

Empty Hearts

Scripture: Matthew 7:24–29

Code: 2256

INTRODUCTION

A. The Scene

1. Catastrophes in California

In Southern California, people are constantly made aware of the need for houses to have good foundations. Frequently, there are earthquakes or floods. Earthquakes crack foundations, and floods wash them away. Living in Southern California can be interesting, especially in earthquake or floodprone areas. Whenever a house is built, the builder has to keep in mind the possibility that an earthquake or a flood could occur any time. Careful soil tests are done, and the soil is compacted to make sure that the foundation is going to stand.

2. Catastrophes in Palestine

The climate in Palestine is almost identical to that in Southern California. Most of the time, it is dry. But when it rains, the ground can't absorb all the water, thus causing a flood. Houses are easily washed away, just like they are in Southern California. When making a building, the people there have to prepare the ground so that the foundation will be strong. What looks like a wonderful place to build in the summer may become a raging river in the winter, wiping away whatever edifice has been placed there. That's what Jesus had in mind in Matthew 7:24-27.

B. The Story

the closing paragraph of His sermon, Christ pictures two men, each building a home. Perhaps they were building on a dry streambed in a valley. One man works feverishly to build his house, and does not think about a solid foundation to withstand future flooding. He is the "foolish man" (v. 26). The other man builds his house on a foundation of solid rock. He is the "wise man" (v. 24). Jesus' story is simple: There are two men building houses. One is wise, and one is foolish. However, what appears to be a simple story is really a shocking, powerful commentary on people who know Jesus' words, but have an empty heart. You'll notice in verse 24 that Jesus says, "... whosoever heareth ..." and in verse 26 He says, "... every one that heareth ..." Christ is talking about people who hear His message and understand it. Wise people do something about it, but fools don't. James Denney said, "It is the consciousness that the speaker is nothing less than the final judge of all which makes the parable of the builders on rock and sand, the most solemn and overpowering."

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus begins closing His Sermon on the Mount with an invitation. He tells us, in effect, to enter through the narrow gate onto the narrow way that leads to life. He says that won't be easy for two basic reasons: False prophets will deceive many, and many people will falsely profess Christ and deceive themselves. We all live under some illusions; we ourselves cultivate most of them. It's a tendency of human nature to try to cover up faults.

So, the Lord says that you must enter the narrow gate, and that it won't be easy because false prophets try to send people onto the broad way (vv. 15-20). It also won't be easy because people tend to deceive themselves. In verses 21-23, Christ says there will be people who verbally profess to belong in the Kingdom, but won't do what Christ said. The dichotomy indicates that they are not true Christians. Then in verses 24-27, the Lord talks about those who know His message, but have empty hearts. The first group has empty words, and the second group has empty hearts. People will

deceive themselves either way: They will profess that they are Christians, and convince themselves of that even though there is no evidence in their lives. Or, they will have mere knowledge that seems to suffice for a real heart relationship. Some people are deceived into thinking they are Christians because they know so much about Christianity. Others think they are Christians because they talk so much about Christianity.

I. THE FOLLY OF EMPTY WORDS (vv. 2123)

II. THE FOLLY OF EMPTY HEARTS (vv. 2427)

In Matthew 7:24-27, the Lord reminds us that we must meet God's standard of righteousness if we are to enter the Kingdom of God. Unless your life is built on His standard, you'll be washed away by the flood. It doesn't matter how much you know or how feverishly you conduct your spiritual activity.

A. The Discussion

1. The Two Builders

Notice that verse 24 begins, "... whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine ..." and that verse 26 begins, "... every one that heareth these sayings of Mine" The Lord is referring to people who have heard His message. Then at the end of verses 24 and 26, we read of two men building their houses. They have listened to the message, and are involved in spiritual activity. They both belong to the visible body of believers. Both men probably read Scripture, attend meetings at the church, and go by a spiritual value system. However, there is one tremendous difference: One man is wise because he builds on rock, and the other man is foolish because he builds on sand. By the way, once the edifice is up, you can't see the foundation anymore. Thus, it becomes difficult to tell what kind of foundation exists under the building. True Christians can be deceived about who truly is or is not a Christian. What our Lord is saying here is very simple. Many people hear Christ's teaching. But it's those who obey His teaching that get into the Kingdom. That's the bottom line. If you examine your life and find that you are a hearer and not a doer, don't deceive yourself into thinking that you are a Christian (Js. 1:22-25). Jesus said the storm that comes along will manifest the truth about who is wise and who is foolish.

