

# FALSE PROPHETS AND BAD FRUIT

## I. The Scripture: A Tree and Its Fruit

*15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20"thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."*

**Matthew 7:15-20**

## II. Looking at the Scripture

### 1. The Spiritual Masquerade Party

What do you think Jesus means by using the phrase 'wolves in sheep's clothing'?

According to Jesus, knowing the difference between good and bad fruit is vital for every believer. What other insights about true and false prophets can you gather from the following verses?

**Jeremiah 23:16**

**Matthew 24:24-28**

GETTING YOUR  
PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

**1 Timothy 6:3-5**

**2 Peter 2:1-3**

**1 John 4:1-3**

Why do you think Jesus included a warning on false prophets in the sermon on the Mount?

What are some of the reasons people follow popular leaders and celebrities?

Jesus said that false prophets "come to you in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). His word picture was understood very well by the people of His day who were very familiar with sheep and shepherds. The picture He created was that of a very wily, dangerous person disguised as a sweet, nonthreatening animal.

What disguises might false prophets wear today?

GETTING YOUR  
PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

## **2. The True or False Prophets Test**

How can Galatians 5:22,23 help you determine the quality of a person's fruit?

How can you evaluate a person's fruit and still remain consistent with Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1?

In John 15:5, Jesus gave His followers an instruction. How will following this command help you to bear fruit?

## **III. The Scripture and You**

### **1. Finding the True and False Prophets in My World**

Who are the people who influence you? We all have people in our lives who are good influences and some who are bad influences.

Take a moment to think about who is influencing you in what way. Then fill in the following chart (You may list friends, family members, pastors, celebrities, teachers, etc.)

Name	How They Influence Me	Positive/Negative/So-So

**Example:**

Susie Smith  
Sam Jones

Strong Christian influence  
Partying-peer pressure

Positive  
Negative

For me to be better prepared to react properly to the false prophets, I need to . . .  
.(Circle two)

- a. pray for God's discernment.
- b. ask for advice from a godly person.
- c. choose my friends more carefully.
- d. learn more about truth so I can recognize what is false.
- e. give up some of the "false prophets" in my life.
- f. speak up for God's truth more often.
- g. take the idea of evil and false prophets more seriously.

Complete the following sentences:

The most negative influence in my life right now is . . .

The most positive influence in my life right now is . . .

## 2. Bearing Good Fruit

*"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

**(Matthew 7:19)**

How can this warning to false prophets also keep us from becoming complacent as Christians?

What action steps can you take to insure that you will bear good fruit?

In case you ever get discouraged in the "bearing fruit department" of your life, here is a great story to give you reassurance that God will help you with your spiritual growth. Don't give up!

GETTING YOUR  
PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

Ignace Jan Paderewski, the famous composer-pianist, was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall in America. It was an evening to remember-black tuxedos and long evening dresses, a high society extravaganza. Present in the audience that evening was a mother with her fidgety nine-year-old son. Weary of waiting, he squirmed constantly in his seat. His mother was in hopes that her boy would be encouraged to practice the piano if he could just hear the immortal Paderewski at the keyboard. So-against his wishes-he had come. As she turned to talk with friends, her son could stay seated no longer. He slipped away from her side, strangely drawn to the ebony concert grand Steinway and its leather tufted stool on the huge stage flooded with blinding lights. Without much notice from the sophisticated audience, the boy sat down at the stool, staring wide-eyed at the black and white keys. He placed his small, trembling fingers in the right location and began to play "chopsticks." The roar of the crowd was hushed as hundreds of frowning faces turned in his direction. Irritated and embarrassed, they began to shout:

*"Get that boy away from there!"      "Who'd bring a kid that young in here?"*  
*"Where's his mother?"      "Somebody stop him!"*

Backstage, the master overheard the sounds out front and quickly put together in his mind what was happening. Hurriedly, he grabbed his coat and rushed toward the stage. Without one word of announcement he stooped over behind the boy, reached around both sides, and began to improvise a countermelody to harmonize with and enhance "chopsticks." As the two of them played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear:

*"Keep going. Don't quit, son. Keep on playing . . .don't stop . . .don't quit!"*<sup>1</sup>

And so it is with us. We continue to work on our spiritual lives and God improvises on our behalf. He provides just the right touch at just the right moment.

How does this story relate to you?

<sup>1</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983), pp.48,49.