

Panthers:

Have you ever entrusted yourself to a mentor who wanted you to be more oriented toward man-made rules than relationships? Rather than base his advice on the teachings of Christ and the counsel of the Bible, he develops his own personal potpourri of teachings. Describing two trees, Jesus addressed this dichotomy in the Sermon on the Mount when He taught His disciples how to *go* to their teachers and leaders (Matt. 7:15-23).

**First, *discern: the fruit is determined by the root* (Matt. 7:15-20).** Jesus warned His audience to watch out for false prophets who led others away from God (Matt. 7:15; cf. Deut. 13:1-18). Many had surfaced on the scene during Jesus' day. They pretended to be good on the outside, but they were evil on the inside.

Jesus said that false prophets could be recognized by their fruit, or what their lives produced (Matt. 7:16, 20). Disciples of Christ humbly led people to God (Prov. 11:30). False prophets led others away from God. Being fruitful in multiplying the heart of God in others was the Creator's original idea (Gen. 1:28). Jesus said that the fruit is determined by the root (cf. Ps. 1). The root is either the *sinful nature* or the *Spirit of Christ*.

Paul said that the *fruit of the sinful nature* were obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like (Gal. 5:19-21). However, the *fruit of the Spirit of Christ* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Ga. 5:22-23).

Do you have a mentor in your life sowing hatred over love, rage over joy, and discord over peace? Rather than being *condemning* (viewing him as all bad for one spoiled fruit) or *careless* (seeing him as all good despite a bushel of spoiled fruit), be *discerning*. Separate the outside from the inside and examine his fruit—what he produces in his life—recognizing that his fruit is determined by his root.

**Second, *disciple: intimacy with the Root produces His fruit* (Matt. 7:21-23).** Jesus said that only those who do the will of His Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). On judgment day, He will tell false prophets plainly, "*I never knew you*" (Matt. 7:23). *Know* means "to experience intimately." The one who does the will of God is the one who has intimacy with Him. We find intimacy with God in Christ (John 15:1-17). He is the Root (Rev. 5:5; 22:16). The fruit He produces includes seeds that produce more fruit when they are planted in fertile soil. Thus, the fruit is another disciple who discerns and disciples with the heart of Christ.

This week, conduct a fruit inspection. Ask, "Am I a false prophet, or do I have one in my life?" First, discern that the fruit is determined by the root. The root of sinful nature produces hatred, rage, and discord. The root of the Spirit produces love, joy, and peace. Second, disciple another fruit-bearer, recognizing that intimacy with the Root produces His fruit. In order to do this, nourish your roots by reading the Bible (the same passage each day for a week), serving (those who fit in your agenda and those who don't), and praying (for every detail in your life). Then you will be energized to nourish the roots of another.

Fruitful in Christ,

Mitch