a. The Similarities Detailed There are several similarities in the story of the two builders. First, both men build a house. They are both involved in spiritual activity that has to do with the Kingdom of God. Second, both individuals build their houses in the same location. We know that because both houses were subject to the same storm. True believers and false believers invariably live side by side. They attend the same church and Bible study. Third, both of their buildings are so similar that they are indistinguishable to most people. In fact, both men build their homes the same way, because the Lord said the only difference is in their foundations. So, both men build houses in the same location, and they build them in the same way. Both individuals carry a Bible and notebook; both of them pray, give, and participate in certain activities. All of what they do looks identical. The only difference is the crux of the matter: their foundations. Unfortunately, they are not visible once the edifice is up. Only an honest soulsearching examination can reveal the truth. That's what Jesus tries to get the Pharisees to do. He wants to get them off their high tower, look at their lives, and see how spiritually bankrupt they are.

b. The Difference Detected Verse 24 says that one man "built his house upon a rock [Gk. *petra*=`a rock bed']." There is another Greek word, *petros*, which means "a stone or a boulder." The wise man built his house on a rock bed. Verse 26 says the other man "built his house upon the sand [Gk. *ammon*]." That is, he built his house on sand like that found on a seashore. A man is wise if he builds on a rock bed, and a man is foolish if he builds on the shifting sands of the sea or the desert. The false prophets mentioned in verses 15-20 are real estate agents trying to sell sand lots! It is foolish to build on sand, because when a storm comes, it will wash away the sand under the house. Verse 27 says that a house built on sand will fall. But a house built on a solid foundation of rock will not fall in a storm.

Spirituality on Shifting Sands In the story about the two builders, Jesus rebukes the religion of the Pharisees. They had no regard for spirituality of soul,

purity of heart, integrity of behavior, or obedience to God. They were building their big spiritual structure on sand. It's true that the Pharisees prayed, fasted, and gave alms, but they only did those things to parade their supposed spirituality and enhance their reputations. Their religion of externals was based on sand. They didn't go through the narrow gate. The broad way that leads to destruction is all sand.

2. The True Believer

a. **His Foundation**1) Identified A wise person builds his life on rock (v. 24). You say, "What does it mean to build your life on rock?" We could say that the rock is God, and that you are literally building your life on God. Psalm 18:2 says, "The +LORD is my rock" The Pharisees claimed that their lives were built on God. We could also say the rock is Christ. Peter mentioned that Christ is the chief cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:6). Paul said He is the rock (1 Cor. 10:4). However, there is more to building on the rock than just saying your life is built on Christ. Most commentators say that the rock is God or Christ. But a careful look at Matthew 7:24 and 26 shows us what the rock is. Jesus said, "... whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock" (v. 24). It is the people who hear and do what Christ commanded that build their house on the rock. It's true that God is a rock and Christ is the chief cornerstone, but the Lord is saying that His words are the foundation of the true church.2) Illustrated In Matthew 16 is a familiar text that aptly illustrates what I am saying. Beginning with verse 13, we read, "When Jesus came into the borders of Caesarea Philippi [the extreme northern part of Israel], He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father, who is in heaven [i.e., Peter had received a divine revelation]. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [Gk. petros='a pebble or a boulder'], and upon this rock [Gk. petra='rock bed foundation'] I will build My church ..." (vv. 13-18). Peter said to Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Christ responded, "Upon that affirmation of truth I will build My church." The word petra in Matthew 16:18 refers to the Word of God. It means the same thing in Matthew 7:24. In Acts 20:32 Paul said, "... I commend you ... to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up" The Word of God is our foundation, and it provides us with the materials we need for building. The Lord is saying that the person who only hears God's Word but doesn't act on it is building on sand. The sand represents human will, opinion, and attitudes. A foolish person builds his life on the shifting sands of human philosophy. He just listens to Christ's words; therefore, he is not established on the rock. But the wise man that hears God's Word and builds his life on it is building on a rock foundation. He lives a life of obedience. John 8:30 says that as Jesus spoke, "... many believed on Him." They listened to Christ. In verse 31, Jesus said, "... If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." If we just hear and believe, that doesn't mean anything. It's when we continue to obey the Word of God that we build our lives on the rock. Don't be deceived because of your verbal claims. Unless you build your life on biblical truth, you are deceiving yourself.b. **His Function**1) Delineated in Scripture In James 1:22 we read, "... be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." The Lord is saying the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. James 1:23 continues, "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and immediately forgetteth what manner of man he was" (vv. 23-24). In other words, if you are not a doer of the Word, then it is not having any effect on your life or destiny. Colossians 1:21, 23 says, "And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ... if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" First John 2:3 says, "... by this we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Both the Lord and the Apostles stated the importance of obeying God's Word. We read in Titus 1:16, "They

