



Passage Outline:

1. Life or Destruction? (Matt. 7:13-14)
2. Genuine or Counterfeit? (Matt. 7:15-23)
3. Rock or Sand? (Matt. 7:24-29)

What's This About?

This lesson is about how we build our lives on Jesus and His teachings.

How Can This Impact Your Life?

This lesson will challenge you to build your life on Jesus and His teachings.

1. Life or Destruction? - Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 7:13-14

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.

- A. The narrow gate: Jesus said it is small and thus perhaps easily overlooked. Therefore, few find it.
- B. The wide gate: Jesus is saying that this gate is easy to find, and apparently more attractive. Large crowds enter that gate, because this gate is the popular choice. If so many people enter there, it must be the best choice. Unfortunately, the majority is not always right.

Read article "Ancient City Gates" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- C. The narrow gate leads to a difficult road. The word *narrow* literally means difficult, in the sense of deep valleys or high mountains.
- D. The wide gate leads to a broad road. Freshly paved and well maintained, it offers plenty of rest stops and picnic areas with scenic overlooks. Entertaining and interesting attractions line this road, and travelers flock to them.
- E. The narrow road ... leads to life. What appears as a foolish choice has spectacular benefits. Trusting Jesus brings us into a personal relationship with the Father who created us, loves us, and wants us to have the best life possible. That does not mean the Christian life is easy, but it is the most fulfilling and satisfying way to live.
- F. The broad road leads to destruction. What seems so promising at its beginning ends in the worst disaster imaginable, eternal separation from God (see Prov. 14:12; Rev. 20:11-15). Even in this life, the popular path doesn't live up to its billing. Sin destroys, like a corrosive poison, the brightest and best aspects of life.

Examine Your Life

Do you determine the direction of your life based solely on the degree of difficulty that direction presents? What evidence is there in your life that you are traveling the “difficult...road that leads to life?” Which description best describes your Christian life and walk with Jesus?

- ___ The **more difficult** the task, the **less likely** I will participate;
- ___ The **more difficult** the task, the **more likely** I will participate;
- ___ The **more easy** the task, the **less likely** I will participate;
- ___ The **more easy** the task, the **more likely** I will participate;

Take this description to God in prayer and ask Him to empower you to continue traveling the “road less traveled” – that of following Jesus!

2. Genuine or Counterfeit? - Matthew 7:15-23

Matthew 7:15-23

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 he 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 perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

- A. We all have heard the old saying, “What you see is what you get.” Don’t we wish that were true of everyone we meet? Unfortunately it is not.
- B. Religious fakery is not new. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of false prophets, and Jesus here warns us to beware of them.
- C. But how can we tell whether a preacher, teacher, or layperson is genuine or counterfeit since they bleat like sheep rather than snarl like wolves? Jesus said, we can recognize them by their fruit.
- D. Thornbushes and thistles do not produce edible and nutritious fruit.
- E. Grape vines and fig trees produce edible and nutritious fruit.
- F. To expect a bad tree to produce good fruit is simply stupid; it can’t happen.

Read article “Trees Native to Israel” contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- G. Jesus makes a very serious statement: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” To verbally profess Jesus as Lord is necessary, but it is meaningless apart from a faith commitment to follow Him.
- H. Jesus made plain that the only people in heaven will be those who do “the will of My Father in heaven.”

- I. While we are saved by faith, we demonstrate our saving faith by obeying Christ's teachings and following His example with the strength He provides.
- Jesus said in **John 15:5**
 - ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.
- J. Sadly, some people who assume they are saved are really lost. This superficial Christianity, like the false prophets, masquerade in sheep's clothing.
- K. Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you!" The only way to know Jesus personally is to yield our hearts to Him by faith, that is, to make Him Lord of our lives. Anything less is just religious ritual and activity.
- L. Some of these counterfeit Christians will boast of their Christian service, saying they have prophesied, driven out demons, and done many miracles in His name. How were they able to do these things?
- i. Some of these so-called Christian works will have been done through human ingenuity, clever deception, and even satanic influences.
 - That is why Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 11:14-15**
 - ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.
 - ii. Jesus, knowing their hearts, will respond to this boasting, "Depart from Me, you evildoers!" Since they merely sensationalized Christianity, holding fast to lordship of their own lives, they did not yield their hearts to the Lord by faith.

Read article "The Day of the Lord" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:8-10**
 - ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

M. Let's nail this down:

- i. We are saved by faith in Christ Jesus.
- ii. Salvation is the root; good works are the fruit. Got it?

N. Jesus is not looking for spectacular acts of service but for consistent acts of obedience.

3. Rock or Sand? - Matthew 7:24-29

Matthew 7:24-29

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." ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

- A. While Jesus is the church's foundation, the two houses the foundation represents doing (or not doing) what Jesus commanded us to do.
- B. Jesus contrasted the fate of those who heard His words and obeyed them with others who heard and did nothing.
- C. Jesus described obedient hearers as sensible, and the disobedient hearers as foolish. Why? Because eventually the rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house.

Read article "House Construction in the First Century" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- D. The storms represent the damaging and even devastating events that befall all of us in this sin-cursed world.
- E. Those who hear and obey Jesus have a foundation that sustains them in hard times. They don't collapse into bitterness or hopelessness but endure and persevere.
- F. Those who hear but do as they please are on their own and will suffer for it greatly.
- G. The conclusion of Jesus' sermon contains strong warnings:
 - i. The broad way leads to destruction;
 - ii. Worthless trees are cut down and thrown into the fire;
 - iii. The great collapse of the house built on the sand may also mean the falling under God's righteous judgment.

Rookie or Well Trained Player

We've heard, read, studied, and even taught Jesus' words. That is vital but by itself only puts us in the position of a rookie in the National Football League. He has the play-book, has studied it, and knows his assignment for every play. He is well coached and practices hard. Then he gets in a game, forgets what he's seen and heard, and relies instead on what worked for him on the college level. Immediately, he is benched.

We know much of what we should do, but do we keep that in mind as we travel through each week? Do we practice what we've learned? Do we allow Jesus' words to bear fruit that glorifies Him? Let's renew our determination to be doers of the Word.

Let's rejoice that for this life's storms and the judgment to come, we have built on the only foundation that ensures our eternal security—the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, let's build our lives on Christ and His teachings.

Biblical Truths

1. Let us rightly judge ourselves before helping fellow believers in their Christian walk.
2. Let us be honest about our own spiritual struggles rather than pretending we "have it all together."
3. Let us relate to unbelievers with discernment, especially when witnessing to them.
4. Let us pray persistently and confidently for God's grace to obey and serve Him.
5. Let us build our lives on Jesus and His teachings.