



Sermon on the Mount Study Guide – Week 9
November 4-10
Matthew 7:13-20
The Divine Conspiracy, pp. 273-280

This week's text is the beginning of the end. Jesus is concluding his Sermon on the Mount – and he's doing so by giving one of the biggest commands so far. He instructs us to routinely and heartily obey all that he has said.

So the question becomes: How are we supposed to follow and obey all of what Jesus has preached in Matthew 5-7? It begins with acknowledging that our spiritual lives can get messy, and we shouldn't beat ourselves up for not being perfect. But Dallas Willard reminds us that Jesus is serious about this discipleship stuff. It's not enough to simply listen to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount or follow him around. Instead, we need to become his disciples.

In the eyes of Jesus, there is no good reason for not doing what he said to do. Jesus only tells us to do what is best – what is going to bring us life. At one point, Jesus asks his students, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say (Luke 6:46). Just try picturing yourself standing before Jesus and explaining why you did not do what he said was best. Try doing that with the things that you have done just today.

Now, we can certainly count on Jesus' understanding when we mess up. But we can't build our lives as Christians on the mess-ups – that will not do as a general posture. Jesus has made a way for easy and happy obedience, and he laid it out in the Sermon on the Mount. That way is called discipleship. It's an apprenticeship with Jesus. His gospel is the good news *for life and Christian discipleship*. (273)

And so we enter the Kingdom of God through the narrow gate of obedience to Jesus. We strive to produce of a true disciple of Jesus. And as we have already seen, we don't display the fruit in some gaudy spectacle. Instead, we strive to produce fruit so that we may glorify God and testify that his reign has already begun. We may mess up from time to time, but we work to produce fruit out of our new kingdom identity.

When we grow as disciples, and grow into Kingdom citizens, it is our task to invite others. In time, we are called to disciple them just as Christ disciple us. Learning from Jesus, we lead others to the narrow gate as well – teaching them how they can grow into the good life.

Discussing the Text:

1. Dallas Willard makes an important point: he writes that the narrow gate is not doctrinal correctness, like most people assume. The narrow gate is obedience – and the confidence in Jesus necessary for obedience.
 - a. Discuss how the many parts of the Sermon on the Mount point to obedience over doctrinal correctness.
2. Jesus tells us in verses 16-20 that we will be able to recognize false prophets by their “bad fruit.”
 - a. Is this easy to do?
 - b. What does “bad fruit” look like?
 - i. Willard characterizes the wolves in sheep’s clothing as those who try to fake discipleship by outward deeds (275).

Discussing the World:

1. Talk about the common ways that we turn from the narrow gate and do whatever we want to do.
 - a. What kind of fruit did it bear?
 - b. Going further: get specific, and name specific instances – if you feel comfortable
2. Discuss actions or practices that have been helpful in the pursuit of Jesus. Share stories about what discipleship looks like in your everyday life.
 - a. Talk about the demands, challenges, and joys of the 21st century disciple.

Action: Consider practicing the Spiritual Discipline of Worship

- The purpose of this spiritual discipline is to respond to God’s truth with loving obedience.
- Regularly engage with a worshiping community.
- ‘Work the program’ – obey Jesus. Doing this will help you taste more of God’s goodness.
- Worship is every spiritual discipline’s end game! The “be all and end all” is a loving trust of and obedience to God.