



Sermon on the Mount Study Guide – Week 10
November 11-17
Matthew 7:21-29
The Divine Conspiracy, pp. 281-373

Jesus' final statements in the Sermon on the Mount are of encouragement. He encourages them toward living this life of discipleship and obedience, so that they may know the 'good life.' The final verses of Matthew 7 expand on this theme, pointing us toward the firm foundation of his words and teaching. The life that hears and does will build his or her life on Christ, the rock. That way, when trials come, there is a firm foundation to hold them steady.

Dallas Willard highlights the two main objectives for a person training for 'life on the rock':

- First: apprentices must come to dearly love and constantly delight in the heavenly Father – the Father made real to us in Jesus Christ. In this love, they realize that there is no limit to the goodness of God's intentions or the power to carry them out.
- Second: we must remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God. Freeing the apprentices of domination, enslavement, and old habits.

Spiritual disciplines of the Christian life are tested methods that believers have been using for years to accomplish these two main objectives. Willard describes them as engaging the body differently. Believers use them to conquer habits of thought, feeling, and action that govern our lives poorly – as if the kingdom were irrelevant. In the process of removing bad habits, the disciplines replace them with good habits – kingdom habits. Willard writes that the ultimate effect of practicing the disciplines makes our body a reliable ally for spiritual life.

Spiritual progress often only comes with a practiced rhythm of pursuing the disciplines. Much like training for a 5k, or preparing for final exams, it takes time and effort. Building a kind of "rhythm of life" can help train us, and at the same time keep us from turning the disciplines into mere deeds of righteousness. Using them rightly will allow us rely on them for wise counsel on how to live with Jesus in his kingdom (364).

Discussing the Text:

1. Jesus makes it clear in verses 24-27 that his words must be put into action.
 - a. What is the relationship between faith and actions?
 - b. If we are saved by faith alone, why do our actions matter?
 - c. How does our faith in Jesus change how we live? How does it change who we are as people of God?
2. The phrase, “Lord, Lord” in the Greek is an emotional plea. The point Jesus is making is that even a very emotional or sincere confession of Jesus as Lord is not enough. Kingdom citizens *live* according to the life of discipleship – they *live* a life of obedience to Christ.
 - a. Talk about the temptation of ‘all talk and no walk’
 - b. Over the course of the Bible Study, how have you found ways to *live* a life of obedience? Talk about the good and the bad.

Discussing the World:

1. Willard writes that, “Non-discipleship is the elephant in the church” (301). Sure, we talk about our moral failures and we discuss financial abuses. But fundamentally, Christian believers fail to be constantly learning how to live their lives in the Kingdom. And this has become an *accepted* way of doing things.
 - a. Talk about the difference between whole-life devotion to God, and consumer Christianity (people who maintain a consumer, or client, relationship to the church).
2. Consumer Christians are not inwardly transformed, nor are they committed to being transformed. People like this utilize the grace of God for forgiveness, but don’t give their innermost thoughts and intentions over to the Kingdom.
 - a. What North American mindsets have led to consumer Christianity?
 - i. Rejection of authority? Church hopping? Relative truth?
 - b. Discuss how our prayers can be consumeristic too.

Action: Consider practicing the Spiritual Discipline called Rule for Life.

- The purpose of this discipline is to live a sane and holy rhythm that reflects a deep love for God and a respect for how he has made me
- Create rhythms that honor your desires and respect your limits
- From time to time, assess your spiritual growth
- Develop regular, repeated relationships that make space for God in the busyness of life