



Part 2 | Practical Teaching

Information - even true information - is useless until it is applied. The same is true of the Scriptures. Jesus wasn't content with saying true things; he wanted them to be helpful. His primary concern wasn't about the content - however true and important - it was about the application of content to daily life. Why? Maybe it was because application of what he taught was, in itself, an act of trust in him. When our acts of faith intersect with God's faithfulness, our faith grows. From Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish builders, we find that hearing and learning are not enough. The value is in the application. Because in the end, it's application that makes all the difference.

Bottom Line: Application of what God says builds trust in who God is.

Discussion Questions

Begin by reading Matthew 7:24-29

1. Did you grow up attending a church that emphasized application? If not, what was emphasized in your church? Doctrine? Sacraments? Attendance?
2. The parable in Matthew 7:24-29 follows the Sermon on the Mount. Why do you think Jesus concluded his sermon with this parable? What does this exhortation say about Jesus' view of his own teaching? What is the relationship between "...and puts them into practice" in verse 24 and "...had its foundation on the rock" in verse 25?
3. What keeps people from applying the Scriptures?
4. Can you think of a difficult time you have faced that could have been avoided if you had applied the principles of Scripture?
5. Have you ever applied a specific teaching of Scripture that, looking back, prepared you for an unexpected storm? What impact did you notice on your trust in God?

6. If, for the past five years, you had been applying what you know the Scriptures teach about finances, how would things be different in your consistently applied scriptural teaching on relationships during that time, what would be different today in your marriage, family, or friendships?
7. After the message this week, how did your thinking shift, if at all, regarding the involvement of children and youth in an application-oriented environment?
8. What has been the most helpful or encouraging thought/idea from the message this week? How has that thought/idea helped you?

Your Time with God

Week 2 - Day 1

Matthew 7:24-25

During the hot summer months, the sand around the Sea of Galilee was hard on the surface. But a wise builder knew that he needed to dig several feet below the surface to the bedrock in order to establish the foundation for his house. Every building has a foundation, including the lives we build for ourselves. Jesus is connecting with his audience in a way that they would understand. He is calling them to choose Him and His teachings as the foundation for their lives.

Prayer: Father, how can I make You the foundation for my life?

Week 2 - Day 2

Matthew 7:26-27

The religious establishment had embraced a mere surface righteousness built on an unstable foundation of religious pretense. Jesus is raising the standard, contrasting the unwise man in these verses with the wise man in the previous verses. He is also reminding them that there are consequences to our building, depending on the source of our foundation. The consequences of the weak foundation when the difficult times come are instability and destruction.

Prayer: Father, show me the weak foundations in my life.

Week 2 - Day 3

Matthew 7:24-28

Jesus calls for his audience to decide between himself and the religious establishment, drawing a dividing line between himself and any other foundation for life. The evidence of whether one is truly a believer is in whether one does the words of Jesus. Not just hear them. Not even understand them. But DOES them. Disciples who build their lives in this way, on the bedrock of Jesus and his message of the kingdom of heaven, are truly wise regardless of the shifting cultural or religious fashions.

Prayer: Father, what do I need to DO?

Week 2 - Day 4

James 1:22-24

Being doers of the Word and not hearers only is the proper response to the Word of God (not only the gospel but the entirety of Scripture), allowing it to take root in your life. Looking intently at your natural face in a mirror and then forgetting what you are like demonstrates the folly of examining yourself in God's "mirror" of His word and then doing nothing about it. When you see imperfections (as when looking in a mirror), common sense says something should be done about it.

Prayer: Father, show me those things that I need to do something about.

Week 2 - Day 5

James 2:20-22

James does not disagree that faith alone saves. Scripture is clear that we are saved by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) The word "completed" in the original Greek language of the New Testament often means "bring to maturity." Full-grown and genuine faith is seen in the good deeds it produces. When we do what God says, our actions are an expression of our confidence in Him. Obedience is what makes the difference in our growth of faith.

Prayer: Father, give me the grace I need to obey you, no matter what.