



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 6:43-49**

To understand the difference between good and bad fruit (spiritually speaking, of course).

## The Joy of Being a Homeowner

I remember the year my wife and I moved into our first (and to this point only) home. We purchased an older home that needed a good amount of work, but because the housing market at the time was in favor of buying, we got an extraordinary deal on it. We painted the entire thing on the inside before we moved in. It took a lot of time because we did it ourselves (and we aren't professionals by any stretch of the imagination). Once it was done, though, it looked great. That is, until about 5 months later, when the walls started cracking in nearly every room! The house had some foundation issues that were repaired before we purchased it, and luckily the work had a lifetime transferrable warranty, so I called the company and they were out that day to begin working on it. One of the piers they had installed to fix the foundation had hit roots (common in our part of Texas) instead of the bedrock, and over the course of the following months those roots shifted, causing that corner of the foundation to fail. After a new pier was added, the home was as good as new. The sheetrock, well, was not.

The importance of a foundation cannot be overstated. You can do all of the cosmetic work you want, but when the foundation fails, it takes with it the whole structure. This week in Luke 6:43-49, Jesus teaches about the importance of a good foundation, and how over time, the foundation of an individual will make itself known by the kind of fruit that individual bears. People with good foundations (Christians) will bear good fruit at some point, and people with bad foundations (non-Christians), no matter how much cosmetic work they do, will bear bad fruit.

## Good and Bad Trees

Verses 43 and 44 begin with yet another parable of sorts: “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.” Sometimes, parables like this are over-analyzed. We think, “Well sometimes I bear bad fruit, and Jesus says, ‘No good tree bears bad fruit,’ so maybe I am a bad tree?” The parable, however, is not talking about quality of fruit, but the kind of fruit produced. Thornbushes don’t produce figs, and bramble bushes don’t produce grapes; only fig trees produce figs and grapevines produce grapes. Occasionally, a fig tree will produce a small number of figs that are not the highest quality, but they are still figs! Fruit evaluation does not mean to evaluate how ripe and colorful and perfect looking the fruit is, but whether or not the kind of fruit is consistent with the kind of tree a person claims to be.

Parables are meant to be understood in general terms. They are simple stories or illustrations that are meant to highlight one basic idea. Often, Christians can be guilty of over-qualifying every single detail of a parable in a way that was not intended by the original speaker. The point is that in general, good people bear good fruit, and bad people bear bad fruit. Jesus goes on in verse 45: “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Here, Jesus goes even further to the heart of the person. The quality of a person’s heart will dictate how they speak because “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

This speaks to our underlying spiritual condition. We, apart from Christ, require a heart transplant! The prophet Jeremiah said it this way in Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” The prophet Ezekiel spoke, however, of a time when God would make a new covenant with his people in Ezekiel 36:26-27: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” The Old Testament prophets predicted a covenant wherein God would change our hearts and place His Spirit within His people so that we might walk according to His statutes and commandments (Heb. 8:10). Jesus, then, is speaking to what He will eventually usher in through His death, burial, and resurrection. It will be evident who has believed by faith and been given a new heart and God’s Spirit; their actions will reflect their inward change.

## The Importance of Foundation

Jesus moves from the illustration of the good and bad tree to a parable regarding the importance of a good foundation. He asks a troubling question in verse 46: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” He then goes on to talk about the consequences of not following His commandments. The one who hears Jesus’ words and does them will be like a man who has built his house with a foundation, such that even floods will not be able to destroy him. The one, by contrast, who does not do what Jesus said will be like a man who built his house without a foundation, and “when the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:49b).

The point of these two parables are two-fold. Not only is obedience to Christ revealed through the words and actions of an individual (good fruit, bad fruit), but it also affects the way a person will weather difficulty in their lives (good foundation, no foundation). However, the goodness or badness of a person is not dictated by cold obedience, but through the faith in Christ and the changing power of His Holy Spirit who can transform a heart (Ez. 36:26-27). In other words, faith has real world consequences. Belief in Jesus isn’t simply a verbal

confession of intent, but a spiritually transformative moment that shapes the way a person lives, speaks, and behaves. It isn't that good behavior is pleasing to God, but that faith in God through Christ makes it possible to behave well because behavior flows from the essence of a human being, and our essence is changed when we are born again (2 Cor. 5:17). The aim, then, is faith that shapes our works, and not the other way around. You can never work yourself into better faith, but faith will always produce works (Ja. 2:17).

## What About Now?

The applications of this passage are many. For one, the behavior of an individual is in many ways predictive of a person's underlying faith assumptions. Being a Christian doesn't mean that all of the fruit a person produces will be perfect in *quality*, but it should be Christian in *kind*. That doesn't mean a Christian will never sin, but on the contrary, they will recognize it as sin and repent as often as necessary (read: every day). Another application is that our faith in Christ sets us up for more success against the currents of life than the non-believer, because we have a future hope in the midst of present suffering (Titus 2:13; Rom. 5:5). Our foundation in Christ is able to withstand the floods of life in a manner that a life without a foundation cannot. Finally, none of these things are possible unless one is born again, since everyone is in need of heart change. Only the new covenant can accomplish that (Ez. 36:26-27).

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 6:43. What will good trees not bear? What will bad trees not bear? In your own words, summarize what Jesus is saying here.

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2. Read Luke 6:44. What are each trees known by? What do the examples of the fig tree and the grapevine indicate about what Jesus is communicating in this parable? In other words, is He speaking about the *quality* of fruit, or the *kind* of fruit a tree bears? Why?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 6:45. What does Jesus connect the good and bad trees to? What will the good person bear, and from where? What will the bad person produce, and from where? What else is connected to the heart in this passage?

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2. Read Luke 6:46. What is Jesus asking in this question? Should it be possible for Jesus to truly be Lord and not submit to His Lordship?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 6:47. Who is Jesus speaking about in this passage?

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2. Read Luke 6:48. In your own words, summarize the parable and write what the parable means to convey to us. What happens when life gets difficult to the one who builds their house with a foundation?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 6:49. In your own words, summarize the parable. What is an example of building your house without a foundation? What happens when life gets difficult?

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2. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27. How is this predictive of the New Covenant that Christ established upon His resurrection?

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## Week 25 Discussion: Obedience Matters

In Luke 6:43-49, Jesus gives a parable about the importance of hearing His words and doing them. He uses the illustration of two men, one who builds his house on a rock, and one who builds his house on the sand, and each of these individuals represent obedience and disobedience. Obedience matters, in that it reflects a love for Christ (Jn. 14:21). Talk as a group about the importance of obedience to Christ's commands, and the real world effects it has on us (both positively when we obey, and negatively when we disobey), and how we might better live out our faith.

1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself an obedient Christian in general? Why or why not?
2. How are obedience and living above reproach linked together?
3. What does obedience look like when you've sinned? How should you respond?
4. Have you ever known someone who claimed to be a Christian but lived a life indistinguishable from the world? What does that say about the quality of their faith according to this passage?
5. Read John 14:21. What does this verse say about our obedience to Christ? What does it indicate?
6. How can the church better encourage Christians to live with obedience as a top priority without being legalistic?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus teaches that good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit, and that the heart dictates whether a person is a good tree or bad tree.
2. Jesus teaches that a person with no foundation will be destroyed in life, but the one who hears His words and obeys will be firm even when things get difficult.