

Chapter 3

BAD FRUIT AND BAD ROOTS

The nice looking young man felt guilty and confused and deeply depressed as he stared at the picture of him and his ex-wife that was taken on their honeymoon. Their marriage had failed in great part because of his uncontrollable anger and raging temper. Several years had passed since their divorce and he still could not understand some things that had happened. He remembered times when he had completely lost control of himself and said and done inexcusable things that deeply wounded his wife. He felt apprehensive about picking himself up again to seek another chance at love. After a few more years, he finally felt that he was emotionally healed and that his faith in God had grown, and then he met a beautiful woman at church who was a committed Christian. They really hit it off well and seemed to be a perfect match for each other. They had an extended courtship that included premarital counseling, and he was confident that all would be well. After a lovely wedding, they escaped to Hawaii for their honeymoon. Ah, sweet bliss! On the third morning, in their suite, his bride accidentally dropped a pitcher of water on the floor. An irrational rage rose within him, and he began scathingly attacking her and calling her all sorts of names. She drew away from him in complete shock, and then her eyes filled with tears. He could see that something beautiful in her was dying. Still, he could not staunch the bitter words that flowed out of his mouth. Two years and many similar explosions later, he once again felt guilty and confused and deeply depressed as he stared at the picture of him and his second ex-wife on their honeymoon.

The Bible tells us again and again that the fruit of a tree, and similarly, that which emanates from a human heart or life, depends on what the tree or heart is rooted in. The Bible also seems to imply it is useless to try to correct or heal a particular weakness, sin, habit, compulsion, addiction, mental problem, emotional problem, or demonic problem unless one finds and deals with the root cause of that problem..

A universal spiritual principle is stated by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:17, “**Every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit.**”¹ A few of the many scriptural affirmations relating to this subject follow:

- “...if the root is holy, so are the branches.” (Romans 11:16) And remember that Jesus said, “*I am the Vine, you are the branches...*” (John 15:5)
- We should be rooted and grounded in love, and if we are rooted in love we will be able to comprehend, to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. (Ephesians 3:17, paraphrased) Paul is here reaffirming Jesus’ declaration that if our hearts are pure, we will be able to “see,” to perceive, to understand God. (Matthew 5:8)
- Paul declares that we should be rooted and built up in Christ. (Colossians 2:6)
- John the Baptist declared that when a tree does not bear good fruit, the axe is laid to the root of the tree, and the tree is thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:10)

What is good fruit? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.² Eugene Peterson renders this section of scripture in contemporary language: “But what happens when we live in God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like affection for others, exuberance about life, and serenity. We develop the willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a

basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.”³ If these good qualities consistently shine out of a human life, it indicates a life which is rooted and grounded in love. It is rooted and built up in Christ. I am not saying that people who are not Christians do not have any love or kindness or self-control. But for a person to exhibit love for his enemies, in the midst of persecution, is beyond what most of us can do apart from Christ. And who can find peace or joy without the Lord?

The Bible teaches that when we become Christians the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us and that the character traits of the Lord Jesus – the fruits of the Spirit – should now be flowing out of our inner person like a river of living water. However, it is crucial to realize that God never overrules our freedom. Thus, the Bible makes clear with each of the fruits that we must choose to so act. We are exhorted to love others, to walk in love, husbands – love your wives, love your enemies, and especially to love God. We are exhorted to rejoice; to have peace and to be peacemakers; to be kind; to be gentle; to exercise self-control. For instance, Colossians 3:12 says to “clothe yourself” or to “put on” many of the fruits of the Spirit, including kindness, humility, patience, love, and peace. Our clothes don’t jump out of the closet and onto our bodies. It takes an act of our will to clothe ourselves. A key scripture is Philippians 2:12, which tells us (you) “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” I believe that a key part of working out our salvation is by choosing to love, to have joy, to be peacemakers, to exercise self-control, and all of the expressions of the fruit of the Spirit, day by day, and moment by moment.

What is bad fruit in a human life? Galatians 5:19 lists the deeds of the flesh or the acts of the sinful nature as “*immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.*”(NAS) Eugene Peterson translates this list in everyday language as follows: “It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.” (The Message)

The third chapter of Colossians instructs us to “put to death” or to “put off” these acts of the sinful nature, specifically: “*immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, anger, malice, slander and abusive speech.*” Again, Paul is telling us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that overcoming the bad fruits of the sinful nature requires an ongoing decision of our will.