[unbelievers] profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient" If you verbally profess to be a Christian and know some things about Christianity but there is no obedience in your life, then you are not saved. Building your life on the rock means being obedient. Examine your life. Do you desire, more than anything else, to obey the Word of God? Or, do you live in disobedience and try to justify yourself? Obedience is the key word here. The only validation you will ever have of your salvation is a life of obedience. That is the only way you can prove that you really recognize the lordship of Jesus Christ. If you do not obey God's Word, your confession of Christ as Lord is a mere verbal exercise. 2) Delineated in the Sermon The life that is built on the rock is the kind of life that is described in the Sermon on the Mount. A true believer has a biblical view toward self, and lives out the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12). A person who builds his life on the rock preserves the world and lights it up without being a part of it (5:13-16). He doesn't seek to alter the Bible, but accepts it (5:17-20). Such a person has biblical moral standards (5:21-32). He doesn't try to get away with everything he can. His Christianity is internal, not external. He has a biblical attitude toward words (5:33-37), deeds (5:38-47), motives (6:1-18), money (6:19-24), things (6:25-34), and people (7:1-12). Jesus spoke about all of those things in His sermon. He is saying in Matthew 7:24 that if you are committed to obedience, you are building on the rock. **The Marks of True Salvation** When I hear someone say, "I am a born-again believer, but live the way I always have," I question whether he is really a Christian. I recently read an article in a magazine that discussed what pastors should do with unmarried Christians who live together. If two people are living together, I doubt that they are Christians. We don't need to reevaluate the standards for marriage; we need to establish the standard for who is really a Christian. If you are not obedient to the principles in the Sermon on the Mount, you are probably self-deceived. You don't become a Christian just by making a decision, raising your hand, or signing a card. True salvation is marked by a recognition of God's divine standards, experiencing an overwhelming sense of sinfulness, and pleading for God to be merciful and give you His righteousness because you desire to live for Him. You can't say, "I want to come to Christ and be saved, but I don't want to worry about being obedient." If you say that, you are not a Christian. It grieves my heart to hear a Christian say, "I know so-and-so is saved, but he never comes to church and is not interested in it." If that is true, the person is probably self-deceived. Let's examine the self-delusion that is presented in Matthew 7:24-27 more carefully. We've already seen the similarities between the wise man and the fool. Let's look now at ...

