

5. Help others to grow too.

<sup>2</sup> Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:2 (NKJV)

We said earlier that our works of service or good works or ministry begins in earnest only after we have come to spiritual maturity. However, they are still a critical part of the process of spiritual growth. That is, we cannot grow spiritually if we are not actively doing anything we can to help others to grow spiritually too.

The Lord Jesus teaches us in the passage above that we are only able to bear more fruit if we bear any fruit at all. Although this becomes obvious to us when we begin to perform ministry as mature believers, it is the truth of our entire walk with the Lord. We have to bear fruit to be able to bear more fruit.

To understand this, consider that the teachings of the Bible that we learn to grow to maturity necessarily lead our actions toward helping other believers and unbelievers to know the Lord and walk right with Him when we obey them. As we have already learned, believing and applying what we learn from the Bible changes our actions to mirror those of Jesus Christ. Thus, we become examples to others of the Christian walk. This is ministry too because we are teaching our observers with our actions what the Lord is pleased with and how He is able to transform those who listen to Him. Additionally, the things that we learn as we grow spiritually are sometimes direct commands to act in a certain way toward other people, especially fellow believers. Acting that way generally results in helping these people to come to know God and grow spiritually too. An example of this is when the Bible tells us to be generous to fellow believers who are in material need, obedience to this is direct ministry to our brothers and sisters in the truth.

Therefore, we do not wait until we feel spiritually mature before we begin to offer our help to fellow believers and unbelievers to receive the Gospel and grow spiritually. At every moment, we must be ready to use what we are learning to benefit other believers and unbelievers in any way that we can if they are willing to accept our benefit. As we do this, our spiritual growth is further accelerated.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NKJV)

A prime benefit of helping our brothers and sisters as we are growing spiritually is that we start to get an idea of what our spiritual gifts and inclinations are. The Lord presents us with opportunities for ministry as we grow spiritually. Our spiritual instincts will pick them up and react to them in ways that are increasingly unique to

us. As we respond in this way, we get an increasingly clearer idea of what our spiritual gifts and calling might be.

On the one hand, therefore, we grow in our understanding and use of the truths of the Bible as we help each other to do so. On the other, we learn quite a bit about ourselves by actually identifying and using the opportunities that God gives to us to help fellow believers and unbelievers to learn about Him and obey Him. This knowledge helps in shaping our future ministries too.