

## PREPARING TO PARTICIPATE

### I. **Christians are to be fruitful (John 15:1-8).**

1. God expects his children to be fruitful (Titus 3:14).
2. When we are fruitful it brings glory to God (John 15:8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. Being fruitful also shows that we are disciples of Christ: “and so prove to be my disciples (John 15:8, NASV).
4. Others see us and know us by our “fruits” (Matthew 7:15-20).
5. But before we can be fruitful, we must be prepared.
  1. This holds true with gardening.
    1. What if we planted a seed in ground that had not been prepared?
    2. We should not expect anything to grow in unprepared soil.
  2. This involves gaining knowledge (Colossians 1:9-10).
  3. It also involves the development of inner character (2 Peter 1:2-8).
  4. The ASV renders verse five this way – “Yea and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence in your faith supply virtue and in your virtue knowledge.”
  5. The word supply comes from a Greek word for “chorus leader.”

### II. **Christians are to be profitable (Matthew 25:30).**

1. Could you think of a greater condemnation than to be described by God as “unprofitable” – a word that is translated “worthless,” “useless” and “good for nothing” in other translations of the Bible?
2. On the other hand, notice the praise given to John Mark by Paul (2 Timothy 4:11).
3. Our being profitable is not just for our own benefit, but also for the good of the entire body (1 Corinthians 12:7).
4. But before we can be profitable, we must be prepared.
  1. We must put forth effort (2 Timothy 2:15).
  2. We must strive for godliness (1 Timothy 4:8).

### III. **Christians are to be useful (2 Timothy 2:20-21).**

1. We are to strive to be vessels “meet for the Master’s use.”
  1. It is a conjunction of two Greek words, one of which means “useful” or “worthy.”
  2. The other is a Greek word that means “to wield unlimited authority.”
  3. This shows we are to be a people who wield the authority of the scriptures in a useful manner.
  4. We are to be able use the scriptures the way they are intended to be used, not in a perverted manner.
2. Being useful means we have knowledge and experience.

3. Someone once said, "Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you."
4. But before we can be useful, we must be prepared.
  1. Personal spiritual growth is necessary.
    1. The person who expects to be worthy of the Master's use must cleanse himself (2 Timothy 2:21).
    2. Every member has a responsibility to the body to mature (Ephesians 4:13-16).
  2. Preparation rarely takes place unless goals are set.
    1. Montaigne once said, "No wind favors him who has no destined port."
    2. Each member needs to set goals for where they want to be spiritually in one year, five, ten and twenty years.
    3. This is a challenge for elders.
    4. It is also a challenge for our young adults and young people.
    5. Where do you see yourself spiritually: as elders, deacons or teachers?
5. We must be aware of our accountability to God: when the final accounting is made, what will we have done with out potential?