

PARABLES: The Greatest Stories Ever Told

When you - Then God

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Discussion Notes

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OPENING

Stories have a way of sticking with us, and Jesus knew that. He would often tell stories to help the people understand who God is, who Jesus is, and who we are. He used stories to help us understand the Kingdom of God and what God values most. Jesus used fascinating stories to illustrate spiritual truths. These were stories that challenged cultural norms, shook up the religious elite, and baffled people from all walks of life. They are called parables and over the next few weeks we are going to look at the greatest stories ever told.

SCRIPTURE¹

Ephesians 2:8 - 10 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Matthew 7:24 - 27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

OBSERVATION

God offers us unconditional love, but conditional blessings. When you - Then God means that people are responsible for taking steps of faith so that God can then move alongside and bless their acts of obedience. This parable is about a foolish and a wise builder. They represent foolish people who build their lives on worldly things (sand) versus wise people who build their lives around God's perfect foundation (rock).

Question: Which are you - foolish or wise? In what ways?

When contractors build houses, their first priority is to find land that will support the weight of the structure. If they fail in that, then all subsequent effort is worthless as the building can come crashing down at any time. God has building codes for us to follow, too. He wants us to find the bedrock to support our lives before we begin building them.

Question: When are you going to do a foundation inspection of your life?

APPLICATION

God wants us to build our lives on the strong foundation of His word by knowing it and obeying what He teaches us. He gives us examples of this happening in the Bible:

- When Noah built the ark - God saved his entire family;
- When Abraham trusted God's promise - he became the father of an entire nation;
- When Moses followed God's instruction - God led His people out of Egypt;
- Jesus said. " Knock - and the door will be opened to you."

¹ All scripture listed is NIV unless otherwise indicated

To build “on the rock” means to be a hearing, responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. Practicing obedience becomes the solid foundation to weather the storms of life.

Question: Why did the foolish man choose to build on the sand?

Foolish people:

- take the quick and easy way;
- approach life with little commitment;
- bring little time or energy to the task;

Wise people hear His words through:

- reading the Bible;
- attending church services;
- joining small group studies;
- reading Christian books;

Question: How often do you read and listen to God’s word in the course of a week?

Salvation requires faith - blessing requires obedience.

We can practice obedience by:

- volunteering;
- teaching;
- evangelizing;
- exemplifying Spiritual fruits;

Question: Whose responsibility is it for your life to change? Is it God’s or the Church’s or yours?

It is actually a partnership of all three. If you want to build a life that stands the test of time, build on the word of God in a partnership and He will give you an unshakeable life. Crises will still come, but you won’t be crushed. When you build on The Rock, you must expect storms, because only storms can show your wisdom to the world around you. Remember, you can’t change the foundation in the middle of a storm.

Question: What personal storms have you experienced in the past year? How did you fare spiritually in the midst of them?

The winds of life leave others in a pile, but God will keep you safe - anchored and on sure footing - if you love God, love people, hear His words and practice them.

When you decide to build on the Rock, then God gives you an unshakeable life.

Question: What form does this metaphor take in your life?

“Spiritual maturity is directly related to the length of time between hearing the word of God and doing it.”

Question: What does this sentence mean?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we know You are watching and waiting to bless us and answer our prayers if we will only take the first step toward You. Help us to surrender to You as God of the universe and become obedient in all things. You are the Alpha and the Omega and we trust You to take us from our beginning to our earthly ending as You are the Rock upon Whom we depend for all things through Your grace and mercy. We thank you for the opportunities to serve and for Your word that guides us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.