

CORE Seminar  
Spring 2024  
Sermon on the Mount  
Course 8: Matthew 7:13-29

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### ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you for being a part of this CORE Seminar this semester. We’ve received a lot of great feedback and we hope that you all have enjoyed them. But, today marks the end of the teaching portion of this semester.

This week we’re winding down our study on the *Sermon on the Mount*. Up until this point, Jesus has instructed His disciples how they should live as part of the Kingdom – even correcting false assumptions about how they should live under God’s law. Today we’ll be in **Matthew 7:13-29**. In these verses, Jesus closes the Sermon by revealing that He is the only way, how to discern false prophets, and providing direction on how believers should build obedience on the solid foundation of God's Word. We will also see that our judgment has **eternal** significance, how we can discern from whom we **learn** about God’s Word, and on what to build our **lives**.

So, let’s pray and then we’ll dig into Scripture.

### PRAYER

Ok – let’s open our Bibles and dig into **Matthew 7:13-20**

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.**

**<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles**

In reality, this final section of the Sermon can be summarized by the word **judgment**. If you looked up the word judgment, you would discover that it has different meanings. In this section, Jesus teaches us that we must avoid eternal judgment as condemnation and practice judgment as discernment/ choices. He does this by using three metaphors, such as:

- **Gates** - Broad and narrow
- **Prophets** - true and false

### **Gates/ Ways**

Jesus uses the illustration of the narrow and broad gate to teach that there are only two ways to live. The two gates magnify the importance of judgment in the ultimate choices we make. You can almost see that as we stand at the crossroads of our lives, there is a narrow way - less travelled - and a broad way - often travelled. There are plenty of people on the broad road and the narrow road is less travelled and looks more difficult. Based on this, we think that the broad road is the right way. Our judgments are always being tested by the choices we make in life, but we must look and see where these two roads lead. Jesus emphasizes the destinations of these two ways as that which should inform our choices - destruction or life?

The two gates/ ways also underscore the **exclusivity** of Jesus Christ. Those who view Jesus solely as a great teacher may struggle with this aspect of the Sermon. Jesus is plainly teaching that there are only two ways to live – one leading to destruction and the other to life. Some find the exclusivity of Jesus offensive, yet it reflects the core message of the gospel—that He is the only way to eternal life and salvation. While our culture embraces exclusivity in various contexts, it often rejects the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ. Jesus words verify that when He states, **“those who find it are few.”**

### **Prophets**

In **verse 15**, Jesus uses the illustration of prophets – both false and true. Jesus teaches that judgment is required to determine which teachers and leaders to follow. Now, we all know that false prophets do not walk into a room and announce themselves as “false prophets.” They don’t bring overt attention to themselves and “out” themselves before their poison begins to take effect. That is not how they work. So, it is important that we are able to identify a **“ravenous wol[f]”** in sheep’s clothing. David Guzik writes that ‘the basic fault of

the false prophet is *self-interest*. It can be expressed by a desire for gain or an easy life, a desire for prestige, or the desire to advance one's own ideas and not God's ideas."<sup>1</sup>

Dustin Bengte wrote a social media post where he provided characteristics of a false teacher [prophet]. They are:

- They are man **pleasers**.
- They avoid weighty **theology**.
- They minimize the **gospel**.
- They build earthly **kingdoms**.
- They willfully twist **Scripture**.
- They feed the **emotions**.
- And, they compromise **truth**.

In all of these, we learn that false prophets/ teachers can take advantage of those who are unprepared. We'll see how we can test our leaders in the next section.

**QUESTIONS:** *In our final section of verses, we stated that these verses can be summarized by what word? [judgment – not condemnation but discernment/ choices]*

*Why do you think the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ – ie. being the only way and the only Savior – are often considered to be offensive?*

*Why do you think so many people follow the broad path and enter the broad gate?*

- *Take a look at your life. Is there something you need to change to be sure you're on the narrow path?*

*Considering Dustin Bengte's 7 characteristics of a false teacher, which one stood out to you the most? Why?*

- *Were there any that you disagreed with? Why?*

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:17-23**

*<sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/matthew/matthew-7.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/matthew/matthew-7.cfm)

**many mighty works in your name?’<sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’**

To test false prophets/ teachers, Jesus provides a couple of tests by which we can identify these false prophets/ teachers – **“You will recognize them by their fruits.”** Now, there are three types of fruit that a tree can bear – really 2, but you will understand:

- A tree can bear no fruit – and be completely barren.
- A tree can bear bad fruit – that cannot be used at all.
- And, a tree can bear good fruit – this fruit produces more fruit and nutrition.

