

RISE

MIDDLE SCHOOL SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Session 8

Parable of the Foundations

Matthew 7:24-27

Bottom Line: Jesus reminds us that our lives must have a strong foundation on God.

- This is the last session in our series about Jesus' parables. We're going to hear about the parable of the foundations today. Remember, Jesus told parables to help people understand the best way to live and to follow God.
- He talked about things like caring for those in need, loving those that are not of your high status or lifestyle, being humble, and choosing to have grace for God's people that are lost and need help.

Read Matthew 7:24-27.

Highlight, circle, or underline what stands out to you.

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

- This parable is part of Jesus' famous sermons called the Sermon on the Mount. In this popular sermon, Jesus reveals the principles of

the kingdom of God. Jesus talks about how to care for others, how to pray, and how to live a life of strong faith.

- At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shares this parable about two builders. He starts off with “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it...” It's clear that Jesus wants us to follow these instructions that He gives. He wants us to put something into practice.
- In school, when your teacher teaches something that will help you grow in knowledge and in life, they encourage you to **put it into practice**.
- In sports, when your coach teaches you a new technique or a fundamental skill necessary to do better in a game or in a match, they tell you to **put it into practice**.
- A parent who teaches their child a basic life skill tells them to **put it into practice**.
- Jesus says that if people put into practice what He says, they will be like a wise man who builds his house on solid rock. Jesus emphasizes where the man built his house... on **solid rock**. Now why would that detail be important?
- In life, there is a solid foundation that *you* can depend on and stand on and it won't move. Can you guess what that firm foundation is?
- It's Jesus and His teachings. So Jesus says a wise person builds their house on a strong and firm foundation so that it stays grounded and stable no matter what storm comes its way. He says a foolish person builds their house on sand.
- If you've been to the beach, have you ever tried to stay standing on the shore as the tide came in and out from under your feet? When you plant your feet in the sand, at first you feel pretty stable.

- But as the tide comes in and sweeps around your feet and through the sand you're standing on, it erodes the sand underneath your feet and you begin to sink.
- Then as the tide rolls back into the ocean, the sand underneath your feet begins to wear away even more, and you are now trying to stand upright without falling over. And that feeling and experience is exactly what it's like to be on an unstable foundation. It's difficult to stay standing upright.
- And Jesus uses this builder, who He calls foolish, to explain that anyone who doesn't listen to His wise words is living a life of instability and will eventually fall over and be destroyed. Ouch, Jesus.
- But Jesus is telling us this because He loves us and knows what's best for us. If we follow His teachings, we will experience Jesus' joy, peace, and fullness in our lives... even when there are storms or hard times.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. The Scripture passage says that "The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house." What do you think the storms represent? What are the rain, floods, and winds in your life?
 2. Think or talk about a time when you dealt with a storm in your life (not a literal storm but a metaphorical storm). Did you have a strong foundation or did you crumble from the storm? What helped you through the storm?
- Jesus just spent a long time speaking about principles of the Kingdom of God and God's desires for His people, and He hopes that all of what He said doesn't just go in one ear and out the other.

He hopes that the crowd of people actually listened and will apply those teachings to their lives.

- But His audience still has a choice in how they respond to everything He says. Will they listen and be like the wise man, or will they not listen and be like the foolish man?
- This teaching is for us, too! Not just the people who were listening to the Sermon on the Mount 2,000 years ago. Let's see how we can apply it to our lives.

Optional Activity: A Firm Foundation

Even if you don't do the activity, just read through this section.

Supplies: Bowl filled with sand, bowl filled with rocks, a small figurine, and a water bottle

- If Jesus and His teachings are not the firm foundation for our lives, the storms, or bad and difficult things in this world, will knock us down and destroy us.
- There are many things that we can choose as our foundation, but most things in life are not as stable as they seem... money, fame, people, social media, sports, or a career, to name a few.
- All these things can be fun and great, but none of them are going to bring you the stability you need to withstand the toughest storms in life.
- When you run out of money, don't become as popular as you had hoped, your friends betray you or fade away, you get rude comments, you get injured during a sports game, or you don't get into your dream college... what's your stable ground that will support you so you don't crumble?

Fill a bowl with about 1/2 cup of sand. Place a figurine like a Lego in the middle of the pile of sand in the bowl. This bowl filled with sand and a figurine represents the foolish man who didn't listen and take Jesus' words to heart.

Pour water on the sand and watch what happens to the figurine standing in the middle. (Obviously, he should fall down.)

- In life, if we don't have anything stable to stand and rely on, we will sink and fall. This is what happens when Jesus and His words are not our foundation.

Now fill another bowl with small rocks and place the figurine in the middle of the pile of rocks in the bowl. Pour water around the base of the pile of rocks and watch what happens to the figurine standing in the middle. (He should not fall down.)

- However, if we stand on a more solid foundation like these rocks here, you see that we're more stable and able to withstand the flow of the water.
- **No matter what storms we face – problems at school, at home, within yourself, whatever – we know we'll be okay because we have a solid and firm foundation to rely on - JESUS!**

Reflect and Discuss:

1. How would you describe your spiritual foundation right now? Shaky? Solid? Brand new? Old and worn? Rebuilding it?
2. How can you get help from others to rebuild or strengthen your spiritual foundation?
3. What "building materials" could you use to build a spiritual foundation for your life?

4. How can we encourage others who have an unstable spiritual foundation to have a firm foundation in God?

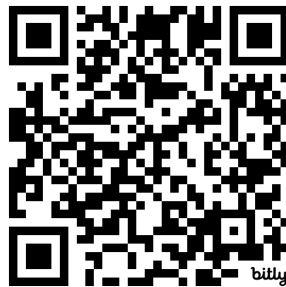
Optional Activity: Journaling a Prayer

Listen to the following song that talks about how God is our firm foundation who will never let us down. Scan the following QR code to access the song on YouTube.

Pay attention to the lyrics for the first minute of the song. After one minute, start to silently write or "journal" a prayer to God and continue for the rest of the song (about 5 minutes).

Remember, you can talk to God like you're talking to a friend. He wants to celebrate our wins with us and comfort and guide us through our struggles and worries. We don't have to hide anything from God.

Thank God for being your firm foundation that you can rely on, and ask Him to help you listen to His Words like the wise man who built his house on rock. However, you can include much more in your prayer. It can be however long or short you want.



Session Challenges

- Matthew 7:24 is our theme verse for this week: **"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."**
- Now for our challenge: This week, journal another prayer to God just like you did for the previous prayer activity.