

### GETTING STARTED

**We are better together!/Opening question:** Welcome to LIFEgroup, as always someone please share a God story from the past few days. Did anyone memorize *Matthew 7:7*? "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." Anyone remember *Matt 7:1?*

**Our Subject Today:** We are going to study *Matthew 7:13-29* and we'll be covering many subjects as Jesus completes His teaching on the mount.

### VIDEO NOTES/QUESTIONS

Share any thoughts from the Video:

### INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

**OBSERVATION:** The Sermon on the Mount compares those in the Kingdom of God with those still outside it.

**INTERPRETATION:** Please see the commentary on pages 5-6.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** Please see the following 6 application questions. (You do not have to cover all 6, choose the best ones for your group)

Read *Matthew 7:13-14*

1) Why do you think Jesus choose the narrow gate that leads to life (Salvation)? Why do so many people choose the wide gate?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Jesus said : *John 10:9* "I am the gate..." *John 14:6* "I am the way..." A narrow gate relates to the fact that we face the gate alone with no baggage. There is only one way to be saved, by repentance and faith in Jesus. However, it appears easier to go through a wide gate, to go along with the crowd.

**DIG DEEPER:** How does *Psalms 1* describe the differences between those who choose the narrow gate versus those who do not? What are their actions and attitudes?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)****Read *Matthew 7:15-16***

2) Today, false prophets are false teachers; what is the message and motive of a false teacher? How can you spot a false teacher?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** False teachers sound religious but are motivated by money, fame, sex, or power. You can spot a false teacher because they minimize Jesus and His teaching and glorify themselves. They contradict, minimize, or alter the Word of God especially in regard to the Word of God, the Trinity, the person of Christ, and salvation. They use Jesus to promote themselves.

**DIG DEEPER:** What warning did Jesus give in *Luke 6:26*? How does Peter describe false prophets in *2 Peter 2: 1-3*? How does Jude describe false prophets in *Jude 8-13*?

**Read *Matthew 7:17-20***

3) How does “cost” and “life change” tell us if a person is truly a child of God? Someone, please share a “cost” and “life change” story from your life experience, either from the past or present. If we are known by the fruit we bear, what kind of fruit does a believer produce?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** It “costs” a person to become more like Jesus. A person’s character represents the fruit. Fruits of the Spirit *Gal. 5:22-23*.

**DIG DEEPER:** *Heb 5:14* indicates that mature believers have been *trained* to discern good and evil. They can separate good teachers from false teachers. What are some of the ways this training occurs?

**Read *Matthew 7:21-23***

4) These are strong words from Jesus. As we apply these words, it could be very frightening to know that although we may have said all the church words, attended worship and life groups that we still may not end up in Heaven one day. Are you 100% sure you are saved; if not can we settle that in group today? **(If needed, please use the *Prayer of Salvation on Page 4*)**

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Be prepared to lead your group through the salvation prayer we have included it in the weekly email. Praying for your group this week!

Remind them that all believers have had to make their own decision in this and is nothing to be embarrassed about. State your willingness to speak privately with them. However, at some time they will need to publicly declare their association with Jesus.

**DIG DEEPER:** Did Jesus prophesy and cast out demons? How do these outward actions compare with living by faith and having a relationship with God through Christ’s death?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)****Read *Matthew 7:24-27***

5) At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches about two houses that look alike but the foundations are different. One of the main differences is one is obedient. What does obedience look like in the life of a Jesus follower?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Obedience is becoming more and more the habit of the Christian's life regardless of struggles or persecution. Obedience includes actions and attitudes.

**DIG DEEPER:** How does *James 1:22*, "be a doer of the word..", correlate with this passage? What are the results of obedience in *James 1: 23-25*? How do *Heb 10: 34* and *Matt 13:44* describe the person who chooses to build his house on the rock? (Joy! Following Christ is worth whatever it costs.)

**Read *Matthew 7:28-29***

6) During Jesus' day, teachers of the law taught from tradition but Jesus did not teach from tradition. What did He teach from and how was his teachings different?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Because Jesus is the Word - John 1:1 He was the Word! "in the beginning was the Word, and Word was Jesus..." Jesus is the authority. This authority would only belong to God.

