

## JUDGING FRUIT

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Sometimes we meet people, and after a period of time we learn that they are not all they appeared to be. Someone we initially thought was rude and obnoxious can turn out to be a very nice and pleasant person. On the other hand, we may find that one we thought was a trustworthy friend is a liar and a thief. Appearances can be deceiving, so we must be careful in how we judge one another. Is it right to judge others? Some say that we should not judge others, but that would be impossible. It is necessary in virtually every walk of life to make judgments about those around us. We must make certain that this judgment is fair and without hypocrisy (Matt. 7:1-5).

Jesus recognized our need to make proper judgments about our fellow man. The fact that there are people who are dangerous to our souls prompted Him to reveal these words of truth and wisdom:

### **MATTHEW 7:15-20**

*“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”*

Notice some principles revealed in the Lord’s words:

**PEOPLE WILL OFTEN HIDE THEIR TRUE SELVES** – Appearing in sheep’s clothing is an attempt on the part of the wolves to hide their true selves. They may *look* like sheep, but Jesus said they could never *act* like true sheep. Their words and actions will expose their disguise.

**WE CAN FAIRLY JUDGE A PERSON’S CHARACTER BY THEIR “FRUITS”** – The only fair judgment of a person is to observe their actual words and actions. Just as the nature of the tree is known by its fruits, the true nature of your heart is known by what you say and do (cf. Matthew 15:18-19). No one can claim unfairness when his own words and actions are being judged (2 Corinthians 5:10).

**A BAD TREE CANNOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT** – If the fruit coming off the tree is bad, the only way to correct the problem is to change the tree. If the tree is bad, the fruit will be bad. This is why we would not want a thief to teach us about honesty, an adulterer or homosexual to teach us about sexual morals, or a denominational preacher to teach us about the one, true church.

**BAD TREES WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD AND DESTROYED** – Men are to reject bad trees because such trees will be rejected and destroyed by God. Judgment day will be a time of harvest to separate the good from the bad (cf. Matthew 13:36-43). No bad tree will slip “under the radar” or be given extra leniency. Avoid those who bear the bad fruit of sin and error.

How diligent are you in judging the “fruit” of others? Is your own fruit good or bad?

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