer has demarcators on it that cause you to not only know that you are going faster but you also know how much faster you are going! A pressure valve has lines on it that let you know that you've gone from 40 PSI to 60 PSI to 80 PSI to 100 PSI.

What do you want to see more of in your life - in your walk with God? Personally, I often want something just bad enough that I pray to God but I don't want it bad enough that I keep praying! John Wimber used to tell people that wanted to see healing miracles in their ministry to pray for 500 people's healing and then come back to see him if they hadn't seen anyone healed yet. I doubt anyone made it back to him without success! For me, it took about 100 times in which I prayed for people before I saw someone supernaturally healed before my eyes. An amazing thing happens in ministry when we step out - we see breakthrough. Too many of us are trying to see breakthrough from our Lazy Boy recliners.

I have had seasons where I have seen more people healed physically and I have had seasons that are more like a dry spell in that regard. And I can tell you why I have a dry spell when I have had one ... because I wasn't praying for many people's healing then ... because I don't do it! It is so simple! That is not meant to be condemning. In fact, it is encouraging to me. There is nothing standing between me and seeing more healing again other than focus!

I have been stirred to press back into healing. To focus on the power of God again. I am hungrier than I have EVER been for that element of my walk with God - for that element of being His disciple. And one night I was recently crying out to him for hours about wanting “more” and I heard nothing but crickets it seemed. I finally realized that and said “God you aren’t going to answer this prayer tonight, are you?” And then I heard the Lord say “I want you to be this hungry 3 months from now.” He gave me an assignment.

Sometimes we get the pressure of some hope that starts to rise in our hearts and instead of letting that hope rise in our hearts to the point that it has to overflow into a faith-filled prayer, we chuck a half-hearted prayer to God just to relieve the growing pressure of hope in our hearts ... to “blow off some steam.” But what that does is that it actually cuts the legs out from underneath something that the Lord is wanting to develop in you such that you get to the point that you will pay the price (no matter what the cost) to see it come to pass. We need to pray for and steward hunger!

### *A Testimony from Kerri*

Kerri had chronic low back pain since she was 16 (she had a waterskiing accident). Every day on a pain scale of 0 to 10, she was always at least a 2. For years and years it just hurt all the time. Sometimes, about once a year, it would lock up and she would have to miss a week of work. If she did too much exercise or if she sneezed wrong, she never knew when it would go out. So, at church in the park on May 29th, Kerri prayed with her husband about her back.

A week later, at church, Kerri realized that her back hadn’t hurt in a whole week! What’s significant about that is that she had actually stepped up her exercise regimen and gone 5 days in a row ... which normally would be too much for her back. When she shared this testimony with me, I asked her to share it with the whole church.

After saying she would share her testimony with the church, Kerri found herself worried that she could “lose her healing” prior to giving the testimony. Her husband encouraged her (based on a testimony of a healed back that he had) to not allow the devil to steal her testimony.

So, what has Kerri done? She has worked out 5 days a week for 3 weeks in a row now with ZERO PAIN! Amen! Praise You God!

When you expect more, you get more! And this is a season for a measurable more! It’s time to move the needle.

### *The Value of Fruitfulness*

I used to have anxiety so bad as an unbeliever. And when I got saved, I still had anxiety because I still thought the same. I remember as a new believer that a great man of God once saw me working on my school work and he encouraged me that next time, before I worked I should pray “Father, I ask for your blessing on my work now, in Jesus’ Name!” Fast forward a few years and one of my co-workers who I had worked along side for a few years told another person “Peter is unflappable.”

That's fruitfulness! The things I was getting in the Word of God had turned me from anxiety-ridden into "unflappable." On another occasion, I heard that someone would try to walk past me if they wanted to feel better. That's fruit! Now, I haven't heard that again and I want to see more of that. But I'll take it as a first fruit!

Think about it, in Acts people wanted to get in Peter's shadow so that they would be healed. The lady that touched the hem of Jesus' garment to be healed of the issue of blood had to fight through a crowd to get to Him! Why was the crowd pressing in upon Jesus? Because they wanted to be right next to Him! He was so conspicuously effervescent with the presence of God that He couldn't get any personal space! They tracked Him down even when He went away to pray ... just to be next to Him! That's fruitfulness! We ought to have noticeable, measurable, quantifiable fruit in our lives!

