

Series Overview and Guides

2018-2019 ANNUAL THEME | SERIES 4

JANUARY-MARCH 2019

Objective

what we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study

We build on Jesus' ethic by God's grace.

STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock."

—Matthew 7:24-25 HCSB

"The glimpse of kingdom life (horizontally and vertically) in these chapters anticipates not only the love commandments (Mt. 22:34-40) but also grace (Mt. 5:3; 6:12; 7:7-11; cf. 21:28-46)."

—D.A. Carson
Matthew (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Premise

why we are studying this

The one who chooses to follow Jesus needs to build rightly, especially within the redeemed community. This is important for each of us, that we might persevere in the world. It is also critical for others, who need our light and saltiness. Thankfully, Jesus shows exactly how to live in His Sermon on the Mount.

STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

"You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

—Matthew 5:14-16 HCSB

"The time of trial which will show whether we are truly his followers [and not merely believers] may come upon any Christian at any time...Those who know that their faith is no more reliable than that of Peter and James and John wisely pray...'Grant that we may not fail the test.'"

— F.F. Bruce
Hard Sayings of Jesus

Theme

what the study is about

Jesus calls His followers to an ethic that exceeds anything ever imagined in human history.

STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

—Matthew 5:20 ESV

"Jesus paid full respect to the Mosaic Law...Although the Mosaic Law as a [binding ethic] was to end at the cross, Jesus called for a righteousness which would exceed it."

—John Walvoord
Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The content of this study guide is based on the sermon and personal study notes of

Dr. M. Wayne Braudrick
Senior Pastor, Frisco Bible Church

and is developed by the Frisco Bible Curriculum Team:

Writers:

Ken Bergstedt, AJ Rinaldi, Randall Satchell, Steve Wilson

Editors:

AJ Rinaldi, Randall Satchell

Layout and Design:

Steve Wilson

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

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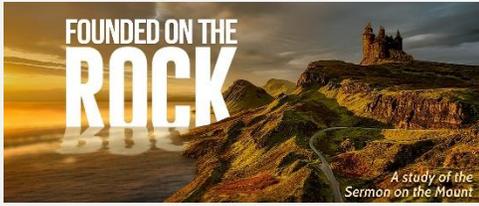
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Frisco Bible Church
8000 Sanctuary Drive
Frisco, TX 75033
972.335.8150
contactus@friscobible.com
www.friscobible.com



SERIES 4 | SESSION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:1-2

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus gave the greatest sermon ever spoken, what we call "The Sermon on the Mount." In it, the Lord lays out His ethic, specifically detailing how one builds to last. We need to listen to His voice and let it change us.

OBJECTIVE

We listen to Jesus' words.

EARTHLY RESPONSIBILITY

"We need to remember that, though a heavenly people, we have earthly responsibilities, and these are defined for us in this greatest of all sermons having to do with human conduct."

—H.A. Ironside
Matthew (An Ironside Expository Commentary)

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we live in a way which honors our Master's words.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 1: The Master Speaks

1. Read Matthew 5:1-12 and the sidebar quote by H.A. Ironside. Looking ahead to this series on the Sermon on the Mount, which verse is your greatest challenge to live out in our world today?

2. The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is holiness in the lives of believers in Jesus Christ. Using a sample of statements to understand the need for this teaching, answer the following:

True or False:

- I faithfully follow Jesus every day.
- I consistently hunger for righteousness.
- I am gentle, merciful, and always strive for unity.
- I rejoice when I am shunned for being a Jesus follower.

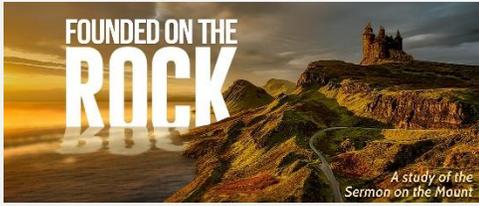
If you answered False to any of these questions, then you are missing the Master's voice. We need to hear the life-changing message in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

3. Why is living this way impossible apart from following Jesus?

4. When we have so many contrary voices shouting at us all day long, how can we strive to remember what Jesus is teaching us to be and do in this sermon?

5. Given your current circumstances, which characteristic of a follower of Jesus Christ will be important for you in the coming week?





ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:3-12

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus lays out the core of His way of life. It all begins with poverty of spirit, kenotic emptying of place, position, and prestige. This is utterly unlike every human system.