Note what Jesus said about this subject: “*For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*” (Luke 6:43-45) So, according to Jesus, what comes out of our mouth is a big part of the fruit of our life.

Could the same life produce good fruit and bad fruit? Yes, unfortunately that is true. James tells us, "*Out of the same mouth come forth both blessing and cursing*" and "*This should not be*".⁴

This is the dilemma in which we Christians find ourselves. We are sincere about our walk with Christ; we are serving Him not only in public but are seeking Him earnestly in prayer and searching His word; we are trying to be good and faithful spouses and good parents. We have no desire to be Pharisaical pretenders. Considering the lifestyles from which many of us came and the inevitable destruction that lay ahead, there has been a drastic turnaround and we are so grateful to Christ for rescuing us.

But we continue to struggle with "that problem" that won't go away. Perhaps that problem is a short fuse, our anger wounds and frightens those we love the most, and leaves us with a guilty conscience and feelings of hopelessness. Perhaps it is fear or depression that robs us of peace and security. Perhaps we can't seem to keep unclean images out of our minds and off our TV and computer screens. Perhaps it is an addiction to cigarettes, wine, prescription drugs, or gambling that we try to keep hidden from our friends (addictions trouble many Christians). Maybe we are getting uncomfortably and embarrassingly overweight and don't find the will power to do anything about it except on a short-term basis. Perhaps our problem is a foul, critical, or gossipy mouth. Or self-pity and a victim mentality.

This ugly list is comprised of bad fruit. And there are other negative things that can be included: mental problems, emotional problems, suicidal tendencies, chronic pain or sickness, a fascination with occultism and witchcraft. Do you perceive that this wisdom regarding bad fruits and bad roots from God's word is tremendously significant to every life?

Our assignment as Christian ministers, counselors, and friends is to discover the bad roots that cause the bad fruits in people's lives and to "lay the axe to the root of the tree".⁵ Since this statement is the central emphasis of this book, let me repeat it:

OUR ASSIGNMENT AS CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, COUNSELORS, AND FRIENDS IS TO DISCOVER THE BAD ROOTS THAT CAUSE THE BAD FRUITS IN PEOPLE'S LIVES AND TO LAY THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF THE TREE.

Here I list some bad roots hidden in people's lives, which are identified in this book:

- unforgiveness and judgments against others
- inner vows
- trauma
- curses of several different kinds
 - word curses spoken to you or about you
 - word curses spoken by you against others
 - generational sins and iniquity
 - witchcraft, pacts, occultic sins including drugs and alcohol.
- soul ties
- demonization

Let me state emphatically that this ministry of cutting bad roots to set the prisoners free, is not a magic shortcut to spiritual maturity. The bad roots in people's lives might be compared to dandelions in a lawn, or better yet to Russian Olive trees which have invaded wetlands and riverbanks in Colorado and other states.

We know that cutting the top off a dandelion does not solve the problem. The roots have to be dug out or killed with an application of weed killer. But the problem of Russian Olive trees (or of Mesquite trees in the southwest) is a different matter. Russian Olive trees are an environmental disaster. They grow rapidly, use a disproportionate amount of water, and crowd out native species. When the tops are cut off, the roots spread even more rapidly, resulting in an impenetrable tangle of brush, with 2 inch thorns. What a picture of the spiritual condition of many people! They become conscious of the bad fruit in their lives which is destroying peace, health, and relationships. “No problem!” they say. “I’ll just stop that habit, that addiction, that destructive relationship.” Then they discover that good intentions are not enough, that will power is not enough, that self-help books and psychologists and psychiatrists are not enough, that even repentance and prayer are not enough in some situations. Some of the bad roots in people’s lives are insidious, deeply entangled in their personality, and of long duration. They are “land” that has been occupied and controlled by the enemy for years, perhaps for a lifetime, perhaps for generations of lifetimes.

The ministry of inner healing and deliverance is spiritual warfare. I have seen people instantly set free, healed, and liberated on many levels using these Biblical principles. I have also seen people who were not instantly set free but who had to pray and struggle and cry out to God and seek help from many ministries. Overcoming these enemies in some instances is like the Israelite army that defeated Jericho. They marched around the city as God prescribed, shouted, and “Boom!” the wall fell down flat. On other occasions it is more like the way the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem: one stone at a time. Why the difference? We may have insight and revelation at times, but ultimately God only knows.