**DIG DEEPER:** Noticed that the text says that the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching which does not necessarily indicate belief. What do you see in our text today that might warn those who are only amazed or intrigued by Jesus but refuse to accept his authority?

**MY TAKE-AWAY****POSSIBLE TAKE-AWAY:**

- Have I chosen the narrow gate?
- Do I produce the right kind of fruit?
- Have I let false teachers affect me?
- I am ready to meet Jesus?



## COMMENTARY

**Matthew 7: 13-14.** All this is but the outward manifestation of the eternal contrast between the children of light and the children of darkness. In this sense, the gate serves as the figure of their choice; and the way, as that of their walk and conduct. By the strait gate we understand *humility*, repentance, and renunciation of the world, through poverty in spirit. The wide gate is the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, or the spurious riches of a piety which is combined with the service of mammon. Similarly, the narrow way is the prosecution of those spiritual attainments described in the seven beatitudes; while the broad way indicates that corruption in doctrine and life, which, passing from one extreme to the other, renders the way so wide and ill-defined. The contrast between the goal of these two ways is exceedingly significant. In the one case, it is life; in the other, destruction,—first, as matter of inward experience, then of outward fact, and, lastly, of eternal destiny (rest and unrest, deliverance and destruction, salvation and condemnation). The figurative language of this passage is closely connected with what precedes about the relation of Christians to their fellow-men. It is your duty to devote yourselves to others,—not according to the measure which they demand at your hand, but according as you would have them do to you. You are not to follow the multitude on the broad way, but to seek with the few (John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* [Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008]).

**False prophet:** The pages of the OT are filled with men and women who fit the description of a false prophet given in *Jer. 14:14*. Other examples are in *Jer. 23:21-33* and *Zech. 10:2*. Punishment for prophesying falsely was severe. False prophets were cast away from God's presence and permanently humiliated. They suffered the destruction of their cities (*Jer. 7:14-16; 23:39*).

Jesus and the apostles spoke many times about false prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about the marks of a false prophet and the consequences of being one (*Matt. 7:15-23*). He said to be careful when the world loves a prophet's words because a prophet who is false is apt to be popular (*Luke 6:26*).

The apostles instructed believers to be diligent in faith and understanding of Christian teachings, in order to discern false prophets when they arise (*2 Pet. 1:10; 1:19-2:1; 1 John 4:1*). The tests of a prophet are: (1) Do their predictions come true (*Jer. 28:9*)? (2) Does the prophet have a divine commission (*Jer. 29:9*)? (3) Are the prophecies consistent with Scripture (*2 Pet. 1:20-21; Rev. 22:18-19*)? (4) Do the people benefit spiritually from the prophet's ministry (*Jer. 23:13-14, 32; 1 Pet. 4:11*)?

Jesus said the false prophets would be cut down and burned like a bad tree (*Matt. 7:19*). *Second Peter 2:4* describes being cast into pits of darkness. The ultimate punishment appears in *Rev. 19:20; 20:10*—the false prophet, the beast, and the devil will be thrown into a lake of fire and brimstone and be tormented forever (Donna R. Ridge, "False Prophet," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003]).

**False prophets:** Refers to those whose teaching contradicts Jesus' teaching. Beginning in *Matt 5:17*, Jesus has reinterpreted the established religious and social norms of His day. Here, He portrays those who contradict His instruction as false prophets—people who falsely claim to speak on God's behalf (compare *2 Pet 2:1*) (John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016]).

**Matthew 7:15-20.** Even though he spent most of his time on the tree metaphor, Jesus had an important reason for inserting the wolf metaphor (*Acts 20:27-31*)—to alert his listeners to the danger of a false prophet. If the false prophets were thought of as a source of bad fruit, then the disciples might think it was enough simply to recognize and ignore the false prophet, refusing to consume his bad fruit, and awaiting God's judgment on him. But the wolf metaphor attributes a more active and malicious motive to the false prophet. He is actually an enemy of the sheep, and, if not confronted, will get his way by destroying the sheep.