Have you ever heard the phrase that someone is "so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good?" Why does that phrase exist? It exists because it is sometimes true. But what about Jesus? Was He heavenly minded? Of course! He never did anything except what He saw the Father doing! He set His mind only on the things above - on the things of the Father! Was He of earthly good? YES! Think about the lady who was healed of the issue of blood after 12 years and her entire savings account had been spent in sickness and on trying to heal that sickness! Think about Zacchaeus who had spent his whole life stealing and dealing with the condemnation of being a crook. I am sure he did not sleep well at night before Jesus came into his life.

So, what's the difference? Why are some people so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good? Why was Jesus so heavenly minded AND was of great earthly good? The difference is that Jesus valued fruitfulness! He expected His relationship with God to make an impact in the lives of others!

A religious spirit tries to replace fruit with rhetoric. The gospel calls for fruitfulness, but the religious spirit disarms that clear call for fruitfulness and then tries to explain with theology that somehow you are correct to not be fruitful! For instance, if in a "dry spell" where I was not seeing people healed I started thinking "well there are just different seasons in the Lord" that gives me opportunity to shrink back from the work of a disciple by means of a spiritual excuse.

The most extreme form of this (as it relates to healing) is the theology that says that there are no more signs and wonders after the apostles. Cessationist theology has tried to prove that the power of God is not for today. Scripture says the power of God is AS MUCH FOR TODAY as it was for the the apostles. But the tendency can be to try to use rhetoric to explain away why we are not seeing the fruit!

1 Cor. 4:20 says *"for the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power!"* Fruitfulness is a major issue in the kingdom. Life-Changing power and results are a major issue in the kingdom! The idea that if I don't produce any fruit that it is a neutral thing with God is WRONG! If you have a relationship with God and you produce no fruit, it is not neutral. It is negative. It's bad. God's opposed to it! It's

not neutral. Jesus even said you would no the false prophets by their fruit! You can't get good fruit from a bad root and you can't get bad fruit from a good root!

Wherever you are fine with fruitlessness is where the enemy will steal from you in your walk with God. We do not want to succumb to a religious spirit that somehow explains away fruitfulness! Those that are the most fruitful in the Kingdom of God are not so fruitful because they have been operating in a gift the whole time. They are so fruitful because they know what the Word of God says, they believe it, and the practice it! And when they don't see it work in their lives they press in, pray, and fast about it until they see it.

Jn. 10:10 tells us that Jesus came to give life and life abundantly but the enemy has come to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus came to give you salvation life, and then once you are saved, to give you life more abundantly! So, the enemy opposes people being saved and then once they are saved he opposes the abundant life (primarily through wrong theology). Wherever you are fine with fruitlessness is where the enemy will steal from you. Imagine a business that was fine without having profit in some sector of its business. Do you think they are going to be profitable in that? They have to demand profit in order to see profit. What you expect is what you'll get. If we don't know what we're going for, we won't get there!

We have to value fruitfulness. Fruitfulness matters. Jesus said in Jn. 10:37 that if He didn't do the works of the Father that we should not believe Him! Jesus set the standard. That's the standard. The standard is not your brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone that came to Jesus was healed. That's the standard. That's the standard for fruitfulness. Peter had a money problem and Jesus said "go catch a fish, there will be a coin in its mouth." That's the standard. The standard is not neutral. The standard is fruitfulness!

Fruitfulness is a big deal to God! He expects it from us! Look at Luke 17:7-10 and allow it to truly minister to your heart and refine your disposition about bearing fruit for your Lord Jesus:

*And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"*

### A Lesson from the Fig Tree

In Mark 11, we read a lesson from a fig tree:

*And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."*

*And His disciples heard it .... Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away. 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. (Mark 11:12-14 and 20-24)*

In Mark 11:1 Jesus is making his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people are crying "Hosanna!" Jesus is later hungry, sees a fig tree and goes over to it, but finds no fruit ... just leaves. So, he curses the fig tree to it's roots and it dries up between then and the next morning. (An interesting note is that fig trees have one of the deepest root system of any tree in the world). The disciples said "wow, you cursed it and it died!" Jesus then explained to them how faith works. But there is another lesson in this story as well.