Some believe the inner healing and deliverance ministry is not Scriptural and unnecessary. They say that all Christians need is more faith and more Bible study. I respond, if that approach works for you and those you minister to are really set free, praise be to God! And I know of ministries such as Campus Crusade and others who do not use the inner healing and deliverance model – at least in the way I have learned to do it - that have great success. But I have ministered to many who did not find freedom in that way and finally admitted that they were simply denying reality. I have even ministered to the families of spiritual leaders who were preaching against inner healing and deliverance, and who were publicly confessing their freedom and victory in Christ, and yet their families were destroyed by anger, control, addictions, or hidden sexual sins. Jesus said the truth will set you free! I believe the ministry of inner healing and deliverance is Scriptural and, therefore, is part of God’s truth.

A few examples follow:

- (1) In the anecdote that started this chapter about the young man who had destroyed two marriages with his out-of-control temper, in the interview I learned that his father also had an out-of-control temper that resulted in his father and mother divorcing when the young man was 10 years old. Subsequently his time was divided between the homes of his mother and father with a never ceasing barrage of bitterness and recrimination on the part of both father and mother. While he had developed a good personality and an outward demeanor of calmness, he had a deeply wounded heart, and an explosive temper. I attempted to lead him through the steps of forgiving his father, repenting of judgments, and so on, but there did not seem to be any deep healing or liberation, and I was frustrated at my inability to help him. Later I learned that he was involved in multiple adulteries, which he had “forgotten” to mention to me. If a counselee is not serious about repenting of his sins and obeying Christ, then the ministry of inner healing or any other

form of ministry or counseling will not work. God will not violate our free will.

(2) (2) A couple went to see their pastor.

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The wife said, "Pastor, my husband is driving me crazy. He is so jealous. If I even speak to a man at church it makes him angry and he accuses me of being unfaithful to him. He has treated me this way ever since we got married. I have always been faithful to my husband. He is ruining our marriage."

The pastor said, "Brother, is this the way you have been treating your wife?"

He admitted, "Yes, it does bother me when my wife speaks to other men."

The pastor said to him, "You need to repent. You need to ask God to forgive you for this terrible jealousy and ask your wife to forgive you."

After he did that, the pastor put their hands together, prayed for their marriage and assured them that all would now be well. Everything was fine until they stopped at a little store on the way home and his wife spoke to a man that she knew. Jealousy and anger rose up inside the man and as soon as they got outside he blasted her again.

So they went to see another pastor and shared their story. This pastor said to the husband, "Please tell me about your relationship with your parents." (This is where many bad roots originate.) He shared about his family life at home and said that a terrible thing had happened. When he was in his young teens, his mother had been unfaithful to his father. She had committed adultery with another man, and the father found out, their family and friends found out, and it brought much shame to his father, to their family, and to him.

Is there any connection between his experience and the way he treated his wife? Of course we can infer he concluded this is the way wives act, they are unfaithful, so he could not trust his wife. But it goes beyond that. He was breaking spiritual laws:

- He had never honored his mother, and things were not going well with him.
- He had never forgiven his mother, and he did not feel forgiven or at peace with God.
- He had judged and condemned his mother and the judgment was coming back into his own life inasmuch as he found it impossible to trust his wife. He admitted that he also found it difficult to trust God. Because there was sin in his heart, he could not "see" who God truly was.

So how should we minister to him? First, he needs to forgive his mother. He then needs to repent of judging and condemning her and to choose by God's grace to honor and respect her. He should, of course, repent for his jealousy and mistreatment of his wife and ask her forgiveness. Then we should pray for his wounded heart and for that of his wife.

The first pastor saw that there was bad fruit in the man's life (his jealousy) and tried to cut off the bad fruit, but that did not resolve the problem because he didn't "lay the axe to the bad root". The second pastor went back behind the bad fruit to the bad root. The man is still going to have to deal with the habit pattern in his life, the structures in his life, of jealousy. He has had a lifetime of not trusting women and of being suspicious of his wife. And even though the bad root has been cut, now he needs to stand against that jealousy and with his wife's help fight against that spirit of jealousy that attacks him at every opportunity. But now that the bad root has been cut, he has the opportunity to be set free from this destructive habit pattern.