B. The Distinctions

1. The Foolish Man

One man built his house the easy way, and the other one built his the hard way. It's easy to build on sand because you don't have to dig. That's the way life is on the broad road: You can do anything you want; you can carry all your garbage with you. A fool builds the easy way for two reasons: a. He is in a Hurry Fools are always in a hurry. The book of Proverbs says that a fool "maketh haste" (28:20). Over the years I have learned that I am not good at building things. At the same time, I've learned that if you do something right the first time, you won't have to do it again. Sometimes I'm not thorough enough when I do something. It's easy to build on sand because you don't have to dig. A fool always looks for shortcuts and quick results. He does not take time for building a sense of conviction, cultivating a deep awareness of God, and listening to the doctrine of sin. A foolish person does not come to grips with his sinfulness before God. The world today has a quick, canned approach to everything. Some people are in such a hurry that if they don't get their hamburger at a fast food place in three minutes, they start having apoplexy! Quick evangelism attracts more fools than wise men. However, no one should build a tower until he has counted the cost (Lk. 14:28). b. He is Superficial There are many people who say they believe in Christ and accept the gospel; yet there is no evidence in their lives to confirm it. They are superficial. We live in the age of superficiality: Millions of people profess to be Christians, but when they don't get what they want from Christ and

their house begins to collapse, they look for another sandy place to build. I get irritated when I hear a superficial presentation of Christ that is supposed to be legitimate. There are sermons today that have nothing to do with the gospel, and people are invited afterwards to come forward to accept who knows what. There is no foundation, and no brokenness of heart. Arthur Pink said, "If I have never mourned over my waywardness, I have no solid ground for rejoicing" (An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953]). Charles Spurgeon said, "Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of reality in religion this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's soul, neglect of using the lancet with our hearts, neglect of the search warrant which God gives out against sin, carelessness concerning living upon Christ; much reading about Him, much talking about Him, but too little feeding upon His flesh, and drinking of His blood these are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes" (Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977], p. 226).

2. The Wise Man

While the foolish man is in a hurry, the wise man is not. In Luke 6:46-49, which is a parallel passage, we read that the wise man "dug deep" (v. 48). He dug for the rock God's Word and blew away the sand of human opinion and self-will. a. He Is Not in a Hurry A wise man is not a quick convert who makes a superficial confession of sin. Arthur Pink said, "There are some who say they are saved before they have any sense they are lost" (An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953]). Some people present the gospel so poorly that even unbelievers don't know enough to reject it! Those who claim Christ as their own are willing to dig deep. They have thought out the responsibility involved. They don't rush into confessing Christ as Lord, only to depart later on. A wise person counts the cost (Lk. 14:28). He considers what he is doing. He digs deep, and is not in a hurry. When the Lord sowed the seed in the parable in Matthew 13, He said, "... he that received the seed in stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and immediately with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately he is offended" (vv. 20-21). I've seen that happen many times. A person will say, "I'm a Christian," but as soon as the demands of God's Word are made clear to him, he is gone. That's not the way it is with the person who digs deep to the rock bed of God's Word so that he might obey. He isn't superficial. b. He Gives Maximum Effort Those who dig deep show a desire to give maximum effort. Men are always drawn to the easy path. Some people make the requirements of the gospel message so easy that their converts are not really saved. They say, "It is so difficult to follow up converts!" In one year, one large church in America had 28,000 people who professed their conversion on paper and 9,600 people who were baptized. Yet only 123 people were added to the church. One man on the staff of that church said, "I knew something had to be wrong. So I left, and asked God to show me what was right." There were not 28,000 conversions if only 123 people were added to the church. The problem is not the difficulty of follow up; it's the difficulty of true conversion. We can't follow up people who were never redeemed. People say, "We must get converts into a followup program. We can't just leave them to the Holy Spirit!" However, if a person is really converted, God will do His work. It's hard to follow up an unconverted person! The person who digs deep strives to enter in the narrow gate (Lk. 13:24). He minimizes his travail of soul because he wants to build on the rock. It's much easier to go the way of the flesh. It's hard to restrict yourself and go God's way. But His commandments are not grievous; they are blessed (1 Jn. 5:3). We obey them out of love, not out of duty to law. c. He Is Teachable The man who digs deep wants to do things right. He is teachable. The Pharisees weren't teachable; you couldn't tell them anything. There are many people like that. They profess Christ, but they don't want to count the cost of following Him and being obedient. Those kind of people want to live with their own ideas, goals, and will. When you try to teach them what is right, they don't listen. It's not because they are unteachable Christians; it's because they aren't Christians at all. The person who digs deep gets rid of his self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. He knows he is not commendable,

and is overwhelmed with his sin. He strives to enter through the narrow gate he places Scripture in his heart so that he won't sin against God (Ps. 119:11). Such a person is interested in a genuine love relationship with God, not a routine of spiritual activity. He does not build on visions, experiences, or miracles, but on God's Word. He builds for God's glory, not his own.

