



## Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 2 • authentic faith, flourishing fruit •

matthew 7:13-29; 1 timothy 4:16 • 10/07/2018

### Main Point

Following Christ requires growing in discernment so that we might distinguish between true and false teaching.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Why does the saying, “Actions speak louder than words,” resonate with people? Why do people look for consistency between a person’s speech and actions?**

**Does it strike you as odd that many people in our culture seem to long for authenticity and transparency, especially among leaders, and yet speak against “judging” people?**

**Does the common perspective that Christians are shallow and hypocritical seem ironically judgmental to you? Explain why or why not.**

Perhaps the most quoted Bible verse nowadays is Matthew 7:1: “Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged.” Most people probably only quote or paraphrase the first half of this verse. Despite the fact that we inevitably make moral judgments on an everyday basis, nowadays to question someone’s character, sincerity, or faith commitment for any reason seems to be one of the few remaining “heresies.” Jesus’ exhortation in the Sermon of the Mount to look out for false prophets, then, is perhaps more radical than it ever has been. In order to heed Jesus’ instruction, we must be willing to make moral and theological judgments concerning a person’s life and doctrine, a practice that our culture frowns upon to say the least.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE a volunteer read Matthew 7:13-29.

The Sermon on the Mount speaks to life in God's kingdom and what it means to follow Christ as Lord. After providing an overview of Jesus' teaching on the nature of discipleship in various areas of life, Matthew ends his presentation of the Sermon with several warnings from Jesus that would apply to Jesus' disciples, the present crowd, and the religious leaders of the day. There are two gates/roads (7:13-14); there are two kinds of trees/prophets (vv. 15-20); there are two kinds of disciples (vv. 21-23); and there are two foundations (vv. 24-27).

**What does ending with these warnings say about the weightiness of Jesus' teaching and the serious nature of being His disciple?**

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 7:15-20.

**The "fruit" metaphor likely refers to the life of a professed prophet as well as the influence he carries and the types of followers he produces. What strikes you as appropriate or useful about Jesus' "fruit" metaphor?**

**How can we tell if a prophet's fruit is good or bad? What standards do we have to discern whether or not we can trust someone as a teacher?**

**Why is a teacher's "sincerity" not enough for us to trust him or her?**

**How are we to make sense of Jesus' warning to beware of false prophets in light of His exhortation not to judge others self-righteously (vv. 1-5)?**

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 7:21-23.

**Why is it important not to overlook what Jesus is saying about His identity and authority in these verses? What does the title "Lord" and His role as judge indicate about Him?**

**What do verses 21-23 tell us about self-deception and false assurance?**

**According to this passage, is it possible for someone to participate in ministry in some form while never genuinely knowing Christ? If yes, how might this be the case? Can you think of any biblical examples of people involved in ministry who turned out to be false disciples?**

**In light of Jesus' teaching, how can we pursue self-examination and good works without becoming paralyzed with fear and introspection?**

| Have a volunteer read 1 Timothy 4:16.

**How is Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 4:16 similar to Jesus' warning about false prophets? How is it the same command in one sense but from the reverse standpoint (e.g., how not to become a false teacher)?**

**How is “fruit” spoken of in the context of this verse? What does it say about the personal nature of our theological and spiritual beliefs, as well as their effect on others in our community?**

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How does the necessary connection between one’s teaching and one’s life speak to our need as Christians to be open with one another? How can the ongoing practice of confessing sin to one another guard against hypocrisy and lawlessness?**

**When have you seen misunderstanding of a biblical doctrine or belief in a false doctrine lead a person into blatant sin? How did this person’s life change as they matured in their understanding?**

**How is dealing with false teaching unavoidable if we are faithful to the Great Commission?**

**What are some steps we can take to ensure we do not detach doctrine from life? How can we make sure we neither elevate “deeds above creeds,” nor make Christianity solely about having the correct beliefs?**

## Pray

Lord, keep us humble but not naïve, wise but not proud. Protect us from false teachers. Grant that our lives would carry the aroma of Jesus and His teachings so that we would honor Him and lead others to follow Him. We ask these things in Jesus’ name and for His glory. Amen.

## Commentary

| matthew 7:13-29

7:13-14. The narrow gate symbolizes the exclusive nature of Christ’s kingdom. Entrance requires the disciple to do the will of the Father in heaven (v. 21). The gate that is wide indicates that hell grants unrestricted entrance and that many will enter through its gates. The difficult (lit “narrow”) ...road may symbolize the life of hardship and persecution that the disciple must face. However, since Jewish literature often used the symbol of the road to represent a moral path (Jdg 2:22; Isa 30:21; Jer 6:16; 2Jn 6) and because the law was portrayed as a narrow road from which a person was not to deviate (Dt 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Jos 1:7; 2Ki 22:2), the narrow road probably represents Jesus’ morally restrictive teaching. The wide road permits travelers to meander and pursue worldly desires, but the narrow path requires travelers to stick to God’s will (Mt 7:21).

7:15-20. False prophets don sheep’s clothing to disguise the fact that they are ravaging wolves masquerading as true disciples. However, a prophet’s character and behavior (his fruit) indicates whether he is true or false.

Other NT texts insist that a teacher's doctrine must also be examined (1Jn 4:2-3). True disciples bear the fruit of good works, and this confirms their identity as Jesus' disciples (Mt 7:21-23). The image of cutting down and burning a bad tree portrays the judgment and eternal punishment of false disciples.

7:21-23. By referring to Himself as Lord and depicting Himself as the ultimate Judge of humanity, Jesus implied His deity. True disciples affirm Jesus' lordship, submit to His authority, and obey His commands. Jesus insisted that a person is confirmed as a true disciple not by prophecy, exorcism, or working miracles but by living a transformed life made possible by God. The disobedient lifestyles of lawbreakers are inconsistent with genuine discipleship. Jesus' words, I never knew you, show that these were never truly disciples.

7:24-27. The adjectives sensible and foolish describe a person's spiritual and moral state, not his intellect. Whether one is considered sensible or foolish is determined by his response to Jesus' teaching. Since OT writers described God's wrath using the image of a great storm (Isa 28:16-17; Ezek 13:10-13), the storm that destroys the house on the sand is a picture of divine judgment. Hence, the person who hears and acts on Jesus' teaching is prepared for judgment. The one who hears but doesn't act on Jesus' words will be destroyed in the storm of judgment.

7:28-29. Jesus amazed the crowds with an authority that surpassed that of other teachers. First-century Jewish teachers appealed to the authority of their rabbinic predecessors. However, Jesus introduced His teachings with the contrast, "You have heard that it was said... but I tell you" (5:21,27,31,33,38,43). By this Jesus made clear that He had the authority to interpret the law independent from and even contrary to the Jewish oral tradition and the most esteemed rabbis. The words when Jesus had finished are important for understanding the structure of Matthew's Gospel.

## | 1 timothy 4:16

4:16. Reminded that God's sovereignty overcomes all human efforts, Paul exalted in God as his strength and defender. He turned to another personal example: his preliminary trial.

Paul probably had a pretrial hearing to determine the grounds of the accusations against him. At that time, no one offered a word in his defense: no one came to my support. Not only was the hearing void of testimony on his behalf, but his friends deserted him. Perhaps Demas was in mind here along with others. Luke probably had not arrived in Rome by the time of Paul's initial trial. The event, however, brought back painful memories for Paul. Still, he viewed it through the goodness of God, choosing gratitude and forgiveness rather than bitterness: May it not be held against them.