(3) Julia came to me for prayer for pain in her eyes. I never just pray for the pain or the sickness, I regard that as a bad fruit and try to get to the bad root. In order to get to the bad root I ask the questions, "When?", and "What happened?". "When did this problem begin and what happened at that time?" She said the pain in her eyes began 4 years ago. "What happened at that time?", I asked. She said that it started when her little boy died. When I minister to people, I always search for roots of unforgiveness and so I asked her, "Did you blame anybody for your son's death?" She said, "Yes, I blamed the doctor, I blamed myself, and I blamed God."

So I led her through the steps of forgiving each of those whom she had blamed: "Lord, I think that doctor made a terrible mistake that cost the life of my little boy, but for Your sake, I forgive him. I forgive myself, Lord, and I ask You to set me free from blaming myself, and I forgive God."

Obviously God does not sin, but people tend to hold Him responsible when a loved one dies. I encourage people to say, "I forgive God" or to have them say, "Lord, please forgive me for blaming You. I repent, Lord, of judging You and blaming you for my son's death."

I then prayed for Julia's emotional trauma. (I have a more extensive teaching on this subject in the chapter titled TRAUMA.) Trauma causes brokenness inside and is frequently one of the bad roots connected to pain, sickness, and other problems. "Lord, I pray that you would enter into the trauma of the death of this lady's son. I ask you to come and heal her broken heart. I ask you to seal that trauma with the blood of Christ. And now, Lord, I pray for the pain in her eyes and, by the authority of Jesus Christ, I command that pain to leave now! I also command any spirits behind that pain to go now!"

God healed her instantly and took away the pain in her eyes. Based on many experiences of praying for the sick, I believe that if we had just prayed for Julia's eyes without dealing with the bad root, the pain might temporarily have been alleviated but then very likely would have returned. You see, Julia had a worse problem than pain in her eyes, she had great pain in her heart compounded by unforgiveness and bitterness against a doctor, against herself, and against God. God wants to heal the whole person, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. He doesn't just want to heal our pains; He wants to heal us.

(See the chapter titled THE MINISTRY OF HEALING.)

(4) In one of his lectures, John Sandford told of ministering to a woman who could not bear a male child. She was able to carry girls to term, but every time she was carrying a little boy she would miscarry after about 3 or 4 months. She and her husband wanted a little boy very badly. Her gynecologists could not find any physical problem. John interviewed her. She told him that when she was a girl her brother was cruel and vicious; he hurt and embarrassed her many times. Her father would not protect her and consistently took the side of her brother. She remembered that when she was 9 or 10 years old she went down by the river and screamed out, "I will never have a boy!"

That was an inner vow based on a judgment against her brother. So how did John minister to her? He had her forgive her brother, repent of judging and hating him, and forgive her father for not protecting her. He prayed for her heart to be healed and had her repent and renounce that vow that she made. Within a few months she became pregnant with a little boy and was able to successfully carry him to term. We can be snared by the words of our mouth. If you have made a strong inner vow (a promise based on a judgment), the words of your mouth have spiritual power to hold you ensnared to the terms of that vow until you

renounce it.

Let me now address a few of the more common bad roots with which many struggle:

- **Anger** – Many Christians have a problem with anger which is devastating to them and their families. When I minister to someone who has a problem with anger I always ask them, “Who was angry, your father or your mother, (or a step-parent), or both of them?” That is the way it works out in many instances. That situation is destructive to children and should be a serious warning to fathers and mothers who explode into anger or who argue with loud voices and red faces in front of their children. I have them forgive that father or mother for their anger. I have them repent of judging and condemning and hating them. Then I ask them to repent of that anger, renounce it, and command the spirit of anger to leave. Next, I pray for their heart. I encourage them to break the habit pattern of resorting to anger to solve their interpersonal problems. Anger is sometimes a spirit that needs to be cast out. It is also always a negative emotion, a part of one’s flesh or fallen nature that needs to be crucified. Someone has pointed out that you cannot crucify a demon and that you cannot cast out a bad emotion. Each bad root must be dealt with in the appropriate manner.
- **Fear** – Along with its fellow spirits of anxiety and worry, fear is also very common among Christians. Fear is hidden behind anger and rage in many cases. Fear is a destructive emotion to which a spirit is nearly always connected. Before I pray against fear or cast out a spirit of fear, I want to discover the bad root. “When did that fear come in?” It may have entered because of a physical or emotional trauma, it may be a generational spirit of fear, or it may be connected to an inner vow or witchcraft. Since the father is primarily responsible for providing protection for his family, a father who fails in that role sets up his child to suffer with insecurity, anxiety, and fear. Resentment, unforgiveness, and judgments need to be uprooted and repented of, generational curses broken, and spirits of fear cast out. Instruction then is needed to fortify the counselee against the return of fear.
- **Addictions** – Alcoholism, for example, runs in families. It is a generational curse connected to generational sin. So I ask the question, “Was your father or mother an alcoholic? Was alcohol

