

Judging by The Fruit

Matthew 7:16-18 (NKJV)

16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Jesus gives us a really great way to test the spirits, measure effectiveness & generally gauge progress in our lives and ministries. However, if we are not careful, we can misunderstand the fruit that we see.

- Is it “Spiritual” Fruit? Or is it “Earthly Fruit”?

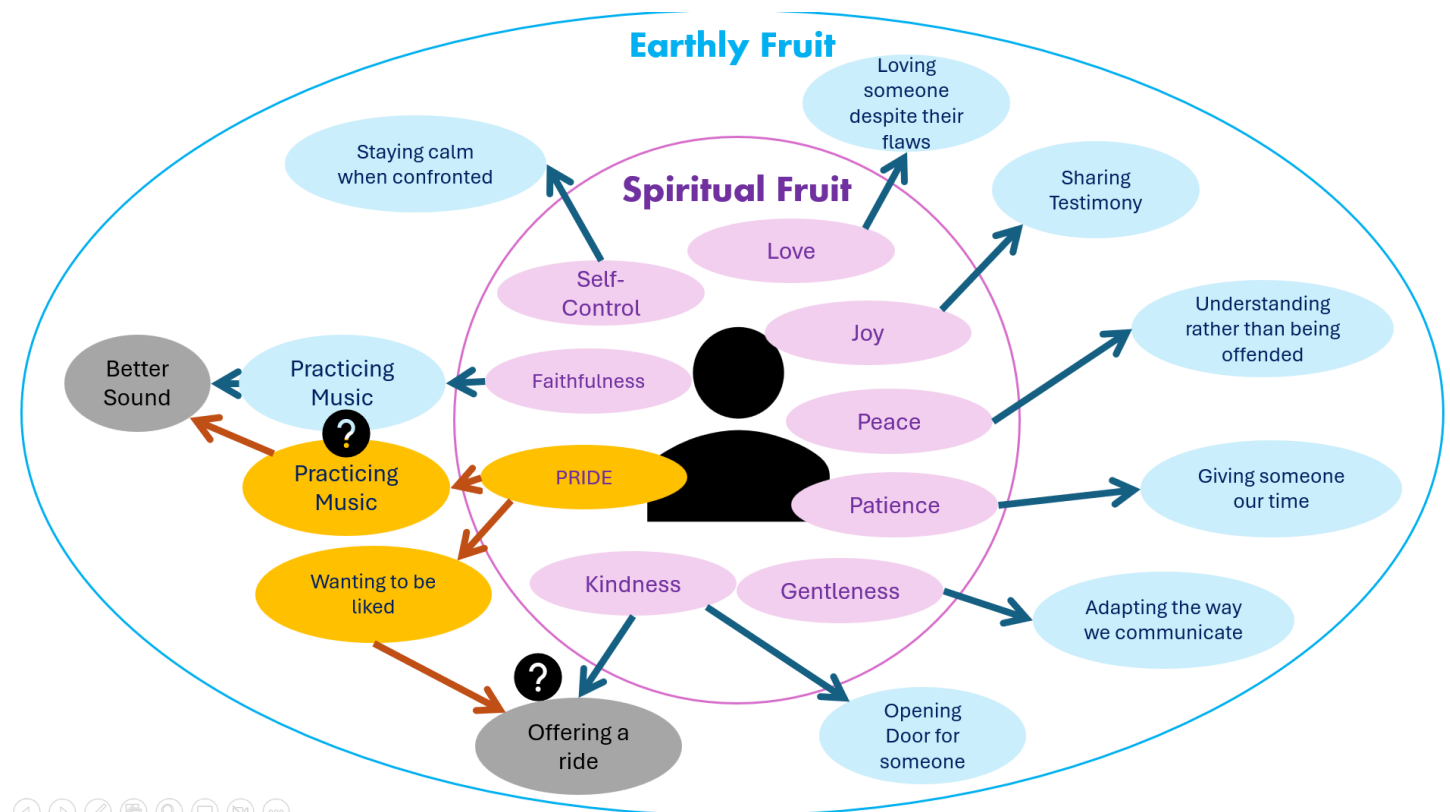
Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

These are **Spiritual** Fruits which then produce good *earthly* fruit.

- Spiritual Fruits MOTIVATE us and our actions.

Earthly fruit, while it is the *visible* fruit that we see, can be deceiving in that you can produce the SAME *earthly fruit* from very different Spiritual Fruits.



Our actions (which we see), such as offering a ride to someone, is **MOTIVATED** by **spiritual fruit** (which we cannot see). The tricky part is determining the SPIRITUAL fruit that produced that action.

- **Kindness:** motivates us to offer a ride to help someone else.
- **Pride:** motivates us to offer a ride for selfish reasons (i.e. so others will like us, to feel better about ourselves)

BOTH produce the exact same earthly fruit, but they come from very different places.

Another example:

- **Faithfulness:** “I’m going to practice my part so that I better honor God”.
- **Pride:** “I’m going to practice my part so that I sound good”.

Again, both produce the same earthly fruit, but the condition of the spirit is vastly different.

Summary

Why it matters?

- Earthly fruit stays here on earth
 - Good earthly fruit is GOOD. It serves a time & purpose.
 - God knows the motive & intent behind each action that we do (even if we do not)
- Spiritual fruit goes with us
 - In the end, this is what we will hold with us when we stand before God.

[Matthew 7:22 \(NIV\)](#)

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Challenge

As we move forward in our team building & growth, we need to challenge ourselves (and each other) to not only look at the earthly fruit, but to discern the Spiritual Fruit that produces that earthly fruit.

- **One Example:** The congregation is engaging, is it because we are pointing to Jesus? Or is it just a song they like?