

Discern False Fruit With This Matthew 7 Key

The Bible is very clear that in the last days, false prophets and others who are bearing bad fruit will increase, and that we would know these kinds of people by their fruit (Matt 7:15-20). Fruit in a person's life can be defined as the product of a person. It can come out through emotions, things they are doing or the results in their lives. Galatians 5:22-23 defines the spiritual fruit in someone's lives as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. As believers in Christ we are to be in the vine of Christ Jesus and, as we do so, bear good fruit (John 15). But sometimes it can be a challenge when you first see the fruit in someone's life, or your own, to determine if it's good or not. I realize that some people will want to argue that determining whether a person's fruit is good or bad is akin to judging them, but the Bible offers a different perspective.

The question then arises: If we are supposed to know them by their fruit, how will we tell if that fruit is good or bad? Even Jesus saw that the fig tree bore no fruit and he determined that it would shrivel up because it wasn't doing what it was supposed to be doing (Matt 21:18-22). We, too, are supposed to be fruit inspectors.

Many of us have our own tried and true ways of examining fruit. I jokingly compare this to how one picks out fruit in a grocery store. Do you thump cantaloupes? Do you feel the softness of an avocado or smell a peach? Granted, it can be a little more difficult to find out if the fruit in a person's life is good or not. So here is my own list for determining fruit. May we all take a moment to examine what is in our own lives:

No Fruit: Just as when Jesus saw that the fig tree was barren, bearing no fruit is just as bad as bearing bad fruit. Bearing no fruit means you aren't doing anything except existing. What are you doing for the kingdom? Do you ever share the gospel? Are you active in your church? Are you a hermit? God created life for you to live. You have a purpose. It's time to get out of your four walls and grow an abundance of fruit. Produce a harvest for the kingdom!

Wax Fruit: Some people you will encounter in life and in the church don't have real fruit but wax fruit instead. You may even find a few of these in your own life. It looks good from afar, and many people want to rave at how perfect the fruit looks, but if you get too close to it you'll see it looks a little too perfect. Something about it just is off. It's ornamental. Wax fruit may look perfect, but when the fire of life is turned up, it won't last. It will melt and isn't good for anything. Do you have things in your life that you are trying to make look perfect but you live in fear that if a strong wind came through like a house of cards it would topple? Do you find that when in a heated circumstance that you melt with fear and anxiety? Stand up tall and where the wax fruit bowl once rested allow God to cultivate a genuine harvest in your life. The world doesn't need to see a waxy still-life as their interpretation of the church. The world needs genuine nourishment from genuine fruit that has been in the Vine of Christ.

Green Fruit: If we aren't careful we can sometimes mistake green fruit for rotten fruit, but that is so far from the truth. Green fruit just isn't ripe yet. It needs time to mature in Christ. I've suffered from a lot of green fruit in my life. So many times, I can list of immature moments where I thought I was being a mature woman of God, when really I was being a door-slamming teenager in the spirit. Green fruit just needs time to mature on the vine. Just like a banana that still hasn't ripened, green fruit can come across as bitter,

sour and a little unsettling. When you see something like this arise, ask the Holy Spirit and wait. I believe the answer will become obvious. It can be a challenge as a leader to determine if a person's fruit is green or rotten. Time is a great factor in fruit-checking.

Bruised Fruit: Bruised fruit is the kind of fruit that has been bruised and hurt. Like green fruit, if you're not careful, it can appear to be rotten but it's not. This is the kind of fruit that just needs to be handled with care. Maybe a few spots need cut out and mended by God, but bruised fruit still serves a purpose. It happens when people get hurt and abused. Their words may turn jaded and bitter. Sometimes I think we need to put "Handle With Care" stickers on people as they walk through church doors. So often the world around forgets that hurting people hurt people and their bruises show. Like apple cider, bruised fruit can still be used for a purpose. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). If you have some bruised moments in your life, know that never counts you out.

Rotten Fruit: One rotten apple and it can ruin a whole bushel. "A little yeast leavens the whole batch" (Gal 5:9). Rotten fruit needs to be thrown in the fire. I realize that just because a person may have a few rotten plums, all of them may not be bad, however the bad ones have to get tossed, pruned, and taken care of quickly before they affect the rest. Bad fruit can have its purpose. I often joke that the bad fruit I've encountered in my life or in others' is just fertilizer to help me grow stronger. It makes for great compost. If you realize you have had bad fruit, then repent and allow God to prune you in that area. This is too important for you to just put off and refuse to deal with; it needs to be dealt with right away lest it spread.

Good God-Fruit: While good fruit may take some time to determine if it is good or not, that time is so worth it. Good

fruit picked at the peak of the season and harvested is a kiss of heaven upon the earth. For many, the wrestling match with God is the timing. Most people don't want to allow things to mature until they're fully ripe. Leave those things on the vine and trust in God. He will not leave things on the vine to rot. His timing is always perfect. He sees what you do not see, and He will bring something good in your life. Good fruit is always worth it.

Whatever methods you use to determine the fruit in your lives or others', make sure you use them. Too many people fall victim to false teachers and false prophets in these days, and we must learn to take a step back and become fruit inspectors. We must examine ourselves first, but we also must be on our guard with others who are wolves in sheep's clothing, lurking in the church and attempting to devour the innocent. {eoa}

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