

Two Foundations

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THE MAIN THING: At the very end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus likens the spiritual decisions we make in life to the structural integrity of the homes we live in. The integrity of our relationship with God will be tested by the storms that come in our life, and at the final judgment. What kind of foundation are we building our lives on?

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Connect and pray as a group*

1. Have you ever had to find a second opinion on something in life? Tell about your experience (either good or bad)?
2. When is it important to get a second opinion?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

Observation and Reflection

1. What were the dualities that Jesus described in vv. 13-27. (eg. Narrow gate/wide gate). Why did Jesus speak in those terms? How do these comparisons help bring the 'Sermon' to a close?
2. In v. 15, Jesus begins with "watch for false prophets." Which words in the verses characterize false prophets? What dangers do false prophets present? (vv.15-20; 24:24)
3. What response is Jesus looking for in Matthew 7:21-24? How does James 1:22 clarify what Jesus says?

Application.

1. This is the final sermon in Pastor Henry's series on 'The Sermon on the Mount.' Take time to read Matthew 5, 6, 7 to remind yourself of the teaching of Jesus. Ask yourself "Is my spiritual house built on Jesus as the foundation?" (Matthew 7:24) Be specific about the steps that you need to take.
2. Memorize/meditate on 1 John 2:3-5.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 7:13-26

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' ²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

James 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

As humans we are prone to ignore or postpone tough decisions in life by seeking second opinions — be they natural or spiritual. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had described the mindset, lifestyle and heart-attitudes of His followers (Mt 5&6). Then He asked for a decision from the people (Mt 7) as to which Kingdom they would give their lives to: the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world. Jesus related the decision to the foundation on which we build our spiritual life. While it may appear sound on the outside, if we neglect the foundation, use inferior materials or take short-cuts, it will collapse in a bad storm. In the same way, the integrity of our relationship with God will be tested by the storms that come in our lives, and at the judgment.

In Mt 7:13-27 Jesus likens our spiritual decisions to several choices we can make in life. Each one speaks of Jesus as THE way to heaven. Do you believe this declaration? If 'yes', does your life reflect your belief in Him, trusting Him to actually do what He asks you to do? Do you trust Him enough to surrender your life totally to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to transform your character from the inside out? Or do you want a second opinion?

In the midst of His challenge, Jesus says to watch out for false prophets. Why? Because some will try to seduce us away from Jesus and the narrow road. Some are easy to see, but others who come in 'sheep's clothing' we will need to discern by the fruit of their lives — their home life, character, lifestyle, accountability, fruitfulness in life and ministry, how they handle money or power, etc. Is their teaching biblically balanced or does it lead to a false spiritual confidence — in something or someone other than Christ? Two poor foundations are:

1. **Believing the right things only.** One can profess and believe the right things and know the Bible well, devote oneself to study and worship and still miss it (vs 21). How? By ignoring the call of the Spirit or picking and choosing what you obey from the Word. This is akin to building on sand. What we know IS important, though what we DO is determined by what we truly believe. Wise is the one who puts Jesus' words into practice (vs 24). God wants to be the object of our highest affection. He wants our hearts (Rom 10:9, James 2:19). We grow best when we hear and apply the teaching of God's Word from the heart.
2. **Doing the right things only.** One can mistake being a good person and doing good deeds with having a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Here, right belief is secondary to being a good person and doing good things for others. Yet, in v. 22, we see people who did many good — and sometimes astonishing — things and yet had no relationship with Jesus (Mt 24:24). Jesus cautions us not to be deceived into worshiping the power of Christ over the person of Christ. Know Him and worship Him for who He is rather than what we may get from Him or do for Him. Good works are a demonstration of our salvation, but are never a means of obtaining salvation (Titus 3:5, Eph 2:8-10). Salvation comes from faith in Jesus and His finished work alone. Genuine faith is evidenced in a close, growing relationship with Jesus and walking with Him in obedience (vs 21, James 1:22, 1 Jn 2:5), giving your life over into the hands of the One you say you believe in, fulfilling the will of God in your life.

There are only two foundations for life — hearing His Word and putting it into practice, or hearing His Word and doing it your own way (v. 24). The person who believes AND does good works is like the person who builds his house on bedrock. Partial surrender is like building your house on sand. Trust Him and do what He asks you to do.

In conclusion, what are you going to do with Jesus and His claims? Are you going to do what Jesus says, aligning the direction of your life and heart in loving Him and being obedient to Him? This is something that is supernatural and cannot be done in our own strength. Humble yourself, align your heart and will to His, and let Jesus live the Christian life through you. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 5:3).