Right after the fig tree is found dead, Jesus goes into the temple and cleanses the temple of the money changers. This angered the Pharisees and the scribes and they sought to find a way to trip Him up. Jesus, after deflecting their attempt to trap Him in His words tells them a parable about a man who planted a vineyard and moved away into a far country. That man sent a succession of servants back to that vineyard in order to get fruit from it. They beat and stoned those servants. Finally the owner of the vineyard thought to send His only Begotten Son. He decided to send Him thinking "surely they will respect Him." So the workers of the vineyard say "this is the heir, let's kill Him!"

So, in this sequence in Mark 11 and 12, Jesus came to Jerusalem, cursed a fruitless fig tree, opposed the Pharisees, and then told them a parable about a fruitless vineyard. It's all connected! So, Jesus really cursed a real fig tree and it died by the next morning. But what did the fig tree represent? In Genesis 3:6-7 *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and **they sewed fig leaves** together and made themselves coverings."*

Fig leaves represent trying to make your own righteousness - trying to cover your own sin. That fig tree represented self-righteousness which is what the Pharisees were. The Pharisees were whitewashed tombs with bones inside ... sheep on the outside, wolves on the inside ... all leaves NO FRUIT!

A self-righteous root will never bear kingdom fruit! On one hand, in Mark 11:20-24 Jesus is explaining His process of faith about how He cursed the physical fig tree. And, on the other hand He is also creating a contrast. He was teaching us how to bear the fruit of faith in God. *"Have faith*

*in God.*” Not in yourself! You cannot produce faithful fruit like this with a self-righteous root. God’s curse is on self-righteousness. God’s blessing is on another root!

### *The Blessed Root!*

Jesus said “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, **bears much fruit**; for without Me you can do nothing.*” (Jn 15:5) Do you see the contrast between the fruitless fig tree and us remaining in Christ? If you want to operate in mountain moving faith; if you want to see fruit in your life, you cannot be operating with your own root. You have to be connected to the vine!

“*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*” (Jn 15:6) That sounds like the fig tree being cursed, doesn’t it!

“*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.***” (Jn. 15:7-8) His disciples bear much fruit!

Fruitlessness in the Kingdom is caused by being your own root - trusting in yourself. Fruitfulness is caused by being in Christ - and knowing it!

### *Send Spies into the Promised Land!*

In Numbers 13, God tells Moses to send spies into the promised land. They were commissioned to go into the promised land to bring the fruit of that land back to the people to encourage them to boldly venture into the promised land.

In Christ, we are supposed to now be the ones venturing into Heaven in order to bring the fruit of Heaven back to people who do not yet know Christ or who do not yet know the promised land in order to entice them to come in to meet the Lord there! “*Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!*” We are supposed to be going in and getting the fruit and bringing it back out.

### *Time to Get Hungry!*

We have to get hungry! I have a deep respect for Pastor Bill Johnson’s ministry. They now see tremendous healings, signs, and wonders on what seems to be a daily basis. But he says it wasn’t always that way. In the late 70’s and early to mid 80’s he pressed into healing for 9 years as a pastor, but they never saw anyone healed. In 1987, Pastor Bill went to a John Wimber conference where many people were healed. Interestingly though, the teaching there was very similar to what Pastor Bill had been teaching his church.

But listen to what Bill Johnson says about the affect of that John Wimber conference on him:

“When I came back from the Wimber conference, I knew it was not an option - I couldn't back off ever again. Healing had to become a part of who we were. There will still seasons of ups and downs, but **I realized that I was obligated to require fruit for what I believed.** It's a hard thing to teach anybody about, because it's hard to describe what goes on inside of you. But there's almost this idea, *Wait a minute, I don't have to settle for fruitlessness.* And you cry out to God in private and you take risks in public, and that was it. My first miracle was in a store ...” (from *Healing Unplugged*, p. 24, bold mine)

### *What do you Have Faith For?*

What do you have faith rising for in your heart? What is something that you cannot do on your own? I know what I am going after! I am going after healings, miracles, and signs and wonders. I am bathing my mind in it. I am getting testimonies and reading teaching on it. I am going for it! What do you have faith for rising in your heart?