[Note: Some pretend Buddhism comes close, but that is inaccurate. Poverty of spirit leading to a vibrant kingdom in Christianity is nothing like losing personhood altogether in order to become part of nothing as in Buddhism.]

OBJECTIVE

We grow up God's way.

PURE IN HEART

"The 'pure in heart' exhibit a single-minded devotion to God that stems from the internal cleansing created by following Jesus. Holiness is a prerequisite for entering God's presence. The pure in heart pass this test, so they will see God and experience intimate fellowship with him."

—Craig Blomberg

Matthew (New American Commentary)

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we continually seek God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 2: How to Really Live

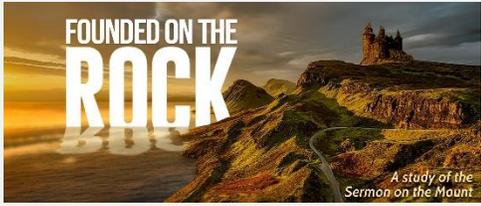
1. Read Matthew 5:3-9 together.
 - Describe the kind of person portrayed by the beginning sections of these verses.
 - What is the fruit of such a life, as described by the ending sections of these verses?
2. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit" (verse 3)? Why is this a prerequisite for the gospel?
3. Why is our being merciful (verse 7) important to God? See also Micah 6:8, Exodus 34:6, Ephesians 2:4, and James 3:17.
4. What is the result of a pure heart (verse 8)? Compare Matthew 5:8 with Psalm 24:3-4.
5. Read Matthew 5:10-12.
 - What are some likely outcomes of living to please Jesus in every way?
 - What is the promised blessing?
 - What might it look like to "rejoice and be glad" in such a situation? See, for example: Acts 5:40-42 and 16:22-25. Share other examples you know of with the group.
6. If someone in your group is facing persecution for their faith, how can you pray for them to be strong and to "rejoice and be glad"?

"Preach the gospel to yourself every day."
—Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*



SERIES 4 | SESSION 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:13-20, 5:48

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus shares His great thesis – perfection is required to enter the kingdom. This perfection is provided in Him alone as He completely and personally fulfills the Law [which was bilateral and temporal] and the Prophets [who pointed to Messiah]. The implication is that by perfectly fulfilling that limited covenant and those prophecies, Messiah Jesus He calls people to the Abrahamic covenant, which is unilateral, eternal, and entered by faith.

OBJECTIVE

We shine with God's righteousness.

LIVE OUT LOUD

Wake the neighbors, get the word out
Come on crank up the music, climb a
mountain and shout
This is life we've been given, made to be
lived out
So la la la la live out loud
Got to live out loud, now now now now

—Steven Curtis Chapman
Live Out Loud

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, for opportunities to shine so that God gets the glory, and for opportunities to tell others what God's grace means to you.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 3: Make Christianity Great Again

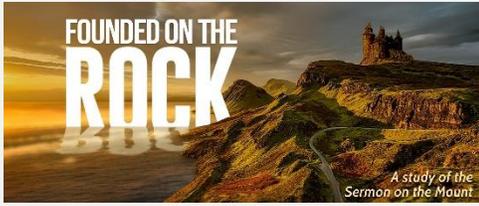
1. Read Matthew 5:13-16. What are some ways we can and should be salt and light to those around us?
2. Where are we likely to shine our lights most brightly?
3. In what situations are we most tempted to hide our light?
4. Read Matthew 5:17-20 and 48. As Christians, what are some ways to practice holy living in our world?
5. If you have ever lived under legalism, describe how it felt trying to reach the unattainable goal of perfection.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Our becoming the righteousness of God is called imputed righteousness. How does imputed righteousness help us attain the standard of Matthew 5:48?



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SERIES 4 | SESSION 4

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:21-32

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus launches from His observations re: the scribes and Pharisees, illustrating that their ethic actually lowers the bar. God's calling is much higher, reaching to the perfection of YHWH that is at the heart of the Mosaic Code and lasts beyond its terminus. There are six examples Jesus employs to emphasize His superior ethos: arguments, both in the covenant community as well as adversarial relations outside the community; marital fidelity; divorce; truthfulness, generosity, and love. The first 3 are covered in this message.

OBJECTIVE

We are holy in our relationships.

CHOOSE RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is to be chosen over maintaining hateful anger. This is more important than sacrifice or worship. Maintaining good relationships is a priority with God.

