

## WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 7:15-29

*Men are known by the fruit of their labors.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

**Teaching Points for Class Discussion:**

**The motivation of our hearts is known by our fruit.** The Lord told Samuel that “man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). This truth is shown throughout Scripture. Here in this text we see that men will come to the church claiming to speak for God, yet inwardly they are corrupt. The fruit of their lives will not match the holiness God’s Word calls for. We can recognize those who are false by what comes out of their lives. This applies to everyone. In fact, the fruit of our lives is a good indicator of where our heart’s devotion is set. Our secret life is the part of our life that others do not often see. What goes on in secret will, in time, bear fruit, good or bad, in keeping with what is good or bad in our hearts.

**Words alone are worthless** – This passage teaches us the sober truth that people are not Christians just because they call themselves Christians. Just because a person calls Jesus Lord doesn’t mean that God has changed his or her heart. James said it like this: “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!” (James 2:19). We know that the demons will not go to heaven, yet they knew who Jesus was and even declared it publicly (see Mark 1:23,24). Even our good works apart from God’s grace cannot earn us a place in heaven. Believing in Jesus’ atoning death on the cross is the only way to salvation. Jesus knows all who are His. Knowing Jesus and being known by Him is the key. Good words and even good deeds can never be valuable enough to purchase salvation. There is no salvation other than the salvation Christ alone purchased for those who are His. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

**The wise builder builds upon the rock.** The foundation for all our good works is Christ and His Word. If we do good works but don’t have the foundation of Christ, we are building on sand. It is interesting to note that storms come for both those who build on the sand and those whose foundation is Christ, the rock. James 1:1-3 and 1 Peter 1:6,7 explain that God uses the stormy trials of life to build our faith,.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

Jesus Christ is the rock-- the sure foundation upon which we should build our lives. There is no other foundation upon which to build that will last. In the parable of the wise and foolish builders, the man who built his house on the rock is building his house upon Christ. When we trust Christ, the rock and the foundation, we trust the one who paid the penalty for our sin. That rock is the basis of our claim to forgiveness and life everlasting in heaven.

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAMAUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

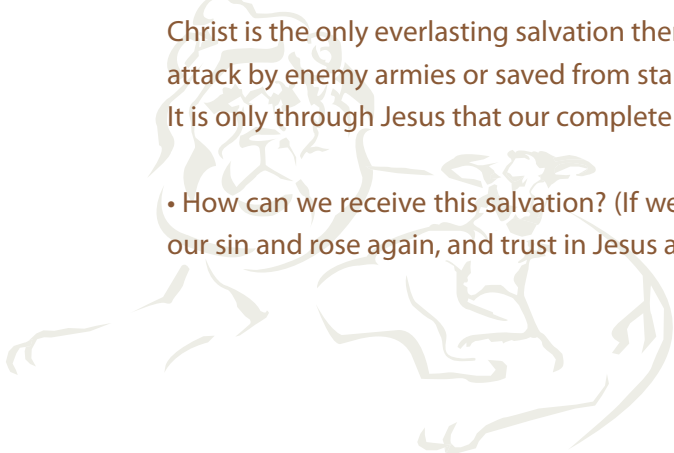
**Bible Passage: Isaiah 51:5-8**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

It is only through Jesus that we will have everlasting salvation. Here, through Isaiah, God promised Israel a day when His righteousness, salvation and justice would come to the nations. God's salvation and righteousness will never fail, because the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross defeated sin and death forever. Those who trust in Christ walk in His righteousness and will live forever with Him in heaven.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- How do we know the salvation Isaiah is writing about refers to our salvation in Christ? (Our salvation in Christ is the only everlasting salvation there is. Some may have been saved from disease, or saved from attack by enemy armies or saved from starvation, but they still needed to be saved from sin and death. It is only through Jesus that our complete and everlasting salvation is found.)
- How can we receive this salvation? (If we believe in the gospel, that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sin and rose again, and trust in Jesus as our only hope, the Bible tells us God will save us.)



