How can we know if our faith is real?
Scripture: Matthew 13:23; 2 Corinthians 13:5
Code: QA162

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The Bible provides a clear understanding of genuine saving faith-true faith produces good fruit. In His parable of the soils and the seed, the Lord Jesus taught that, while unbelievers are unfruitful, those who are saved would bear fruit. In this parable, three of four soils produced fruitless plants, vivid pictures of receptions of God's Word that never resulted in salvation.

In contrast, fruit-bearing plants thrive in the good soil that pictures a redeemed heart. Jesus said, "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23). All believers are fruitful, even though not equally fruitful.

The Bible also describes what good fruit looks like. The following chart lists the characteristics of genuine saving faith. In essence, it serves as a guide for spiritual fruit inspection (2 Corinthians 13:5). If you are unsure about the reality of your faith, please take the time to study this chart, taking care to read each of the accompanying Scripture passages.

The Character of Genuine Saving Faith

I. Evidences That Neither Prove Nor Disprove One's Faith

- Visible Morality: Matthew 19:16-21; 23:27.
- Intellectual Knowledge: Romans 1:21; 2:17ff.
- Religious Involvement: Matthew 25:1-10
- Active Ministry: Matthew 7:21-24
- Conviction of Sin: Acts 24:25
- Assurance: Matthew 23
- Time of Decision: Luke 8:13, 14

II. The Fruit/Proofs of Authentic/True Christianity:

- Love for God: Psalm 42:1ff; 73:25; Luke 10:27; Romans 8:7
- Repentance from Sin: Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13; Romans 7:14ff; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 John 1:8-10

- Genuine Humility: Psalm 51:17; Matthew 5:1-12; James 4:6, 9ff.
- Devotion to God's Glory: Psalm 105:3; 115:1; Isaiah 43:7, 48:10ff.; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Continual Prayer: Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18ff.; Philippians 4:6ff.; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; James 5:16-18
- Selfless Love: 1 John 2:9ff, 3:14; 4:7ff.
- Separation from the World: 1 Corinthians 2:12; James 4:4ff.; 1 John 2:15-17, 5:5
- Spiritual Growth: Luke 8:15; John 15:1-6; Ephesians 4:12-16
- Obedient Living: Matthew 7:21; John 15:14ff.; Romans 16:26; 1 Peter 1:2, 22; 1 John 2:3-5

If List I is true of a person and List II is false, there is cause to question the validity of one's profession of faith. Yet if List II is true, then the top list will be also.

III. The Conduct of the Gospel:

- Proclaim it: Matthew 4:23
- Defend it: Jude 3
- Demonstrate it: Philippians 1:27
- Share it: Philippians 1:5
- Suffer for it: 2 Timothy 1:8
- Don't hinder it: 1 Corinthians 9:16
- Be not ashamed: Romans 1:16
- Preach it: 1 Corinthians 9:16
- Be empowered: 1 Thessalonians 1:5
- Guard it: Galatians 1:6-8

Adapted from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 2190.

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