

April 19, 2026 (Lesson 7)

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

1. **Evaluate Prophets Carefully** (Matthew 7:13-20)
2. **Do God's Will; Know Him Intimately** (Matthew 7:21-23)
3. **Make Jesus Your Foundation** (Matthew 7:24-29)

Central Truth: Christ desires full commitment from His disciples.

Focus: Survey facets of a Christian's commitment to Christ and be fully committed to Him.

Evangelism Emphasis: Full devotion to Christ enables effective witnessing.

Golden Text: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13).

The conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount called both Jesus' disciples and the gathered crowd to embrace the kingdom of Heaven. It also served as a warning about the misguided influence of the religious authorities, particularly the scribes and Pharisees (see Matt. 5:20). Rather than introducing new commandments, the remainder of the sermon emphasizes the importance of adhering to the teachings already provided, while cautioning against the consequences of disobedience. Through three examples, Jesus showed humanity is ultimately divided into two groups. These illustrations contrast those who choose the narrow gate and difficult path over the broad and easy one (7:13-14), those who produce good fruit rather than bad (vv. 15-23), and those who build their homes on a firm foundation instead of unstable sand (vv. 24-27). In each instance, the first group represents those who hear, obey, and find salvation, while the second represents those who hear but fail to act and face destruction. In all cases, the stakes are eternal life or judgment.

In essence, Jesus called His audience to commit to the kingdom of God. After delivering His message of the Kingdom, Jesus urged His audience to make a decision and commit to His teachings. This moment mirrors the events in Exodus 20—23, where God gave His commandments to Israel and called them to commit to His covenant and agree to live by His laws. Jesus was now asking His followers to make that same kind of commitment. There was no in-between, no other option. This decision was crucial and carried eternal consequences.

1. EVALUATE PROPHETS CAREFULLY

A. Two Ways of Life (Matthew 7:13-14)

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The phrase “Enter by the narrow gate” (v. 13 NKJV) begins the final section of the Sermon on the Mount. The imagery of two paths in life was a familiar concept in Jewish thought. In Deuteronomy, Moses declared to the Israelites, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil” (30:15). Similarly, Proverbs 14:12 warns, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Jesus used this imagery purposefully. Those who choose the wide gate will travel a broad road leading to destruction, while those who enter through the narrow gate will find themselves on a difficult path that ultimately leads to life.

The wide gate and broad road seem appealing. They offer plenty of space for those who follow the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The words “wide” and “broad” suggest ease and comfort (Matt. 7:13). But this comfort is misleading, as it ultimately leads to “destruction” (*apoleia*), a Greek word often used to describe eternal punishment. The narrow gate and road are much more limited, as they are reserved for Jesus and His way of discipleship. The words “small” and “narrow” (v. 14 NIV) also refer to space but highlight the challenges involved. The word *narrow* especially suggests hardship and struggle, hinting at the difficulties and trials that come with this path.

Jesus’ illustration presents a clear choice between two opposite paths and their outcomes. It assumes only a few will find the way to life while the majority will choose the other path. The Sermon on the Mount does not permit us to take the easy way. God’s kingdom calls for commitment and complete dedication.

Unacceptable Excuses

In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus encountered three would-be disciples. The first claimed he would follow Jesus anywhere, but Jesus highlighted the sacrifices required. The second asked to bury his father, but Jesus said proclaiming the Kingdom must come first. The third wanted to say goodbye to his family, but Jesus warned that anyone who looks back is not “fit for the kingdom of God.” Full commitment to Christ means prioritizing Him above all else, embracing the sacrifices and focus necessary to truly follow Him.

B. Two Types of Teachers (Matthew 7:15-20)

¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

The second contrast emphasizes the danger of false prophets, who are suggested to be different from reliable true prophets. The word *prophet* identifies these people as part of the disciple community. The picture of wolves dressed as sheep shows their harmful intentions are hidden behind a friendly appearance. It also connects to the Old Testament idea of God's people as His flock. These false prophets want to be accepted as part of God's community. Wolves are linked to false prophets, symbolizing leaders who take advantage of their positions among God's people (Ezek. 23:27–28).

