

Pk's Perspectives ..Jesus is the Vine

If you've been a Christian for a while, you've probably heard someone say something like, "I don't want to ruin my witness." This points to a critical element of witnessing — a Christian's very life should put God's goodness on display.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains this using the metaphors of salt and light: *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:13-16)

First-century people used salt to preserve dried meats and, like us, used it to bring out a food's distinct flavor. But for salt to work, it needs to come into direct contact with a person or a substance. Like salt, Christians are to positively impact the people and things with which we come into contact.

Unlike salt, a lamp does its job from far away. It's not trying to draw attention to itself, but it's illuminating the world around it. Jesus highlights the point of this kind of witnessing when He indicates that the good deeds of Christians should distinctly reveal the Father. It's clear that Christian witnessing isn't just verbal testimony.

Jesus repeatedly made the case that the lives people lead demonstrate who they belong to: *"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?"* (Matthew 7:16) *"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit."* (Matthew 12:33)

On His final evening before the crucifixion, Jesus reiterates why it's so critical for Christians to witness with their whole lives: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:34-35) *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* (John 15:5-8)

In the above Scriptures, Jesus indicates that His followers' behavior will corroborate their message. When people see the Spirit's fruit in believers' lives, they'll respond more readily to the message. Our Christian witness is comprised of two parts. It's telling others what Jesus has done for the world with an emphasis on our personal experience; but it's also about putting our new life on display. The fruit of the Spirit is the stamp of authenticity that empowers our witness for Jesus. Grace & peace, love you. PK