But, Jesus is not talking about apples and oranges here. He is talking about spiritual fruit. Spiritual fruit is first and foremost centered on the individual producing a Christlikeness. Paul tells us in **Galatians 5:22-23** that the gospel will always produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit! So, if we take the examples above of types of fruit and connect it to ministry [to determine whether a prophet/ teacher is false or not] it would look like this:

- A ministry that bears no fruit – is a ministry that is **dying**. It is completely barren.
- A ministry that bears bad fruit – is a ministry that has lost its **witness** and its **effectiveness**. It’s known not for the gospel but for its outward appeal. It may look good on the outside but once someone tastes the fruit they discover the quality of the fruit.
- And, a ministry that bears good fruit – is a ministry that produces and **multiplies** and provides **nutrition** through the gospel. The fruit of this ministry frees people to live to the glory of God!

If the fruit wasn’t enough, Jesus provides another test on how we can discern false teachers. In this case, it is someone who knows the right words to “say” but they do not **KNOW** Jesus Christ as Savior. They are superficial in their connection to Christ. They may say things about Jesus, but don’t really mean it. Their focus is elsewhere, but they acknowledge the value of empty words and the fulfillment of religious responsibility – but they have no heart, no soul, and no love in their connection to Christ. Meaning, it is possible for a person to preach from the pulpit or teach in the classroom or serve on the mission field AND have no connection to Jesus Christ.

And on the day of judgment, they will **think** that they had served the Lord faithfully by performing all sorts of miraculous and supernatural acts in His name. But the problem with these acts is that they never really had a relationship of love and fellowship with Jesus. Saying His name does not equate to relationship. Saying His name does not equate to Jesus **knowing** them. Charles Spurgeon – the Prince of Preachers – once stated, **“If preaching could save a man, Judas would not have been damned. If prophesying could save a man, Balaam would not have been a castaway.”**

**QUESTIONS:** *Jesus says we'll recognize false prophets/ teachers by their fruit. What does he mean by that?*

- *Do you think that false prophet/ teachers are difficult or easy to identify?*
- *What kind of fruit would be evidence of a false prophet/ teacher?*

**What does it mean to enter the kingdom of heaven?**

- *What kind of person will enter the kingdom of heaven?*

**How can it be that some people will be able to do many impressive religious things, but will not be able to enter the kingdom?**

- *What are some examples of empty religion today?*

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:24-27**

<sup>24</sup> *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

In these verses, Jesus teaches a little bit of construction titled “Foundations 101.” He equates Himself to the **foundation** on which people should build their lives upon. The wise man builds his house/ life on the Rock, Jesus Christ. When the storms of life come against this house – rain, floods, winds – it proves strong and it **stood**, *“because it had been founded on the rock.”* Knowing this, it is foolish to build on anything else but Jesus Christ. But – as Jesus teaches – most ultimately decide to build on the sand. When those same elements [rain, floods and winds] hit the home it **fell**, *“and great was the fall of it.”*

We cannot build our lives on something based on **convenience**. – the sand may be more plentiful and convenient than there is rock. It is only those who build their lives on Jesus Christ who will stand in the final **judgment**.

**QUESTIONS:** *What is the essential difference between the two builders?*

- *How can we follow the example of the wise man who built his house upon the rock?*

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:28-29**

**<sup>28</sup> And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.**

The Sermon sets up the rest of the gospel of Matthew with the question of how people will respond to Him. And as you can imagine, when Jesus had finished preaching, the crowd and His disciples were astonished by the authority of His words. It is one thing to be impressed with His **authority**, another all together to understand the **significance** of what He is teaching, and even more significant to **bow** to Him as Lord and Savior.

The Sermon on the Mount ends where Jesus ministry really begins and where the Christian life begins. Are we building on the sand – the things this world has to offer that will all fade away – or are we building on the Rock, Jesus Christ?

**QUESTIONS:** *The last verses say, “Jesus taught as one who had authority.” In his day, teachers would often quote a Bible passage and say, “You have heard it was said...,” and then they’d quote many teachers before they would make their point. Jesus said, “You have heard it was said..., but I tell you.” He was essentially saying, “Nevermind how this has been read for a thousand years; I’m telling you how to read and understand it now.” In what ways does Jesus’ teaching here undermine our culture or understanding of life?*

**Think back over the Sermon on the Mount. What are some steps you’d like to take to put Christ’s words into practice?**

## CONCLUSION

Was there anything that stood out to you from **Matthew 7:13-29** today?

- Was there any “aha moment” for you?

## PRAYER

**Next Week: HANGOUT Night! Last week of Community Groups.**