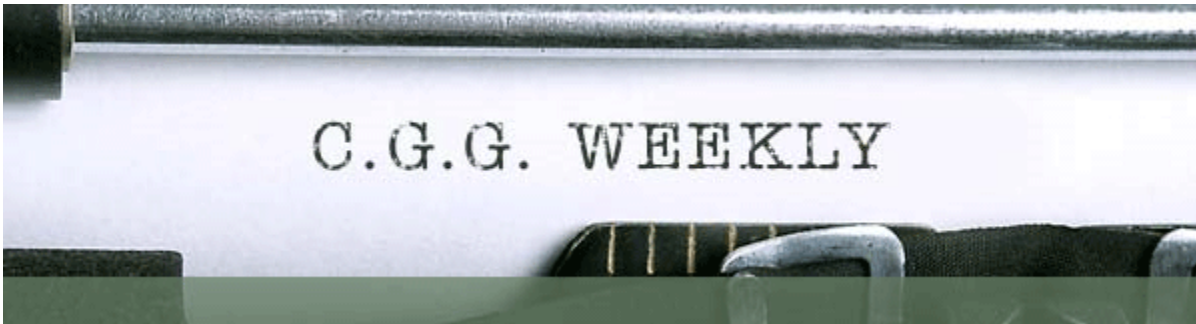




"We don't follow Jesus in isolation. Our growth and our perseverance also encourage growth and perseverance in our brothers and sisters in Christ."

—Glenna Marshall

24-Oct-25

Christian Productivity

At the hospital where I work, management often talks about productivity. *Productivity* is "the measure of what is produced—output—divided by what resources are used in its production—input." Productivity percentage measures how efficiently something is produced compared to a predefined standard. At the hospital, managers speak about productivity in terms of human resource hours and other equipment or supplies used to evaluate, care for, and discharge a patient or transfer one to another unit. My boss is happy that she only has to input the numbers, and a computer program spits out the results.

Similarly, one's Christian life is about productivity. The Bible tells us repeatedly that each person will be judged on his individual performance (e. g., [Jeremiah 17:10](#); [Matthew 16:27](#); [Romans 2:6](#); Revelation 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12). Being productive looks quite different for someone in his twenties than it does for someone older. Regardless of age, we can all do something, whether it be physical assistance, counsel, prayers, telephone calls, or just

listening and encouraging someone based on our experience. A silver-headed man or woman crowned with righteousness is the result of many years of rightly applying the Word of [God](#).

Everyone needs to be encouraged. Many of us have been members of God's church for decades, but we may have lost the edge we had when we first believed. Ministers must frequently admonish the church, "Wake up!" We can never forget that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed ([Romans 13:11](#)). We need to produce the fruit the Father is expecting to see from us ([John 15:8](#)).

The first three chapters of Jeremiah list the sins of both Israel and Judah. God had sent Israel into captivity earlier, and now He warns Judah that He will do the same to them. These chapters have a dual meaning for us, as God's church is the [Israel of God](#) (Galatians 16:16). We can learn from the lessons found here.

In [Jeremiah 3:6](#), God calls for [repentance](#). Verses 12-13 state His message to the prophet:

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: "Return, backsliding Israel," says the LORD; "I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am [merciful](#)," says the LORD; "I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, . . . and you have not obeyed My voice," says the LORD.

In verse 22, God further pleads, "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." The word "return" is the Hebrew word *shûb*, which means "to return; to turn back and go in a different direction." Their acknowledgement of their sins was only the start. God required them to make new progress in the right direction.

The words of Paul in his letter to the Romans come to mind. He observes that many of the Jews of his day had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" ([Romans 10:2](#)). The dynamic image of a downed power line can help explain his meaning. As it wiggles around, a lot of energy is expended, but all that energy is wasted and lost because it accomplishes nothing useful.

Our time and energy for productivity are limited, so we must use them wisely!

[Jeremiah 3:23-25](#) reveals that the Israelites eventually do indeed repent, acknowledging their transgressions and confessing their shame. It is a significant first step, but in [Jeremiah 4:1](#), God repeats, "Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved." This final word is *nud* (*Strong's* #5110), and it means, among other things, "to shake, wander, move to and fro, and flutter." It might even describe that downed power line. The idea is that returning to God removes futility from our lives, giving us a productive outlet.

God then gives some further instruction, "Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns" ([Jeremiah 4:3](#)). [Agriculturelore.com](#) provides this helpful definition:

To fallow a field refers to a process where farmers leave their land bare for a period of time in order to restore its fertility. This process replenishes nutrients that have been removed by crops, reduces erosion and leaching, and helps to maintain better soil physical and biological conditions.