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### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

*Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.*

### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

#### GUESS THEM BY THEIR FRUIT

##### Supplies:

- two blindfolds
- a selection of 10 different fruits (banana, apple, pear, orange, lemon, lime, and four other more exotic fruits)
- a prize for the winning team

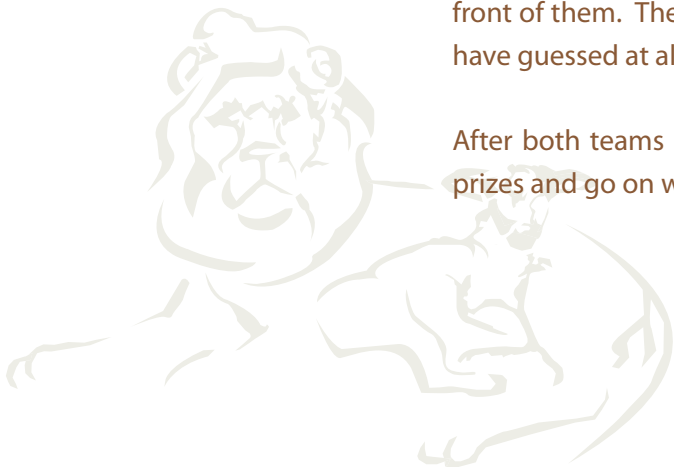
This is a fun exercise to use as an introduction to the idea that you can recognize a person by the fruit of their lives. In this case we recognize a tree by the kind of fruit that it bears.

Keep the fruit hidden and then ask for four volunteers, two boys and two girls. The boys form a team and the girls form a team. Send one team out of the room while the other plays, then bring back in the second team for their turn. (Make sure you arrange to have them go into another class where they won't be able to peek.)

Blindfold the first team and sit them in full view of the class. Pull out the first piece of fruit and show the class. Ask them which one of them wants to guess this first piece of fruit.

They may only use their index fingers to touch the fruit which you lay on a table in front of them. They get 30 seconds and then need to guess. Take turns until they have guessed at all ten. Hide the fruit and repeat the game with the second team.

After both teams have guessed, review the results and declare a winner. Award prizes and go on with your lesson.



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### SAND AND ROCK

#### Supplies:

- ½" wooden dowel cut into four 8" pieces
- two disposable plastic containers
- a small amount of concrete mix or anchor cement, enough to fill one of the containers
- enough sand to fill the second container

Prior to class, mix the cement and pour it into the first container. Insert two of the dowels like pilings into the cement standing straight up on end. Allow it to harden completely. Bring to class the cemented dowels along with the second bowl filled with the sand and the remaining two dowels.

Tell the parable to the class and then set out the dowels pushed into the bowl of sand. Have a volunteer play the wind and see how difficult it is to push over the dowel in the sand. Then bring out the dowel in the cement (rock) and see if that same volunteer can move it.

Pass around the cemented dowels for the class to touch. Draw them out about which material would make for a better foundation and why.

Then ask them what the rock represents in the story. (The rock represents Jesus and His word.)

End by encouraging the class to build their lives upon Jesus and review the Gospel with them.

