

Timeless Transformations

You Will Know Them By Their Fruits

You may have seen in my office, a list of my favorite spiritual principles from the Bible's New Testament. Over the years I've framed them and have had images of them on my computer and in notebooks. One of them has to do with discernment, which is the ability to make sharp perceptions about people and situations. It's more than intuition. It's a deeper level of wisdom that is often overlooked. It's a principle that is uniquely described in the Gospels of Matthew 5:15-20, Thomas 45, and Luke 6:44-46. It's rated pink by Westar at 69% for the probability of being true.

- *Matthew 5:15-20 (NIV): 15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, **by their fruit you will recognize them.***
- *Thomas #45 Jesus said, "Grapes are not harvested from thorn trees, not are figs gathered from thistles for they yield no fruit. 2 **Good persons produce good from what they've stored up;** 3 bad persons produce evil from the wickedness they've stored up in their hearts, and say evil things. 4 For from the overflow of the heart they produce evil."*
- *Luke 6:44-46 (NIV): 44 **Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.** People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. 45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

Your dad and I worked very hard to cultivate this ability of discernment in you. One of the attributes that I'm most proud of is your ability to use good judgement in all situations. Just like this weekend in Fredericksburg, it never enters my mind that you would not leave the home in perfect condition or that you would take anything that was not yours. I know that you will treat each other and the other girls with kindness. I know you will work to make the weekend peaceful and good for all those that are there. I know you will love each other and be patient. As a mother, there is nothing more heartwarming than to know these things to be true at the deepest level. I am so grateful!

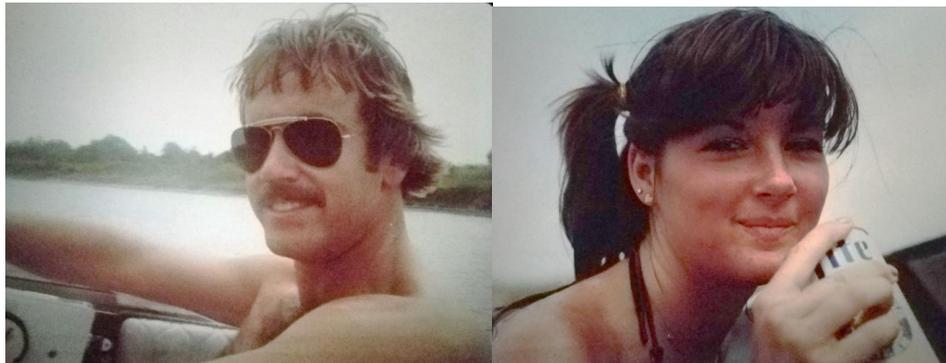
My inspiration today is **you will know them by their fruits**. When I can find a Christian principle that I can relate to, I use it. It is our culture. Jesus was a master teacher and there are some masterful insights that he taught. One of the reasons he was so powerful was the way he taught which was in parables. He had a way of using everyday stories and metaphors to explain a complicated spiritual concept. Those that followed him then (and still today) can understand his messages. Maybe that is why they are so timeless, even after all of these years. For example in the Bible references above. He was not talking about fruit in the context of apples, oranges, and pears. He was trying to get the point across that the fruit of the spirit can be compared to the fruit on a tree. For example, the fruit that we bear are qualities such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, self-control, etc. He was trying to explain how we can ascertain what people's values are and one way to do that is to observe what comes forth in a person.

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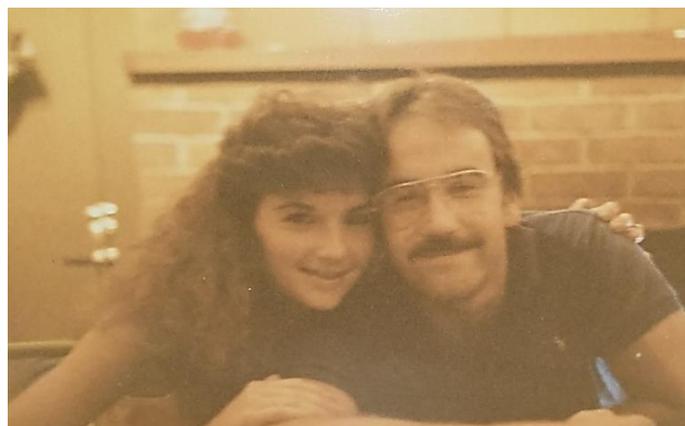
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How do we make good judgments in life? I believe this is the ultimate value of reflection. We do it by looking at the fruits that are the outcomes of our behavior. We look carefully and determine what is behind the activity and action. Our fruit (our spirit and activity) is discerned by how we behave or by the relationships we cultivate. For example, if we walk into a room and there is heaviness in the room by others that don't get along or express tension. Do we bring a spirit of peace to that room when we walk in? As a true spiritual being, are we the peacemaker? Do we bring comforting words or peaceful solutions? Or do we join sides and stir up conflict? A great question I ask myself is, what are the fruits of my labor? What do the fruits of my tree look like? How has my tree grown over the years? What was it like when it was a sprig? What did it look like when I married your dad? I went back to 1981 and found the first summer I spent with your dad.