Therefore, Jesus encouraged His disciples to closely examine any prophets who came into their community. They needed to check if their messages matched the narrow path Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount. Additionally, they should look at the prophets' actions and lives to see if they reflected the righteous life of Christ's kingdom. The instruction to “beware” (Matt. 7:15) of these prophets highlights the need for discernment among God's people, as seen in verse 6. People cannot

always be trusted based on appearances, especially when they claim to speak on God’s behalf. The key to identifying the true nature of false prophets is to examine their fruits—what they produce. The phrase “Ye shall know them by their fruits” frames the passage (vv. 16, 20). This metaphor highlights the natural link between a person’s character and their actions. It also reflects the theme of integrity found throughout Matthew, emphasizing the need for inside-out righteousness (5:8, 21-48; 23:23-28).

§ *List specific examples of “evil fruit” that indicates someone is a false prophet.*

2. DO GOD’S WILL; KNOW HIM INTIMATELY

A. Do God’s Will (Matthew 7:21-22)

²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

The third contrast hits even closer to home. While Jesus cautioned His disciples about outsiders pretending to be part of the group (v. 15), here we encounter individuals who openly declare their loyalty to Jesus as “Lord.” Jesus expects His disciples to address Him in this fashion. When He washed their feet, He said, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (John 13:13). The objection Jesus registers is toward those who, using this title, claim a connection with Him that does not exist except in their imagination. Since there is no real relationship to Christ, there can be no entrance into Heaven.

On the other hand, Jesus said those who obey the heavenly Father, thus doing His will, will enter His kingdom. Doing God’s will shows the relationship with Jesus is real. Doing the will of God begins with repentance and faith, and leads to works that please the Lord. Jesus Christ is the source of this new life (6:39-40). Those who have walked and worked to glorify Him benefit from His gracious, saving will (see v. 40).

A day of judgment is coming when all pretenders and false prophets will be tried. In that day, many will parade their works before the Lord as evidence that they belong to Him. Their approach to Him will be in that zealous double designation, “Lord, Lord” (Matt. 7:22). As they made His name prominent to give credibility to their earthly activities, then they will use His name to gain His favor.

These pretenders will say they prophesied in His name. Again, they clothed their pretense in the name and revelation of God. They proclaimed their false doctrines to be true and appealed to the Word for support. In so doing, they deceived many people. Also, they will say they cast out demons and performed miracles in Christ’s name. In 24:24, these miracles are described as being so astonishing they would deceive, if possible, “the very elect.” This is further proof that the apparent miracle is not the criterion of a true prophet, but the Word is.

§ *How is it possible to deceive oneself about their relationship with God?*

B. Know Him Intimately (Matthew 7:23)

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The phrase “Lord, Lord,” along with Jesus’ startling response “I never knew you” (v. 23), appears again in the parable about the young women and the bridegroom in 25:11–12. In the Bible, the word *know* often signifies more than just being familiar with someone; it refers to a deeper relationship. So, when Jesus says, “I never knew you,” He is essentially stating He does not recognize them as part of His true family. This expression serves as a strong rejection of their claims. Just saying we are loyal to Jesus or performing impressive acts in His name is not enough if it is not based on following God’s commandments. This idea connects to a major theme in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus points out the higher level of loyalty He expects from His followers (5:20).

Judgment Day

Many Christians criticize me for taking the Gospel so seriously. But do they really think that on Judgment Day Christ will chastise me, saying, “Leonard, you took me too seriously”?—Leonard Ravenhill

3. MAKE JESUS YOUR FOUNDATION

A. The Two Builders (Matthew 7:24-27)

²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The famous parable of the wise and foolish builders wraps up the Sermon on the Mount. It is not enough just to hear Jesus’ message or to react with a short burst of good deeds. Instead, we must establish a strong foundation that combines genuine commitment to Christ with consistent obedience. Jesus demands a choice between Himself and outward righteousness. He urges those who have heard the words of His sermon to put them into action, clearly distinguishing Himself from any other foundation for living.