Although *Matthew 7* distinguishes between true kingdom righteousness and hypocritical pseudo-righteousness (*5:20*), *Matthew 17:15* comes closest to identifying the religious leaders as Jesus' target. Of all the people in Jewish culture, they were the ones most likely to be seen as spokesmen for God. And, of the three warnings of *7:13-27*, Jesus reserved his strongest and most pointed language for this central warning. But Jesus' warning concerned not only the Jewish religious leaders of his day. He was preparing his followers (hence his church) to be able to discern those of any age who would profess to be disciples of Jesus, but who were really out for their own selfish purposes (also a major theme in *Titus* and *1 John*). Jesus repeated his central theme twice in *7:16, 20*: By their fruit you will recognize them.

## COMMENTARY

This warning pertains primarily to those who were never believers in the first place. But believers would also do well to heed this as a warning against any kind of false or hypocritical obedience in our lives. It is possible for a believer, destined for eternal life, to experience some of the unhealthy fruit of death and destruction along the way (*1 Cor. 3:1-4; 11:30-32*).

**Matthew 7:21-23.** As is true throughout the sermon's conclusion (7:13-27), the emphasis here is on *doing* God's will. This time the doing is contrasted with lip service, calling Jesus Lord, Lord.

But the point of the passage is that someone else's acknowledgment of Jesus' deity will not be sufficient for their entrance into the kingdom, if they have not done the will of the Father. Note that this does not imply that if a person did the will of the Father but did not acknowledge Jesus as Lord, he or she might still enter heaven (see *Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11*).

The evidence that the claimants brought before Jesus in 7:22 would seem quite spectacular and convincing to most of Jesus' listeners. In fact, these were the kinds of works Jesus had been doing for some time (4:23-25). They were validating his claims and drawing large crowds. Therefore, this was a startling statement for Jesus to make. His listeners must have thought, *If we cannot believe prophecy, exorcisms, and miracles—especially those done in the name of Jesus—as signs of a true prophet, then what can we believe?*

Jesus went to this length to demonstrate the importance of righteousness by faith alone in Christ alone (*Rom. 4*) as the criterion for entry into the kingdom. Even doing the activities that he was doing was not sufficient. We should be warned that counterfeits today will look very much like they are carrying on the work of Jesus. But we must look at their lives as well as their works.

In 7:21-23 we have seen at least three ways the counterfeits try to get by without actual obedience: (1) lip service, claiming loyalty to Jesus as Lord and God; (2) spectacular signs; and (3) performing these signs in your name, in essence claiming them to be the work of God. What would lead someone to such an elaborate subterfuge? It seems easier to obey than to go to all his trouble in an attempt to fool the Lord. Pride is the answer. In our efforts to protect the little god of "self," we humans can go to amazing lengths.

Jesus' response to the counterfeits was harsh, because he revealed that he had the power of the eternal judge. The greatest blessing in life and eternity is to know the Lord personally, and to be known in the same way by him. The greatest curse is to have this relationship denied.

The second part of Jesus' response, "Away from me, you evildoers", is a quote from *Psalms 6:8*. This is the bottom line of the sermon and kingdom righteousness. Even if a person performed works identical to those of Jesus, did those works in the name of Jesus, and called on Jesus as Lord and God, he would still be breaking God's law if his life was not lawful according to Jesus' definition throughout this sermon. True righteousness can be derived only from the Savior (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000]).

**Matthew 7:24-27.** The adjectives wise and foolish describe a person's spiritual and moral state, not his intellect. Whether one is considered wise or foolish is determined by his response to Jesus's teaching. Since OT writers described God's wrath using the image of a great storm (*Is 28:16-17; Ezk 13:10-13*), the storm that destroys the house on the sand is a picture of divine judgment. Hence, the person who hears and acts on Jesus's teaching is prepared for judgment. The one who hears but doesn't act on Jesus's words will be destroyed in the storm of judgment.

Jesus amazed the crowds with an authority that surpassed that of other teachers. First-century Jewish teachers appealed to the authority of their rabbinic predecessors. However, Jesus introduced his teachings with the contrast, "You have heard that it was said ... but I tell you" (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). By this Jesus made clear that he had the authority to interpret the law independent from and even contrary to the Jewish oral tradition and the most esteemed rabbis. The words when Jesus had finished are important for understanding the structure of Matthew's Gospel (Robert H. Stein, "Differences in the Gospels." in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017]).

For more on false teachers/prophets, [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org) explains how to recognize false prophets.

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