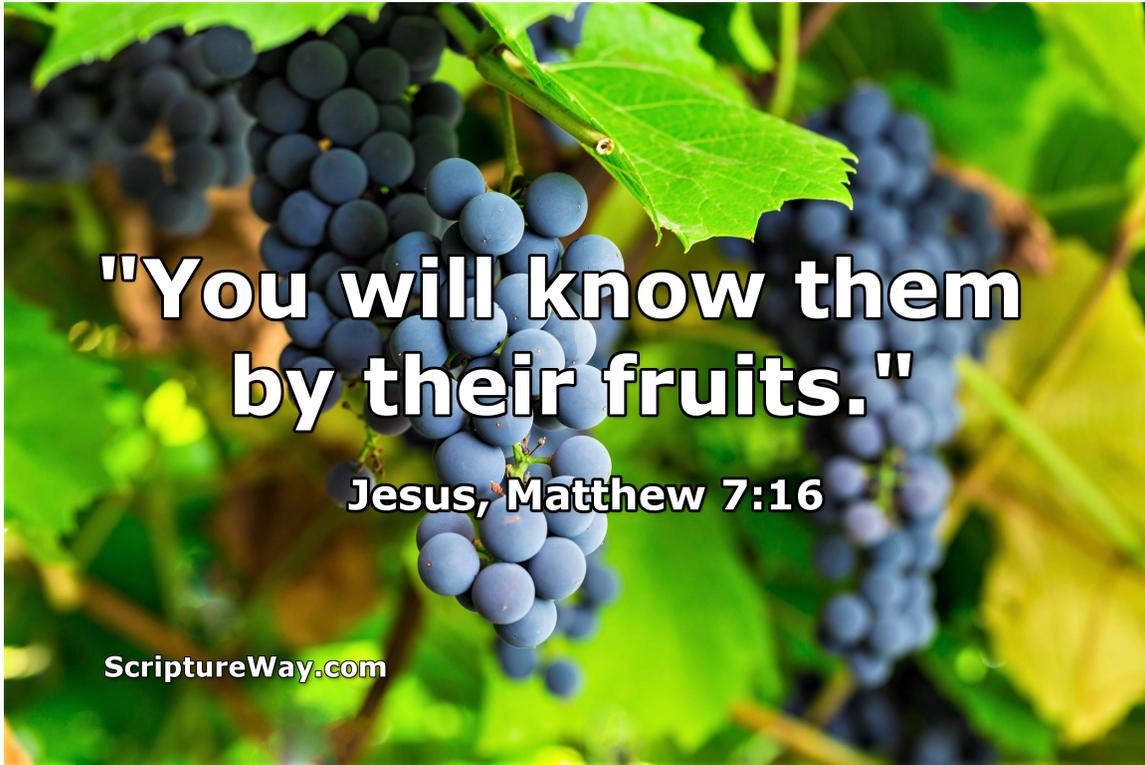


“Characteristics of a Child of God – Part 1”

25 August 2019

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You Will Know Them by Their Fruits - Matthew 7:16 - 123RF Photo - Used under license

"You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16)

"By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:10)

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

This lesson is the second in a series on "The Children of God." The first

lesson in the series discussed "Becoming a Child of God" (Ref. 1). Today's lesson is the first of two lessons on the Characteristics of a Child of God.

Consider. The Bible describes the children of God as having certain characteristics. How do you know a child of God when you see one? What are the distinguishing marks of a child of God?

A child of God bears spiritual fruit. A child of God passes the fruit test. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?" (Matthew 7:16) A child of God is recognized by the fruit that he or she bears.

Jesus said that in order to bear much fruit, we must abide in (*remain in, stay connected to*) him. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, Ref. 2). Bearing spiritual fruit is the natural outgrowth of being attached to the vine, Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The first characteristic of a child of God is a person who is bearing spiritual fruit.

A child of God practices obedience, righteousness, and godliness.

- ***Obedience*** - A child of God obeys and does God's will. In the parable of the two sons, the son who did go to work in the vineyard did the will of his father (Matthew 21:28-31). Note the difference between doing God's will and rebelling against or refusing to do God's will. Jesus emphasized the importance of doing God's will when he said, "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). Obeying God's will is essential for our relationship with Jesus and our heavenly Father.

- *Righteousness* - A child of God practices righteousness and does not willfully, habitually sin. 1 John 3:10 says, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God ..." Practicing righteousness means *doing what is deemed right by the Lord, i.e. what is approved in His eyes* (HELPS-Word studies, Ref. 3). 1 John 3:9 illustrates what it means to practice righteousness. "No one who is born of God *practices sin*, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9, italics added).
- *Godliness* - The Apostle Paul instructs his spiritual son, Timothy, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). The Greek word for *discipline* is *gumnazó*, which means *train oneself with full effort* (Ref. 4). The English words "gym" and "gymnasium" come from this same root. The Greek word for *godliness* is *eusebeia*, which means *piety (reverence) toward God*. *Eusebeia* also means *devotion* (Ref. 5). In the same way that an athlete trains with full effort in a gym, every child of God should train with full effort in reverence and devotion towards God.

A child of God is led by the Spirit. When we are a child of God, the Holy Spirit is our guide for life (Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth and helps us understand the scriptures (John 16:13, John 14:26, Ref. 6). The Holy Spirit helps us to put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13). The Holy Spirit guides us in making decisions (James 1:5), what to do (Acts 10:19-20), and where to go (Acts 16:6-10). A child of God has an active, dynamic relationship with God, and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit in his/her life.

Apply. Are you exhibiting the distinguishing characteristics of a child of God? Consider the main points in this lesson:

- Are you bearing spiritual fruit?
- Are you obeying and doing God's will in all matters?
- Are you practicing righteousness, and not practicing willful sin?
- Are you training with full effort in your devotion to God?

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- Are you seeking and receiving the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study the scriptures and make personal decisions?

In the next lesson, we will continue our study of the Characteristics of a Child of God.

References

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