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) tells us that faith is a conviction. Faith is a conviction ... of things not yet seen. The Holy Spirit wants to convict you of the things you haven't seen yet. He wants to convict you that there's more. He wants to convict you of the things you haven't seen yet! And you will know that the “conviction of faith” is working in you when you start to get the point that you are like “I've GOT TO SEE THAT!” I've got to see that happen! We have to have breakthrough in our marriage ... We have to have breakthrough with our kids ... We have to have breakthrough in our finances ... We have to have breakthrough in our house ... We have to have breakthrough in my career ... We have to have breakthrough in healing ... We have to have breakthrough in the prophetic ... I have to have breakthrough in my relationship with God - with revelation from scripture and my intimacy with Him! We have to, we have to, we have to!

Faith is a conviction of things not yet seen. The Holy Spirit is wanting to convict you this morning of something you haven't seen yet - of something He wants you to see. And I want that conviction for more, that faith, that expectation to get so all over you that it clings to you like a static charged polyester shirt. That today and tomorrow and three months from now you can't stop thinking about it! Because that is when it is going to make a difference in your life ... when you can't stop thinking about it! When you get to the point like Bill Johnson said “I couldn't back off ever again.”

I pray that something would get on you from the Kingdom today! I can't do it; the Holy Spirit has to do it and you have to want Him to do it. It's a season of measurable more! It's a season of breakthrough! It's a season of first fruits! There is something that is coming up in our church (individually and corporately) ... there's more and I pray that the expectation would get all over you today such that you couldn't shake it. That the conviction for what we haven't seen yet would get on us as a body.

We don't all need to have the same focus. We're a body. Not everyone needs to be focused on the same breakthrough right now. What is your focus for breakthrough. What "has to happen!" in your life? I am not talking about small things. I am talking about real breakthrough that can only come from God! You need to steward and grow your hunger for that thing with God. You need to tend your appetite towards that. Sometimes you need to not eat quail in the wilderness so that you are actually hungry for milk and honey. I pray that the expectation of what the Lord's wanting to do would cling to you such that you cannot shake it! That your hunger would become so thick that you cannot have it any other way. The Lord will meet you in that moment and He is going to meet you in that moment!

### *Prophecy over Agathos from Mark Crawford*

*"Can I tell you, you have an incredible privilege as a group of people. You have a privilege in the days that are ahead of you to display something that a group of people do as a church of the Kingdom, the Kingdom coming. God has not called you to play church. God has not called you to be a people where you are just talking. He's called you to be a people who ARE the church. He's called you to be a people who are a people of action. He's called you to be a people where you'll see the Kingdom come, and you'll see His will being done on earth, unlike any other place. There is such an amazing calling and destiny around you guys, where it won't just be one or two of you, but there'll be a whole group of you-- all of you, all of you moving together."* (Given at Agathos Church, July 2013)



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## Text Summary (for reading as a group)

When you step up, the Lord steps up. It's time to move the needle! It's time for more! It's time for increase! It is time for "a measurable more." What do you want to see more of in your life - in your walk with God? We often want something just bad enough that I pray to God but I don't want it bad enough that I keep praying! John Wimber used to tell people that wanted to see healing miracles in their ministry to pray for 500 people's healing and then come back to see him if they hadn't seen anyone healed yet. An amazing thing happens in ministry when we step out - we see breakthrough. There is nothing standing between you and that breakthrough other than sustained focus on it with the Lord!

Sometimes when hope for a breakthrough begins to rise in our hearts, instead of letting that hope rise to the point that it has to overflow into a faith-filled prayer, we chuck a half-hearted prayer to God just to relieve the growing pressure of hope in our hearts ... to "blow off some steam." But what that does is that it actually cuts the legs out from underneath something that the Lord is wanting to develop in you such that you get to the point that you will pay the price (no matter what the cost) to see it come to pass. We need to pray for and steward hunger for our "measurable more!"

Kerri had chronic low back pain since she was 16 (she had a waterskiing accident). Every day on a pain scale of 0 to 10, she was always at least a 2. Sometimes, about once a year, it would lock up and she would have to miss a week of work. If she did too much exercise or if she sneezed wrong, she never knew when it would go out. So, at church in the park on May 29th, Kerri prayed with her husband about her back. A week later, at church, Kerri realized that her back hadn't hurt in a whole week! What's significant about that is that she had actually stepped up her exercise regimen and gone 5 days in a row ... which normally would be too much for her back. She has worked out 5 days a week for 3 weeks in a row now with ZERO PAIN! Amen! Praise You God!

