

Ice Breaker Question:

What is your favorite fruit to eat and why?

Read and discuss this week's scripture [Matthew 7:15-29].

1. At the beginning of this passage, Jesus is addressing leaders in the church. What attributes do you think are most important and what attributes are least important for church leaders?
2. Jesus says "a good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." In other words, you can see the health of a tree based on its fruit. Give some examples of fruit Jesus might be talking about. How are you doing in producing fruit in your life?
3. Jesus says that he will say to some people, "I never knew you." What do you think it means for God to know us? Does it scare you to think about God knowing you? What is the connection between God knowing us and us knowing him?
4. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus says the one who puts his words into practice is wise. One who does not put Jesus's words into practice is foolish. Dale Bruner says, "Christians must not fool themselves into thinking that either hearing good teaching or studying the Bible are by themselves doing the will of the Father." Do you ever fool yourself into thinking that?
5. As we finish this series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, what are some of Jesus' words you need to put into practice? Here are some reminders of what Jesus says:
 - Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Matt 5:7)
 - Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44)
 - Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:10)
 - Therefore do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. (Matt 6:34)
6. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew says that "the crowds were astounded at his teaching." What astounds you about Jesus? Do you still have some amazement in your current faith that you had when you first had faith in Jesus?

Prayer Requests:

- > Prayers of healing for Harry Milli, Hadley Lehr, Jim Bauldauf, Jim Jett, and Kristyn Looney.

Reminders for your group:

- > Lenten Worship Services | Wednesdays through March 23 | 7 am | Sanctuary
- > Service Project Idea: Groups are needed to set up a station for ZPC's Passion Walk on Sunday, March 20 after the 10:30 service. [Betsy Howden; betsyh@zpc.org; 317.873.8137x1010]

Leader's Notes:

[Question 1] Leaders need not have worldly success or be famous to have the attributes of a leader that Jesus wants. Instead of how many people attend my church, or how many books I've written, Jesus might look at these things: Do I care for the poor and the hurting, love my enemies, am I salt and light, am I judgmental, or are my prayers from the heart?

[Question 2] If you are healthy on the inside and following Jesus actively, you will produce good fruit. You might look back at the Beatitudes, Matthew 5, and produce fruit of being poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for righteousness, be a peacemaker; give to the needy, go the extra mile, or love and pray for your enemies.

[Question 3] It is scary to think of God knowing us – in our human sinfulness and frailties. It is also scary for Jesus to say, "I never knew you." We need to be open to God in our prayers and with vulnerability confess to God our needs, especially our need for him. In our weakness, God is strong. We need to be open to seeking God first and letting him see us, so we can also see him at work in our lives as we depend on him.

[Question 4] For those of us who like to study the Bible, we can fool ourselves into thinking Bible study itself is doing God's will. Throughout the New Testament, and here specifically in Matthew 7, Jesus calls us to do his will and to show our faith through our actions, by living out what we read in God's Word.

[Question 5] You might choose from this list or take a quick look at Matthew 5, 6, 7 to see what else Jesus teaches that sticks out to you. To be active in faith, we need to live out Jesus' words.

[Question 6] If you've been a Christian for a long time, it is easy to become jaded about the world or even bored with your faith. So, look for God at work around you and be astounded and amazed that God is alive and active in the world.