Is he not the coolest guy ever? He had a jet boat, a jeep, and he was the nicest person I had ever met. It wasn't the material things that he had or his great looks. It was the fruits of his labor. He was the hardest working person I had ever met. The first month I met him I needed brakes on my car. I left for Austin with girlfriends and I came home and it was fixed. There are so many examples, that's just one. He was genuinely nice to his grandparents, his parents, his brother and sister. He made eye contact with people he met on the street, especially those less fortunate and those that were old. He was loving to animals, even snook-snoudy. He was kind to my family, even Ronnie. When I look at that picture of myself, I see discernment in my eyes. I knew he had the qualities of the type of person I would want to spend the rest of my life with. I knew him by his fruits.



As we became a couple that first summer, he took me to the lake house. As I continued to discern his values, his character, and principles, I fell madly in love with him! I knew him by his fruit, his spirit, and the outcomes of his behavior.



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I also knew that as a couple, we would be a model for our family. We would want to bear the very best of fruit. We made "cultivating our fruit" one of our highest priorities. We worked hard at keeping the fruits of our labor healthy and strong. I believe we were a great success. You three are the fruits of our labor and we are so proud!



For me, my vision was to be a golden delicious apple. I wanted to be the type of person that walks into any room with a peaceful spirit. I wanted to emanate harmony. When I think of a great definition of love, I think of it as a harmonizing force where all is right in the world, where there is peace and hope and I'm always bringing my highest good.

How do you know someone by their fruits? What are the fruits of their labor? How do you recognize a false prophet, or someone that is not who they appear to be? Think about the qualities of greed, jealousy, anger, conflict, envy, etc. Aren't just thinking about those words as descriptors rotten? Have you seen trees like that, people you know like that? It's sad. It's a waste. It's fruit that can't be digested or eaten. It's tossed away and considered spoiled. What are our fruits? What type of fruits are on our tree? Does it have brown leaves? Is it dead? Are the branches bare and without new buds of leaves? Or are they giving off light, new growth, and love? This is how you recognize a false prophet or a true prophet. Our decision is to decide who we want to stand by or move beyond them. **You will know them by their fruits.**

How do we determine who is a false prophet and who is not? A small example is to look at someone that gives generously. We have to look at their intention. Are they giving generously so others will know and that makes them feel good? Or is it because they are so grateful that they want to give as much as they can in time, service, and resources. It takes a lot of study and a lot of discernment on our part to decide. Look at their actions. Look at how they talk to others, regardless of who they are.

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Look at how they treat people. Are they all talk and no show? I believe that is how we discern that their fruit is good fruit. Is their tree green? Are they healthy? Are they giving off light and love and peace and gentleness and self-control? Are they showing goodness and patience and kindness? That is the goal that I'm working to cultivate in my tree and in our family. It's not always easy. It takes assessing the quality of my fruit every day. Many days the fruit isn't as good as I hoped it could be.

How do we develop our fruit? Fruit trees die over time if they are not taken care of. It happens by the way we nurture the tree. It requires constant attention. A tree of 20 years can die with one bad season. We can't take anything for granted. How do we make sure it's not going to produce bad fruit the next season? Without water and sunshine, the tree will die. The work never ends. It takes daily reflection, daily inspirational messages, weekly inspirational messages..... Is what I'm doing really watering my tree when I write these Sunday inspirations? I'm fertilizing my tree with strong messages in the best way I know how. I am giving you sunlight, which is my light. It is all that I have to give you now that your tree is firmly planted in the ground. I am investing in the best I have to give. I am creating the best experiences that I can for our family and for the next generation. I am doing all that I can to guarantee that the fruits of my labor are fruits of goodness, enthusiasm, and inspiration.



I believe our tree is flourishing. It is bearing bushels of golden delicious apples. Dahl is a perfect example of that and I know there is more fruit to bear in our future. I challenge us to continue loving unconditionally and let that be our primary goal and focus. There may always be a season of bad fruit. The key is to recognize when our fruit isn't ripe and make changes to improve.

I love you more than the healthiest fruit tree on earth bearing bushels and bushels of golden delicious apples – Love Mom!