



# SERMON ON THE MOUNT DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Matthew 7:24-29

### INTRODUCTION

In this final section of the Sermon on the Mount so far, Jesus has used a series of contrasts to demand a response from his audience. They are to choose the narrow road as opposed to the wide road (7:13-14), listen to true teachers as opposed to false ones (7:15-20), and to do God's will over and against merely professing to love him (7:21-23). Jesus turns to one more contrast to conclude his sermon.

### MAIN POINT

Christians must not only hear God's words, but actively obey them.

### REFLECT

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus contrasted *saying* and *doing*. He warned that not everyone who calls him "Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is reserved for those who do the Father's will. In other words, it's not enough just to be a professing Christian. Genuine, saving faith will also lead to a life of obedience to God's commands.

In verses 24-28, Jesus contrasts *hearing* and *doing* by giving us a picture of two builders. Both build houses that perhaps look quite similar. Despite the appearance of similarity, however, there is a crucial difference underneath the surface: one house has a solid foundation, while the other has been built on the sand. This difference may go unnoticed for a time. But when the storm comes, it will be clear which house had the solid foundation.

These two builders represent genuine Christians and those who merely appear to be so. Note that both groups hear Jesus' words (vv. 24, 26), but only one group obeys the words they hear (v. 24). The Pharisees embodied those who merely heard God's words. They were deeply familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and had large sections of it memorized. Nevertheless, as Jesus has made clear throughout the Sermon on the Mount, they were far from God.

Two-thousand years later, it is still all-too easy to build houses on the sand by being mere hearers of the word. We can fill our calendars with church activities, podcast sermons, memorize Scripture, and have accurate theology, all without submitting

ourselves to obey Jesus. The storm will reveal the difference between hearers/doers and hearers-only. Jesus most certainly has the final judgment in mind, but lesser storms before then can reveal the difference, too. In his parable of the sower, for example, he references people who receive his words joyfully, but then fall away when persecution comes (Matt. 13:20-21). By contrast, true followers of Jesus will be obedient to him, even when life is difficult (Matt. 5:10-12). This is not to say that they won't sin. But when they do, they will be quick to confess their sins and seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

There's an important reminder for us in the last two verses. Jesus' audience was "astonished" at the authority with which he taught these things. The scribes in their day quoted Scripture, other rabbis, and cited tradition in their teaching. Jesus, however, spoke with a self-authenticating authority. He sat to teach (Matt. 5:1 – sitting being a symbol of authority); he frequently said, "You have heard it said...but *I* say to you"; and he claimed to be the one who could exclude people from the kingdom of God (7:21-23).

Many people who do not profess faith in Jesus have nevertheless admired many of the things Jesus says in Matthew 5-7, and understandably so. But we can't take what Jesus has said and separate it from who he is claiming to be. The Sermon on the Mount is not a collection of ethical teachings from a wise philosopher about how to live the good life. Rather, it is a King's summons to enter his kingdom and a description what life *inside his kingdom* is to look like. In other words, the lifestyle found in these verses is possible only as one first submits his or her life to him. "The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be admired but to be obeyed."<sup>1</sup>

- Why do you think so many non-Christians admire Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount? Why is it not enough just to admire his teaching?
- What area(s) do you find yourself walking in disobedience to Jesus? What steps can you take to repent and walk in obedience?
- What in Matthew 5-7 has been most encouraging to you? What has been most challenging?

## **MEMORIZE**

James 1:22 – "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

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<sup>1</sup> R.T. France