Fallow ground, then, is unplowed ground that has not been tended to, either purposely or through neglect. Farmers sometimes choose to let their fields lie fallow (or dormant) to allow soil nutrients to be replenished. These periods of dormancy usually range from one to five years.

We have all known brethren who have neglected their spiritual fields for many years before returning to their calling. Maybe we have even done it ourselves. Jeremiah's message applies to us, especially if we find ourselves in a fallow period.

Productivity is more than just physical. One can be more spiritually productive as an older, mature, and settled individual than when one is younger and stronger yet dealing with many potential distractions. Breaking up the fallow ground, physically, means to remove impediments in a field that had been left to itself and had become unyielding and full of weeds. Spiritually, as [Christianwebsite.com](#) puts it, "fallow ground refers to

hardened hearts and lives that need to be cultivated, prepared, and sown with God's truth in order to bear spiritual fruit and prosper."

Belief in [the gospel](#) imposes on us the reality that we must act upon our beliefs. Christianity is a way of living. As the apostle Paul writes in [Ephesians 2:10](#) (ESV): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." In addition, the apostle James declares that [faith](#) without works is dead ([James 2:17](#), 20, 26), and Solomon in [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#) advises, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might."

Clearly, Christianity involves doing godly works in faith, and we must work diligently. When we work hard, we learn persistence and how to overcome problems, enabling us to meet our goals. The Bible assures us that such diligent efforts lead to tremendous spiritual rewards, both now and in our glorious future in the [Kingdom of God](#).

The [Parable of the Talents](#) ([Matthew 25:14-30](#)) is an excellent example of how God measures productivity. In it, a man gives three of his servants monetary gifts to work with while he is away. Although the amounts given and the subsequent returns on their investments differ, the first two men used their gifts in ways that yielded each of them a 100% increase. Their lord rewards them both the same.

But the third man, who was afraid, does nothing with the opportunity given to him. Seeing no return—not even interest—the lord rebukes him: "You wicked and lazy servant . . .!" The adjective "wicked" stresses the man's moral failure, and "lazy" refers to his evident lack of diligence. Obedience to God's commands—certainly the one He gives about producing fruit—is the right thing to do, and the parable implies He wants us to do them with diligent effort.

The text makes it clear that the servant knew full well that his master had a reputation for achieving results far beyond his initial investment. God is the Master, and we are His servants. It is His right to receive a significant return on His investment in us. He has put up the "seed money," as well as the

environment, for our opportunity to thrive and flourish. Besides all this, our Master is the actual Creator and Owner of all things! We owe Him everything!

We must heed God's admonition through Jeremiah to break up the fallow ground to produce a crop of righteousness. The apostle Paul says a similar thing in [Hebrews 12:12](#) (*New Living Translation*): "So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees." Both men encourage us to get to work and be productive.

[Jesus Christ](#) is our Standard. We can rely on the fact that what God commands, He also supplies what is needed to fulfill it. We can be thankful that He alone has the supreme ability to judge our productivity percentage and can determine that our cooperative efforts with Him will be judged as a 30-, 60-, or 100-fold increase! Our responsibility is to do what we can, where we are, with what we have.

To us in these efforts, [Hosea 10:12](#) (*New International Version*) provides encouragement:

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing [love](#), and break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until He comes and showers His righteousness on you.

- John Reiss

New Transcripts

[1838-PM: Jesus in the Feasts \(Part Three\): Divine King](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 23-Sep-25

[BS-LA05: Lamentations \(Part Five; 1989\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 23-May-89

[FT25-03: The Feasts of Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread](#)

Given by David C. Grabbe on 09-Oct-25

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Producing Fruit](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As shown in the parable of an unclean spirit leaving a man, yet returning with seven more spirits, being cleaned (or purged of leaven) is only the beginning of the growth process. To be made clean only prepares us for producing fruit. God's concern is for us to mature spiritually. If we stand still (resting on the laurels of our justification), the dark forces are going to pull us backwards. Uselessness invites disaster. We have to get away from the negative fixation of not doing and begin concentrating on doing. The consequences of not bearing fruit are graphically described in John 15:6. God's purpose, once we are cleaned, is to produce growth in us.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Faith Without Works](#)

by Staff

Three times, the apostle James states unequivocally, 'Faith without works is dead!' Here's how James' teaching agrees with and complements the teaching of Paul on justification.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 24-Oct-25) will be **Lamentations (Part Five; 1989)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday** (EST) and all day Saturday.

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