a problem to the preceding generations?” Demonic spirits of alcoholism are, in my experience, always connected to heavy addictions. So, the progressive steps of cutting bad roots are to be followed: Forgiveness, judgments, honoring parents, word curses against them or that they have spoken, inner vows, trauma, witchcraft, generational curses, casting out demons, and instructing the counselee in how to maintain their deliverance. I am not suggesting that every person has involvement with each of these points, but I check to see if there is a problem in each area. (See the chapter titled “ADDICTIONS AND BONDAGES.”)

- **Sexual sins** – Ongoing addictions to sexual sins (pornography, masturbation, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality) are bad fruit, and there is always a bad root. This does not mean that the person is not responsible for his sin or that he does not need to repent of it. It simply means that behind his practice of this sin, if he is a Christian and has been endeavoring to repent and change without success, there is a bad root that has him snared. So I go through the same steps as in “Addictions” above. During the interview, if the counselee has not mentioned his relation with his parents, I ask about it. If he is struggling with a sexual sin, I ask him specifically if his father and mother were faithful to one another, and about past generations.
- **Homosexuality** – I specifically mention homosexuality because it is not only an overt problem that many people, including Christians, deal with, but it is a hidden temptation or cause for anxiety among many because they have urges they do not understand. The following are the root causes of homosexuality of which I am aware. These roots do not mean that a person will start acting out homosexually, but they may be a precipitating root cause:
 1. Having a brutal, dominating father or one who ignores you as a child
 2. Having a passive father and a dominating mother
 3. Being molested as a child, including being exposed to sexual acts or pornography
 4. When one or both parents strongly wanted a child of the other sex when you were in gestation, sometimes to the extent of rejecting you as a boy/girl, and naming and training you as if you were of the other sex
 5. A generational curse connected to generational sin
 6. Word curses (the father who always said to his son, “You are going to be a homosexual!”, or the person who rejects and curses his or her sex.)
 7. Homosexual relationships entered into willingly

Note: A reality that must be acknowledged with regard to any and every sin and sinful addiction is that the person must truly repent and desire to be free if ministry of any sort is to be effectual. If in the depths of a person’s heart he is double-minded about his resentment or sex sin or addiction or involvement in the occult or whatever, he is unwilling to forgive, to repent and renounce alcohol and drugs and occultism, to break off his adulterous or homosexual relationship, then these insights about bad roots will not help him. If, however, he is sincere about getting free and staying free from sin, but Satan has hidden hooks that drag him down time after time, then these insights can bring great and glorious liberty.

A TIME OF REFLECTION

Do you recognize any bad fruit in your life and has the Holy Spirit shown you the bad roots? Do you have problems with any of the bad fruits that were mentioned:

- Anger

- Fear
- Addictions
- Pornography or other sexual sins

Do you desire to be free of this sin? Wait quietly before the Lord and ask Him to help you cut any bad roots. Go through the steps of inner healing: forgiving, repenting of judgments and condemnation, honoring your parents, forgiving and breaking word curses, repenting and renouncing any curses you have spoken against others/God/yourself, renouncing inner vows and promises, breaking generational curses, and renouncing any spirits connected to any bad roots by the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to heal your heart of trauma, to wash and cleanse your mind, and to fill your heart with His presence and peace.

There are, of course, many other bad fruits you might consider: depression, thoughts of suicide, overwhelming compulsions, food addictions, tormenting thoughts, hearing voices, having an ongoing series of accidents, confusion, shame, fear of insanity, and the list goes on and on. Where there is a bad fruit, there is a bad root. Ask the Lord to help you discover and cut the bad roots. If you need help from a minister or ministry team, get it! God wants us to be free.

"Lord, come and heal our wounded hearts. Come and heal us of trauma. Come and heal us, Lord, of rejection and abuse. Come and set us free, Lord, of judgments and bitterness and shame. Come and make us whole in Jesus' name. Amen."

ENDNOTES

1. See also Luke 6:43-45
2. Galatians 5:22
3. Galatians 5, Page 401, The Message
4. James 3:10
5. Matthew 3:10