

## The Fruit of the Gospel

by Pastor Bob Hoekstra (son of Chaplain Ray)

*“By this My Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit**; so you will be My disciples.”*  
(John 15:8)

Spiritual fruit brings glory to the Lord, while demonstrating the genuineness of our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. **Godly character** is one aspect of spiritual fruit. *“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your **fruit to holiness**”* (Romans 6:22). Chaplain Ray and Leola served together as servant of the Lord. Godliness was very evident in their lives. They demonstrated a godly love for prisoners. *“The **fruit of the Spirit is love**”* (Galatians 5:22).

**Praise** and **thanksgiving** represent a two-fold aspect of spiritual fruit. *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of **praise** to God, that is, the **fruit of our lips, giving thanks** to His name”* (Hebrews 13:15). The Lord is the source of everything that results in effective ministry and godly living. Throughout their years of ministry, my father and Leola gave grateful credit to the Lord as being the One who was behind the spiritual effectiveness of the International Prison Ministry.

**Spiritual impact in people’s lives** is another aspect of spiritual fruitfulness. *“I often planned to come to you . . . that I might have some **fruit among you also**, just as among the other Gentiles”* (Romans 1:13). Paul’s previous ministry to *“the other Gentiles”* had been very fruitful. Many unbelievers had turned to follow Christ. Many of those new believers began to grow in the Lord. Similar fruit was also seen in the lives that Chaplain Ray and Leola reached out to in prisons across the country and beyond.

Four distinctive examples of this type of spiritual fruit come to mind: **Frank Costantino, Jack** (“Murph, the Surf”) **Murphy, Mark Maciel,** and **Charles** (“Tex”) **Watson**. I have been blessed to spend time in ministry settings with each of these precious brothers in Christ. All have a history as inmates (with “Tex” still incarcerated). Each was disciplined in ministry by “the Chaplain” and Leola. Each has been abundantly fruitful in prison ministry. Each is the subject of an IPM LifeChanging Testimony book. Frank was a national leader in prison ministry and a powerful preacher of the word of God. “Murph” is a distinctively effective evangelist in prisons all over America. Mark has had nearly 20 years of chaplaincy experience in Los Angeles. Charles is a teacher of the word and a discipler of inmates.

What is the the **dynamic behind** such **spiritual fruit**? It is the proclamation of the **gospel** of the **grace of God**: *“which you heard before in the word of the truth of the **gospel**, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is **bringing forth fruit**, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the **grace of God in truth**”* (Colossians 1:5-6). It is the good news of **grace of God** that is behind the **forgiveness** of our **sins**. *“For by **grace** you have been **saved** through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8). It is also the **grace of God** that is behind the **transformation** of **lives** among those who are forgiven. *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man . . . And the **grace of our Lord** was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 1:12-14). Chaplain Ray and Leola faithfully proclaimed the good news of the glorious grace of God. The **fruit of the gospel** is their testimony and their legacy!