C. The Destruction

1. The Inevitability of Condemnation

Many people want spiritual power. In Acts 8:18-21, a man named Simon wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter told him, "Thy money perish with thee for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (vv. 20, 21). There are people who want spiritual power, but they aren't interested in living according to God's standards. They are building on sand. They want the good things Jesus can give them without being committed to Him. Eventually, according to Matthew 7:25 and 27, the day of reckoning will come. a. Described in Matthew Matthew 7:25 and 27 basically talk about the whole of judgment. I don't think a person can say, "The rain represents this, the flood refers to that, the wind means that, and the beating on the house represents that." A person can get carried away trying to analyze those things. Jesus is simply saying that one day a storm came, and the house on the sand fell, while the house on the rock still stood. Someday there is going to be a divine accounting. God will send the wind, rain, and flood of judgment. Some will stand through the storm while others will fall. Whether your religion is true or false, you will encounter that storm. Whether you are chaff or wheat will be found out. Someday the chief winnower will come, and He will separate the chaff from the wheat (Mt. 3:12). He will blow the wind of judgment, and those who built their lives on the rock will stand (Mt. 7:25). What a wonderful promise that is! Paul told the Thessalonians that Jesus has "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). Why did he say that? Because their faith was genuine (1:4). b. Described in Revelation There is going to come a judgment time. Revelation 20 gives these details: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hades delivered up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (vv. 11-15). That is the second death. Whoever's name is not found in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire. That passage describes the Great White Throne judgment, when God separates true believers from the false for eternity. Echoing in the halls of judgment will be the cries of the self-deceived, "Lord, Lord," and the reverberation of the Lord's reply, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." People are deluded. Satan is a liar. He is a deceiver, and his ultimate deception is to lead someone to believe he is a Christian when he is not. If you don't know you still have a problem, you won't be looking for the answer to that problem anymore. The day of judgment is coming. You better examine your life. Matthew 7:21 says that not everyone who thinks he is going to heaven will end up there. Examine your foundation. You may respect Christ and be orthodox. You may be active in private devotion and public proclamation. You may be building a religious life in the same community that true believers dwell. Your house may look exactly like theirs. But when judgment comes, it will fall down because it is built on the sand of your own will. I tell you this from my heart: Go back and check your foundation. So, Jesus' unequalled, masterful Sermon on the Mount ends with a devastating warning about judgment. The final words in the sermon are "and great was the fall of [the house]" (7:27). Every time you present the gospel, you must end your presentation with a warning of doom to the person who rejects it. Don't just say, "If you don't come to Christ, you are missing many nice things." You must call for a decision.

2. The Importance of Consecration

You say, "I chose Christ. I chose the right way." Proverbs 30:12 says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." Some people think they are washed from their sin. You say, "How can I know if I am washed?" See what your life is built on. Check and see if you are in any of the lists below:

a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Look at your life. b. Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, factions, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and the like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Don't be deceived! c. Revelation 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Do you see yourself in any of those lists? I know that we all sin, but that's not what I'm talking about. If any of those things are characteristic of your life, you are not living in the Kingdom. It doesn't matter what you think; that's what the Word of God says. Remember, Matthew 7:14 says, "... few there be that find [the narrow gate]." However, when you do give your life to the Lord, He takes over, empowers you, and changes you. Paul said, "... He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

