

LESSON 17

The Wise & Foolish Builders

MATTHEW 7:21-27



BIBLE TRUTH

OUR LOVE FOR GOD IS SHOWN BY THE FRUIT OF OUR LIVES,
ESPECIALLY WHEN THE WINDS OF TRIALS BLOW

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW **5 MIN**

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY **10 MIN**

Read Matthew 7:15–29 from the Scriptures or read story 95, “The Wise & Foolish Builders,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 **10 MIN**

How Easy Is It to Fake Christianity?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 **10 MIN**

You Will Know Them by Their Fruit

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ branches from several trees

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY **5 MIN**

7. ACTIVITY TIME **10 MIN**

Fruit Trees

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

8. CLOSING PRAYER **5 MIN**

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON **10 MIN**

Sand and Rock

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ one-half inch wooden dowel cut into four eight-inch pieces
- ✓ two six- to eight-inch square disposable plastic containers
- ✓ a small amount of cement mix, enough to fill one of the containers
- ✓ enough sand to fill the second container

TOTAL 65 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

You can know what's in a person's heart by the behavior of their life—The Lord told Samuel that “man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). It is easy to say you believe in God, but it is much more difficult to obey the Lord with your life. In this passage, Jesus warns that there will be those who will come into the church claiming to speak for God, and yet inwardly be wolves (Matthew 7:15)—they won't really love God and in fact will be bent on destruction. We shouldn't be fooled by those whose lives don't match their words. This principle applies to us all: our behavior, especially how we act in private when no one is looking, is a good indicator of what and whom we really love.

Words alone are worthless—This passage teaches us the sober truth that people are Christians not just because they call themselves Christians (Matthew 7:23). Just because a person calls Jesus Lord doesn't mean that God has changed his or her heart. James said it like this: “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19). We know that demons will not go to heaven, yet they know who Jesus is and even declare it publicly (Mark 1:23–24). Our good words and good deeds are not enough; we must believe and completely entrust our lives to Jesus. Believing in Jesus' atoning death on the cross is the only way to salvation. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The wise builder builds upon the rock—Jesus gave a picture to help us see the difference between actually trusting him and only saying we trust in him. Christ is the Rock in the parable. If we really trust Jesus, our lives are pictured by a man building his house on a rock. Jesus must be what motivates us; he alone must be the foundation for what we say and what we do. If we say and do the right things publicly, but inside do not trust Jesus, our lives are pictured by the man who builds his house on the sand. Notice that both houses have to endure storms. God will send trials to test the foundation of our faith. James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:6–7 explain that God uses the stormy trials of life to test our faith.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Tree Identification

Most people cannot identify a tree just by looking at its branches. An apple tree branch is almost identical to a pear tree branch. A lemon tree branch is almost identical to a lime tree branch. An orange tree looks a lot like a magnolia, but you can't eat the fruit of a magnolia tree. Few can tell an apple tree from a locust tree in the dead of winter. It is not until the leaves come out, and for some trees not until the fruit begins to develop, that you can identify the kind of tree it is. So it is with people: just because someone talks like a real Christian doesn't mean he is a real Christian. Only the fruit of his life identifies someone as a true Christian.

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Jesus Christ is the Rock. The sure foundation upon which we build our lives is Jesus himself. No other foundation will do. That Rock—Jesus—is the basis of our claim to forgiveness and life everlasting. The ultimate trial will come for all men when they must stand before a holy God at the last judgment. There will be no hope for those who have not built on the Rock. Psalm 1 tells us that the wicked will not be able to stand in the judgment, but will be blown away like chaff (Psalm 1:4–6) and perish in the fires of hell.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Matthew 7:15–29 from the Scriptures or read story 95, “The Wise & Foolish Builders,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

How Easy Is It to Fake Christianity?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Read through the Scripture passage for today and ask the class how easy they think it is to fake being a Christian. The reality is that it is very easy. Many people claim to be Christians but don’t go to church or read the Bible or pray, and they live sinfully.

Follow up this question by making two lists on the whiteboard, one labeled “easy fruit” and the other “hard fruit.” Under the heading “easy fruit,” list all the things the class thinks are easy to do even if you are not a Christian, e.g., call yourself a Christian, own a Bible, go to church on Sunday, be kind to people in public.

Under the heading “hard fruit,” list all the things that only a true Christian is likely to do, e.g., read the Bible every day, forgive someone who refuses to repay a debt, serve when no one is looking, confess sin that they see in their heart, endure persecution.

Help the class consider their own lives and whether or not the fruit they see is easy or hard. Encourage them to pursue the Lord and not rely on the label of “Christian.”

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

You Will Know Them by Their Fruit

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ branches from several trees

You can't tell trees apart by their branches unless you are an expert (see “A Little Bit More”). See if the class can guess which tree the branches come from. Try to get at least one branch from an edible fruit tree. See if they can guess which one will bear good fruit.

- **Do these branches look essentially the same?**
(Yes, they do.)
- **Do all people, Christian and non-Christian, look essentially the same?**
(Yes, they do.)
- **How would we know what kind of tree we had in the dead of winter if there was no one to tell us?**
(You could look at the bark, but you might at least need to wait until the leaves came out. Even then you might not be able to tell until the flowers or fruit came out.)

- Why do you think God used the analogy of trees and fruit to describe the way we recognize true Christians?

(Just like trees, we can know true Christians by the fruit of their lives.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Fruit Trees

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Have the children open their Bibles to Galatians 5. Read together Galatians 5:22–23. Have the children draw a tree with fruit. On each fruit have them write one of the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22–23. While they work, reread Matthew 7:15 and ask them which fruit you are likely to see from a “wolf,” a fruit of the Spirit or a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Sand and Rock

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ one-half inch wooden dowel cut into four eight-inch pieces
- ✓ two six- to eight-inch square disposable plastic containers
- ✓ a small amount of cement mix, enough to fill one of the containers
- ✓ enough sand to fill the second container

Prior to class, mix the cement and pour it into the first container. Insert two of the dowels like pilings into the cement standing, straight up on end. Allow it to harden completely. Bring to

class the cemented dowels along with the second bowl filled with the sand and the remaining two dowels.

Read Matthew 7:24–27 to the class and then set out the dowels pushed into the container of sand. Have a volunteer pretend to be the wind and see how difficult it is to push over the dowels in the sand (with their hand). Then bring out the dowel in the cement (rock) and see if that same volunteer can move it.

Pass around the cemented dowels for the class to touch. Draw them out about which material would make a better foundation and why.

Then ask them what the rock represents in the story. (The rock represents Jesus and his Word.)

End by encouraging the class to build their lives on Jesus, and review the gospel with them.