Hal M. Haller

The Grace New Testament Commentary

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we live according to the Spirit by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5).

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests

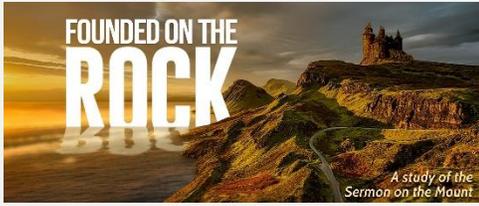
Session 4: This is Going to Hurt

1. God's ethic on arguments: Read Matthew 5:21-26.
 - Describe the difference between Jesus' teaching and the letter of the Law.
 - How does Jesus' teaching raise the bar, or set a higher standard, both for our relationships with believers and for our relationships with non-believers?
 - What is the biblical solution? See, for example, Romans 12:16-21.
 - Which characteristics described in Matthew 5:3-9 are required to live this way?
2. God's ethic on adultery: Read Matthew 5:27-30.
 - Describe the difference between Jesus' teaching and the letter of the Law.
 - What are some practical ways to guard our attention from the constant barrage of images and ideas which tempt us to lust? (No, plucking out our eyes is NOT the answer.)
 - Discuss how 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Psalm 119:9-11 can apply to this area.
3. God's ethic on divorce: Read Matthew 5:31-32.
 - Describe the difference between Jesus' teaching and the letter of the Law.
 - Read Malachi 2:14-16. What does God think of divorce?
 - What are the two New Testament exceptions? See Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15.
4. Since none of us have lived perfectly according to these standards, what then? Discuss Paul's statement of this struggle, and reliance on Christ, in Romans 7:21-8:1.



SERIES 4 | SESSION 5

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:33-47

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus launches from His observations re: the scribes and Pharisees, illustrating that their ethic actually lowers the bar. God's calling is much higher, reaching to the perfection of YHWH that is at the heart of the Mosaic Code and lasts beyond its terminus. There are six examples Jesus employs to emphasize His superior ethos: arguments, both in the covenant community as well as adversarial relations outside the community; marital fidelity; divorce; truthfulness, generosity, and love. The last 3 are covered in this message.

IMITATE THE FATHER

"And this righteousness, whether expressed in purity, honesty or charity, will show to whom we belong. Our Christian calling is to imitate not the world, but the Father. And it is by this imitation of Him that the Christian counter-culture becomes visible."

John R.W. Stott

The Message of the Sermon on the Mount

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we live Jesus' kingdom principles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests

Session 5: Just Okay is Not Okay

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37.

- What is Jesus' standard for our words, such as our promises and commitments?

- How was this standard counter-cultural in Jesus' day? What about in our day?

2. Read Matthew 5:38-42.

- How does Christ's standard for His followers contrast to that of the law, for example, in Leviticus 24:19-21?

- How did the Scribes and Pharisees misunderstand this law?

- Which beatitude characteristics described in Matthew 5:3-9 are required to live this way?

3. Read Matthew 5:43-47. How was this teaching perfectly exemplified by Jesus? See, for example, Romans 5:8 and 10.



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ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:1-8

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus details proper worship. He exposes how we perform for humans instead of God, using three Hebrew worship activities – giving, prayer, and fasting. Along the way, He shows us His ethic on proper giving, fasting, and prayer. He even shares His prayer guide – what we now call “The Lord’s Prayer”.

OBJECTIVE

We worship in Spirit and truth.

NEED TO WORSHIP

“I need to worship because without it I can forget that I have a big God beside me and live in fear. I need to worship because without it I can forget his calling and begin to live in a spirit of self-preoccupation. I need to worship because without it I lose a sense of wonder and gratitude and plod through life with blinders on. I need worship because my natural tendency is toward self-reliance and stubborn independence.”