CONCLUSION

A. The People's Response to the Sermon

What was the response to Jesus' sermon? Was there a great revival with many new converts? No. Matthew 7:28-29 says, "... it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." All the listeners did was analyze the sermon. They "were astonished" (v. 28). The Greek word for that literally means "they were struck out of their senses." In other words, what Jesus said blew their minds. They were amazed that someone could say those things with such power and authority. Jesus didn't do what the scribes did; they merely quoted other people. They were fallible, and they quoted other fallible people to back up what they said. Jesus said things on the basis of His own authority. No one had ever seen such wisdom. Every dimension of human life was discussed in an economy of words that was breathtaking. No one had ever heard such deep insight about the law of God or the sin of man. The listeners around Jesus had never heard such fearful warnings about judgment and hell. They had never heard anyone confront the Jewish religious leaders the way Jesus did. They were shocked that Jesus stood on His own authority, and not someone else's. The people who heard Jesus' sermon had never heard anyone speak the truth like He did. Divine matters were spoken of with great clarity. They had never heard anyone speak with such love. But they didn't respond the right way. Those people couldn't believe that a man would call Himself the fulfillment of the law and the determiner of righteousness. They couldn't believe that the scribes and Pharisees needed correcting. Those who heard Jesus had a hard time accepting His claim that He was God, the way of life, and the Judge of all. They couldn't believe that He was the King. Their response was one of astonishment.

B. Your Response to the Sermon

You don't need to have the same reaction that those people did to the Sermon on the Mount. You should be more than shocked; you should desire to be converted. That's what Jesus is after. What is your response to His words? Your eternal destiny depends on it!

Edward Mote wrote this in the hymn, "The Solid Rock":
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Your life is built on either rock or sand. You are either obedient or disobedient. That is the only way to verify whether your faith is legitimate. I pray to God that your faith is built on Christ.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the simple story in Matthew 7:24-27 really a commentary on?
2. What similarities are there between the two builders in Matthew 7:24-27?
3. What is the only difference between the two builders? Why is it difficult to spot that difference?
4. What does the Greek word *petra* in Matthew 7:24 mean? What kind of sand is referred to in verse 26?
5. Whom does Jesus rebuke through the story of the two builders? Why?
6. What exactly is the rock that a person should build his life on? (Mt. 7:24)
7. What does the sand in Matthew 7:26 represent?
8. What distinction could be made between the people in John 8:30 and the people in John 8:31?
9. According to James 1:22, what do you do to yourself if you are only a hearer of the Word?
10. According to James 1:23-24, what happens to a man who is not a doer of the Word?
11. What is the only validation you will ever have of your salvation?
12. What is true salvation marked by?
13. What is the first reason that a fool builds the easy way? How does that affect his perspective of sin and God?
14. What is wrong with superficial presentations of the gospel?
15. Give three characteristics of a wise man.
16. What is a wise person's approach to acknowledging Christ as Lord? (Lk. 14:28)
17. The person who digs deep _____ his travail of soul because he wants to _____ on the rock.
18. What does the person who digs deep empty himself of? What is he interested in? What does he not build on?
19. What does the storm in Matthew 7:25, 27 represent?
20. What wonderful promise is made to believers in 1 Thessalonians 1:10?
21. Every time you present the gospel, what should you end your presentation with?
22. What point is being made in Proverbs 30:12?
23. Why did the people who heard Christ's sermon respond with astonishment? (Mt. 7:28-29)
24. What kind of response should people have to Christ's sermon?

Pondering the Principles

1. If you have truly responded to Christ's invitation to enter the narrow gate, that will be manifest by the way you live. Christ implicitly says in Matthew 7:24-27 that those who hear Him but don't obey will be condemned. Read the following verses one at a time, and discuss what they teach about obedience: Leviticus 20:8; Deuteronomy 13:4; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 19:17; John 13:17; 14:15, 21; and Ephesians 6:6-7. Are you wholeheartedly obedient to God's Word? Why is it important for us to be obedient?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:11-10. Find all the reasons that Paul was thankful for the believers at

Thessalonica. If Paul had to write a commentary about your obedience to God, what do you think he would say? Are there things in your life that need to be changed? Clarify in your mind what you need work on in your life, and commit yourself to cultivating an obedient life that will please God.

3. How would you describe your relationship with God? Is it deep and intimate, or is it superficial? Are your prayers always short and repetitive? Do you involve yourself in church activities without cultivating a personal relationship with God at the same time? What kind of fruit (actions) does your life manifest? In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul said, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves...." Spend time with God now in earnest prayer, and examine your spiritual foundation before Him.

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