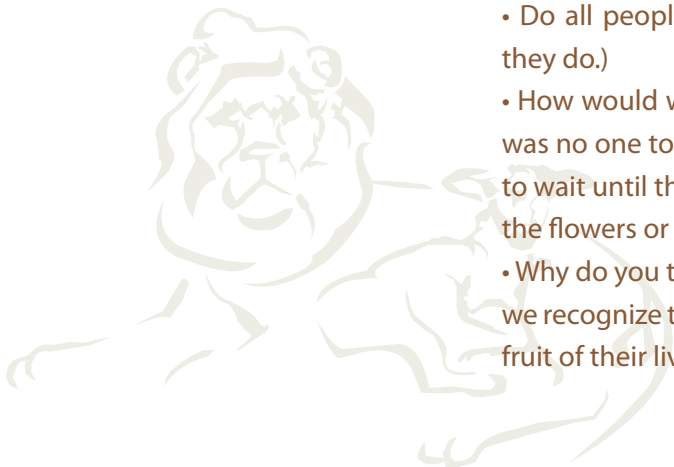
### AN ACTIVITY

#### Supplies:

- branches from several trees

You can't tell trees apart by their branches unless you are an expert. See "A Little Extra" section below. See if the class can guess which tree the branches come from. Try to get at least one branch from an edible fruit tree. See if they can guess which one will bear good fruit.

- Do these branches look essentially the same? (Yes, they do.)
- Do all people, Christian and non-Christian, look essentially the same? (Yes, they do.)
- How would we know what kind of tree we had in the dead of winter if there was no one to tell us? (You could look at the bark but you might at least need to wait until the leaves came out. Even then you might not be able to tell until the flowers or fruit came out.)
- Why do you think God used the analogy of trees and fruit to describe the way we recognize true Christians? (Just like trees we can know true Christians by the fruit of their lives.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

#### AN ACTIVITY

**Supplies:**  
pencil and paper

Draw a tree with good fruit and in each of the fruits write one of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23.

### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### HOW EASY IS IT TO FAKE CHRISTIANITY?

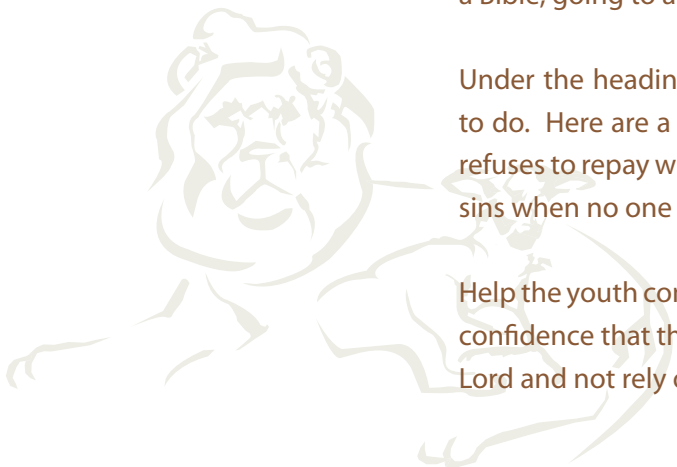
**Supplies:**  
white board and markers

Read through the scripture passage for today and ask the class how easy they think it is to fake being a Christian. The reality is that it is very easy. Many people simply claim to be Christian but never go to church, don't read the Bible, rarely pray, and live sinful lives.

Follow up this question by making two lists, one labeled easy fruit and another hard fruit. Under the heading easy fruit, list all the things the class thinks are easy to do even if you are not a Christian. Things like: calling yourself a Christian, owning a Bible, going to a church on Sunday, being kind to people in public, etc.

Under the heading hard fruit, list all the things that only a true Christian is likely to do. Here are a few examples: read their Bible every day, forgive someone who refuses to repay what they took from you, serve when no one is aware, confess their sins when no one knows what they did wrong, etc.

Help the youth consider their own lives and whether or not the fruit that gives them confidence that they are a Christian is easy or hard. Encourage them to pursue the Lord and not rely on the label of Christian.



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### A LITTLE BIT MORE

Most people cannot tell a tree by its branches. An apple tree is almost identical to a pear tree. A lemon tree is almost identical to a lime tree. What is even more amazing is that an orange tree looks a lot like a magnolia but you can't eat the fruit of a magnolia tree. Few folks could tell an apple tree from a locust tree in the dead of winter. It is not until the leaves come out and for some, not until the fruit begins to develop that they can identify which kind of tree that it is. So it is with our lives. You can't tell a false Christian from a true Christian just by what they say. Many claim to be Christians, but when you see the fruit of the life of a true Christian you can tell them apart from an unbeliever.