—John Ortberg

If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we continue to grow in Christ and in our worship of him in spirit and in truth.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 6: Here’s How to Worship

1. Worship through giving. Read Matthew 6:1-4.
 - Why is it more natural for us to perform for people rather than for God even if no one else notices?
 - Discuss what Jesus says about those whose primary motive is to be seen by others.
 - What are your motives for giving to the church and to the needy? How have your motives changed as you have matured in your Christian walk?
 - How can we battle the desire to be noticed and praised by people?
2. Worship through praying. Read Matthew 6:5-15.
 - What are your motives for praying? How have your motives changed as you have matured in your Christian walk?
 - When you pray, how do you avoid always saying the same things?
 - What are some things you have found useful in building and maintaining a private prayer discipline? What are some areas in which you struggle, or want to improve?
3. Worship through fasting. Read Matthew 6:16-18.
 - Fasting as a means of worship is not as common as giving and praying. Why do you think that is?
 - If you have fasted as a means of worship (not for health or self-discipline reasons), share your experience with the group.
 - If you have fasted as a means of worship, what are some ways you keep it from being known by others?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 7

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:19-34

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus takes us through a primer of properly responding to God's holy jealousy. To prosper now and forever, we need to establish our values on God's attributes. We need singularity of focus and to serve one Master. And we need to trust God, seeking His kingdom and righteousness.

OBJECTIVE

We serve one Master.

THE SINGULAR EYE

"If you strive after moral excellence and at the same time clutch at power and possessions, you will most likely lose these last from having an eye to the former also; and you will most certainly lose the former."

—Epictetus

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we completely trust God and live our lives singularly devoted to glorifying Him.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 7: We Need Singularity

1. Jesus calls His followers to singularity of value, focus, service, and trust in God.
 - What happens when believers are divided in these four areas?
 - Discuss specific ways that believers tend to become divided in these areas.
2. **Singularity of Value:** Read Matthew 6:19-21.
 - What is the difference between storing up treasures on earth versus storing up treasures in heaven? Give some examples of each.
 - How can we be more singular in valuing the treasures which are eternal?
3. **Singularity of Focus:** Read Matthew 6:22-23. A healthy eye produces clearly focused images to guide the rest of the body.
 - How can we encourage one another to remain clearly and singularly focused on God?
4. **Singularity of Service:** Read Matthew 6:24.
 - Have you ever seen someone trying to please two competing bosses? Describe the result.
 - Why is money a telling barometer of our singularity, or not, of whom we serve?
5. **Singularity of Trust in God:** Read Matthew 6:25-34.
 - Choose one or more of the three areas (value, focus, service) and describe how fully trusting God is essential to singularity in that area.

APPLICATION

Think about your own life. Would a close analysis of your daily activities or monthly expenses show a singularity of value, focus, service, and trust in God?

- What are some changes you can make, or have made in the past, to increase your singularity of devotion?
- How can the group pray with you in one or more of these areas?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 8

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 7:1-6

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus lays out an incredibly strong statement against judgment within the covenant community. His image has become burned in the retina of mankind's collective cultures (rather like a petrified log, in fact.) However, lest His listeners of any culture or age think that lack of judgmentalism means no standards, the Lord immediately speaks verse 6. Discernment is important and commanded.

OBJECTIVE

We discern without judging.

SCRIPTURAL JUDGMENT

Clarification on the matter of judgment is needed today because Matthew 7:1 is often used against Christians to intimidate them from engaging in scriptural judgment. The verse is used to promote tolerance of erroneous and destructive beliefs and practices by associating their critics with mean-spiritedness and arrogance."

—Hal M. Haller

The Grace New Testament Commentary

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we learn the ways of humble discernment from the Holy Spirit.

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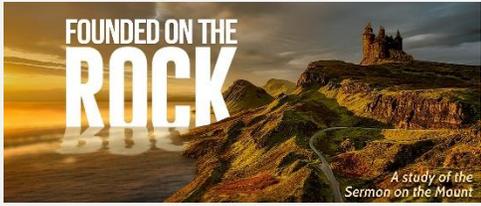
Session 8: Don't Judge; Discern

1. Read Matthew 7:1.
 - How is this statement frequently used to deny an absolute standard of right and wrong?
 - Whose business is judgment? Read James 4:11-12 and Acts 10:42.
2. Read Matthew 7:2-4.
 - Apart from interfering in God's business, what is the problem with our being judgmental of others? Compare Romans 2:1-3.
 - How does our judgmentalism prevent us from seeing issues clearly? What is its root?
3. Read Matthew 7:5-6.
 - As opposed to the pride of judgmentalism, what is the root of discernment?
 - Discuss the difference in attitudes and actions between verse 1 and verse 5.
 - How does verse 5 show that the common use of verse 1 is a misinterpretation?
 - How do verses 5 and 6 uphold the idea of an absolute standard of right and wrong?
4. How can we recognize the log of judgmentalism in ourselves?
5. How can we learn to be humble and gentle in discerning and addressing wrong behavior in a brother or sister in Christ?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 7

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 7:7-12

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus' Golden Rule is introduced. This summary of the entire OT ethos is succinct, memorable, and worthy of the fame it has achieved. However, we mustn't forget (as many do) that it is introduced with a "Therefore." The context is persistence in drawing near to God. The contextual logic thus adds an important wrinkle to understanding & living the Golden Rule:

God engages with us, provides for us, and rewards our persistence in approaching Him. It is because of this unbreakable bond with our Father that we can do to others as we would have them do to us. The big idea is to be golden ruled not because of the horizontal relationship with other humans, but rather because all we need is met in the vertical relationship with the Father.

