

4. The Foundation You Built On

Matthew 7:24-29 NLT - 24 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." 28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 for he taught with real authority--quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

As Jesus ends his teaching, He gives us one last test we can use to determine which Kingdom we are in. He contrasts those who are wise and foolish. He doesn't say the wise never experience hardship. We all will face storms. Instead the place we dwell, where we live our lives, where we take shelter, needs a solid anchoring to withstand all life throws at us.

What must His listeners do to be wise? What does He consider foolish? Pray with your group for those you know who are in the midst of the storms; that they will find shelter on the Rock of Ages.

Wrap Up

We can use four tests to evaluate whether we are in the Kingdom of God or the upside-down kingdom of this world. What road do you choose, what fruit do you produce, do you know Jesus, and what is your foundation built on?

Memory Verse

"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way.
- Matthew 7:13 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs. _____

Challenge- Test yourself in these four areas- are you making the hard choices to follow God's path; producing excellent, precious, commendable fruit; listening and following God; and standing firmly on Jesus the Rock?

"Four Tests" Upside Down Kingdom- #8

INTRODUCTION

Throughout our sermon series we have seen a stark contrast between the upside-down kingdom of this world and God's kingdom. As Jesus concludes the sermon on the mount, He presents four tests we can apply to evaluate which kingdom we are in.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

When you were in school, were you a good test-taker, or did you find tests frightening?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. The Road You Choose

Matthew 7:13-14 NLT - 13 "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

Has anyone ever told you, there are many paths to God? Well that's not what Jesus said. In fact, he said just the opposite. It appears there are basically two paths you can choose; the broad and easy highway to hell, or the straight and narrow path to life. There is no middle road. There is no alternate route.

John 14:6 NLT - 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Proverbs 16:25 NLT - 25 There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

From Proverbs 16:25 it appears that the person on the wrong path believes it is really the right road. What are some things we can use as indicators that we may be going the wrong way?

The root of the word for narrow (*stenos*) means to groan. Jesus was speaking to believers who likely would face literal persecution if they followed Him. He is telling them that they may be in distress on this straight and narrow road that goes against our natural inclinations.

Do you remember a time in your life when you chose not to take the easy way out, but instead do the right thing even though it was difficult? Describe what it was like to keep on the right path and what kind of reward you gained by doing so. (this might be in relationships, athletics, job related)

2. The Fruit You Produce

Matthew 7:15-20 NLT - 15 "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. 16 You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. 19 So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. 20 Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

At this point Jesus warns against following false prophets (*pseudoprophētēs*). A prophet is defined as “a proclaimer of a divine message”. They were religious imposters. On the surface they appear to be divinely inspired but they are not. What they speak and what they teach does not come from God. So, we aren’t to judge by how they appear.

What do we use to identify a false prophet or teacher?

Jesus says that a tree that is good (*agathos*) by its nature produces fruit that is *kalos* meaning beautiful, excellent, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable. A tree that is bad (*sapros*) is of poor quality, unfit for use, and worthless. That tree produces fruit which is *ponēros* meaning bringing toils, annoyances, perils; causing pain and trouble.

What would you include in the fruit of a genuine prophet who is delivering a message from God? What might be the fruit of an imposter?

3. The Person You Know

Matthew 7:21-23 NLT - 21 "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' 23 But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Jesus draws his sermon to a conclusion with a stern warning. When we stand at the judgment seat, our salvation won’t be based on what we said, or even the works we did. *In His concluding statement (v.23), who did Jesus send away? What do you see as the relationship between knowing Jesus and doing the will of the Father (v.21)?*

We may call Jesus by the title “Lord” but if He is truly Lord of our lives, then we allow Him to be in control. Likewise, our salvation doesn’t rest upon the works we do. “Miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace.”¹ In the book of Deuteronomy we see Balaam was hired to curse God’s people. But he also prophesied in God’s name. Seven sons of Sheva were casting out evil spirits (Acts 19:13) and tried using doing so in Jesus name. But they were not followers of Jesus.

¹ Matthew Henry

John 10:27-28 NLT - 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me,

Repeating the sinner’s prayer without letting Jesus change you and direct the course of your life is not sufficient for salvation. What does John 10:27 tell us the “sheep” who know the Good Shepherd do?