

The Accuracy of Fruit
Matthew 7:15-23

Introduction: Today we come to a challenging passage in which Jesus introduces a troubling topic for His disciples to consider. He talks about the accuracy of fruit. Jesus says that just like a tree a person can be identified by the fruit of his or her life. Jesus' teaching here forces us to evaluate our lives as to whether or not we are bearing the fruit we should. This is important because as we've seen in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, what we are inwardly is what we truly are. And so, may God use this study to help each of us examine what the fruit of our lives reveals about who we truly are.

Read Matthew 7:15-23

1. What is your first thought or feeling in response to this passage?

2. What does Jesus say nature reveals about a tree and its fruit (v. 17-19)?

3. What does this passage say about good works? What is it not saying?

4. According to Jesus, who will enter the kingdom of God?

5. How should we understand verse 21 in light of Ephesians 2:8, 9?

6. In light of this passage, how would you respond to the statement, "It is necessary for a believer to bear good fruit"?

Steve said:

There is nothing incompatible between being saved by grace through faith and the necessity of bearing good fruit. The imagery Jesus used earlier suggests that good fruit is the **natural** by-product of our life with God; just like an apple tree naturally produces apples, the person who abides in Christ naturally bears fruit of Christlikeness. Our will and our effort is certainly involved (i.e., we're not passive in the process), but our obedience is a natural expression of who we really are. A believer should never have to fake obedience; to the contrary, we are never more fully true to ourselves when we're obedient.

7. Why is good fruit the natural byproduct of our life with God?

Steve said:

If you're like me, you hear Jesus' words in verse 23 and you wonder, "What will Jesus say to me on 'that day'?" Will He say, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . you've allowed Me to bear fruit in your life"? or "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness"? This passage forces us to evaluate our fruitfulness – whether or not our lives show the fruit of the Spirit's work, the fruit of obedience, and the fruit of influence in the lives of others. There are many different types of fruitfulness.

8. What evidence in your life points to your relationship with Jesus? Do you see the fruit of the Spirit's work?

9. What do you sense Jesus is wanting you to "hear" in this teaching?