When you expect more, you get more! And this is a season for a measurable more! It's time to move the needle. Jesus expected His relationship with His Father to make an impact in the lives of others, but a religious spirit tries to replace fruit with just words. 1 Cor. 4:20 says *"for the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power!"* Life-changing power and results are a major issue in the kingdom! We do not want to succumb to a religious spirit that somehow explains away fruitfulness! Those that are the most fruitful in the Kingdom of God know what the Word of God says, believe it, and practice it! And when they don't see it work in their lives they press in, pray, and fast about it until they see it.

Jn. 10:10 tells us that Jesus came to give life and life abundantly but the enemy has come to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus came to give you salvation life, and then once you are saved, to give you life more abundantly! So, the enemy opposes people being saved and then once they are saved he opposes the abundant life (primarily through wrong theology). Wherever you are fine with fruitlessness is where the enemy will steal from you. What you expect is what you'll get. We have to value fruitfulness. Jesus said in Jn. 10:37 that if He didn't do the works of the Father that we should

not believe Him! Jesus set the standard. That's the standard. The standard is not your brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone that came to Jesus was healed. That's the standard. That's the standard for fruitfulness. Peter had a money problem and Jesus said "go catch a fish, there will be a coin in its mouth." That's the standard. The standard is not neutral. The standard is fruitfulness! It is a scriptural abnormality to live a non-miraculous Christian life.

But the pressure is not on us to bear fruit! In Mark 11, we read a lesson from a fig tree which Jesus cursed because of its fruitlessness. What did the fig tree represent? The root of self-righteousness! Fig leaves represent trying to make your own righteousness - trying to cover your own sin. (see Gen. 3:6-7) A self-righteous root will never bear kingdom fruit!

God's curse is on self-righteousness, but God's blessing is on another root! Jesus said "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" (Jn 15:5) Do you see the contrast between the fruitless fig tree and us remaining in Christ? If you want to operate in mountain moving faith; if you want to see fruit in your life, you cannot be operating from your own root. You have to be connected to the vine! "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*" (Jn. 15:7-8) Jesus' disciples bear much fruit! Fruitlessness in the Kingdom is caused by being your own root - trusting in yourself. Fruitfulness is caused by being in Christ!

In Numbers 13, God tells Moses to send spies into the promised land. They were commissioned to go into the promised land to bring the fruit of that land back to the people to encourage them to boldly venture into the promised land. In Christ, we are supposed to now be the ones venturing into Heaven in order to bring the fruit of Heaven back to people who do not yet know Christ or who do not yet know the promised land in order to entice them to come in to meet the Lord there! "*Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!*" We are supposed to be going in and getting the fruit and bringing it back out. But to be successful in that role, we have to get hungry! Pastor Bill Johnson's ministry saw breakthrough in healing when he "realized that I was **obligated to require fruit** for what I believed" and thought "Wait a minute, ***I don't have to settle for fruitlessness.***"

What do you have faith rising for in your heart? Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) tells us that faith is a conviction. Faith is a conviction ... of things not yet seen. The Holy Spirit wants to convict you of the things you haven't seen yet. He wants to convict you that there's more. And you will know that the "conviction of faith" is working in you when you start to get the point that you are like "I've GOT TO SEE THAT!" We have to have breakthrough in our marriage ... We have to have breakthrough in healing ... I have to have breakthrough in my relationship with God! I pray that conviction for more, that faith, that expectation would get so all over you that it clings to you like a static charged polyester shirt. Because that is when it is going to make a difference in your life ... When you get to the point like Bill Johnson said "I couldn't back off ever again." May the expectation of what the Lord's wanting to do would cling to each of us such that we cannot shake it! May our hunger become so thick that we cannot have it any other way.

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## Points to Ponder . . .

- What scriptures show us that fruitfulness is essential?
- How does valuing fruitfulness increase our expectation in faith?
- How can we steward and increase expectation for what God is wanting to do?
- What are you hungry for with God? - OR - What do you want to be more hungry for with God?