The hearers of the sermon would quickly understand the parable’s basic message. They knew it was unwise not to build on a solid foundation. The scribes and Pharisees promoted a shallow kind of righteousness that covered up their hypocrisy. Over time, it would become clear that this approach could not fulfill the people’s deepest needs. In this parable, Jesus invited them to find the true foundation of life in His kingdom. However, this choice was not easy; it required leaving behind the comfort of fitting in with the popular religious leaders.

Wise people examine unreliable teachings and realize Jesus is the only firm foundation. They prepare for future difficulties by building their lives on the solid rock of Jesus' words. We must choose to base our lives on Jesus, regardless of the challenges from culture or religion. This parable serves as a fitting end to the sermon by showing there is no good reason to reject the kingdom of God.

Wrong Foundation

There is only one difference in the two men described in Jesus' parable of the two builders. One acted on the words of Jesus, and one did not. Both heard the Word. Also, both built a house. And there is no indication that one house was less elaborate than the other. It is only that one built on rock, and the other on sand. The irony is that the folly of building on the sand may not be immediately apparent. As long as the sun is shining and the winds are calm, no danger appears. But when the tempest stirs, the house will crash and be swept away by the swirling floodwaters.

Similarly, a life built on false teachings may not feel their damaging effects immediately. As long as things are going well, it may appear that one is on solid ground. But all of that changes when tests and trials and temptations storm in.

B. Christ's Authoritative Teaching (Matthew 7:28-29)

²⁸ And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: ²⁹ For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Although Matthew emphasized the Sermon on the Mount was directed toward Jesus' disciples, he also indicates the crowds were present and listening (5:1-2). They were "astonished" by Jesus' authority in His teachings (7:28), which set Him apart from the teachings of "the scribes" (v. 29). The scribes and Pharisees were recognized as religious leaders. However, they gained their authority by quoting Scripture and later Jewish teachers. Jesus, on the other hand, used Scripture to offer new

interpretations. He did not depend on human authorities or traditions. Instead, He spoke clearly and confidently, presenting Himself as the voice of God for a new time in history. However, Jesus did not want people to just hear His words and be impressed; He wanted them to listen and choose to follow Him. Choosing to follow Jesus means leaving the crowd behind and becoming His disciple.

§ *Compare the response to Jesus' teaching in a synagogue (Mark 1:21-22) with the response following His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:28-29).*

FULL COMMITMENT

Let us reflect on the commitment we have to Christ. In a world overflowing with information from news broadcasts, the internet, and social media, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. We must ask ourselves: *Can we trust what we hear? Do we know those in our community who are genuine believers? How do we discern the truth among so many voices?*

The answer lies in the fruit. Jesus teaches us we can recognize true prophets by examining the fruit of their lives. We should compare this fruit to that of the Pharisees and scribes, and also be cautious of today's so-called prophets. Many of them may appear harmless, but like wolves in sheep's clothing, some can lead us astray. It is essential that we approach these matters with discernment and wisdom. Additionally, having a strong foundation is crucial. The Sermon on the Mount serves as that solid base for our Christian journey. By adhering to Jesus' teachings, we can ensure our lives are built on rock, not sand. Ignoring His words could ultimately lead to our downfall.

Therefore, as we conclude these lessons on the Sermon on the Mount, consider how we can deepen our commitment to Christ. Reflect on the fruit we see in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Let us strive to be fully committed disciples, grounded in the truth of Jesus' message. As

scholar R. T. France puts it, “The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be admired but to be obeyed.”

Daily Devotions

- M. Evaluate Prophets and Their Message (Deuteronomy 18:15-22)
- T. Find Strength in God’s Word (Psalm 119:25-32)
- W. Disobedience, Past and Future (Jeremiah 7:21-29)
- T. Build Your Life on God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:10-17)
- F. Draw Near to God by Faith (Hebrews 11:4-7)
- S. Test the Spirits (1 John 4:1-6)