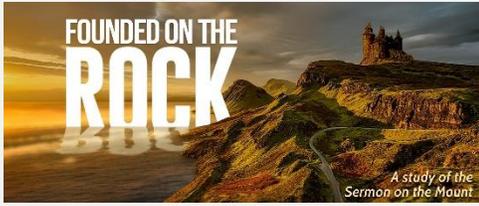
PRAYER

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Session 9: Snakes and Stones

This lesson was not available at the time of publication. Please check for updates.





ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 7:13-23

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus deals with justification, showing that His heavenly kingdom fulfills the limited aspects of salvation promised to Israel, least of the nations. He then describes the danger of false prophets and self-deluded non-believers, warning His people against them.

OBJECTIVE

We share the gospel.

DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP

"Jesus clearly did not believe in the doctrine of universalism that is growing in popularity today, the belief that everyone will eventually end up in heaven (see also John 14:6). Entrance through the narrow gate onto the narrow way will eventually lead a person into the kingdom. The beginning of a life of discipleship (the gate) and the process of discipleship (the way) are both restrictive and both involve persecution."

—Thomas L. Constable
Constable's Notes on Matthew

PRAYER

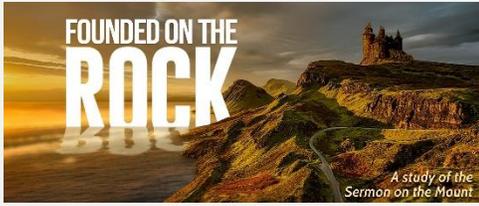
Pray for each other this week, that we consistently preach and live the gospel to everyone around us.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 10: Enter the Narrow Gate

1. There is a popular saying that "looks can be deceiving." Give an example from your experience where this proved to be true.
 - Why is the way easy that leads to destruction?
 - Why is the other way difficult?
 - What makes the narrow gate and the hard road still worth it for the few who enter?
3. Read verses 15-20.
 - How are we to recognize a false prophet?
 - Why do so many false teachers attract crowds?
4. Read verses 21-23.
 - On the surface, how does the fruit of these people appear?
 - What is Jesus's conclusion? Why?
 - What is God's will? Read John 6:40.
5. Spirit-led discernment is required to recognize those who claim to be Christians but are not believers.
 - How can we help such people understand their need to put their trust in Jesus for salvation and enter the narrow gate that leads to eternal life?





ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 7:24-29

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus takes the sum of His ethic and declares that those who build on it are firmly established. Though applicable for non-believers seeking justification, this is actually a sanctification passage (like all the Sermon). Jesus is calling believers to follow His ethic by building their lives on His words. Truly, that is building to last.

OBJECTIVE

We live out Jesus' commands.

MORE THAN A PROPHET

"The sermon ends with a challenge not to ignore responding to Jesus and his teaching. Jesus is a figure who is not placing his teaching forward because it is a recommended way of life. He represents far more than that. His teaching is a call to an allegiance that means the difference between life and death, between blessing and woe. Jesus is more than a prophet."

—Darrell Bock
Jesus According to Scripture

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we build to last by acting according to God's word through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 11: Build on the Rock

1. Read Matthew 7:24-29. What is the difference between the wise and the foolish man?
2. Before we can do what Jesus says, we must first *hear* His words. What are some ways we can continue to gain a deeper understanding of God's word?
3. If we are building our lives on the rock of Jesus' words, what is the outcome when the eventual storms arise?
4. Christians are not exempt from ignoring the Word of God. What will happen if we hear, but do not do, what Jesus said?
5. Review the series Objective, Premise, and Theme on page 1 of this study guide. Discuss some key takeaways from our study of Matthew 5-7?
6. Take some time this week to reread Matthew 5-7. Pray for the desire and the wisdom to build your life more solidly on God's Word and not on the ways of the world around us.

