



This summer, we've been walking through the Sermon on the Mount in a series called "Best Sermon Ever." This was a sermon given by Jesus, and today, we get to the end of his sermon. Today's passage is a great reminder for us as believers to live in such a way that every single part of who we are is affected by our faith, including how we treat other people. Throughout life, you'll experience two ways to live. You can be happy or unhappy. You can be grateful or ungrateful. You can be healthy or unhealthy. Today, Jesus goes beyond all those things and describes two ways you can live your life through various pictures. These two ways to live all have eternal consequences.

Key Passage: Matthew 7:12-27

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the Golden Rule impact our daily interactions with others, and what might be the broader effects if it were universally practiced? What keeps us from being guided by the Golden Rule?

The Golden Rule encourages treating others how we wish to be treated, capturing the essence of the Law and the Prophets. If universally practiced, it would significantly enhance the way people treat one another and lead to a peaceful and supportive culture. Families, schools, and workplaces would see increased empathy and cooperation, leading to more compassion, peace, and understanding. Living by the Golden Rule can transform all our relationships. Within our families, it would foster respect and understanding. In schools, it would promote kindness and reduce bullying. Workplaces would see greater teamwork and a more supportive atmosphere.

2. How do the narrow and wide gates illustrate different approaches to life? What are the eternal consequences associated with each path? Give some examples of narrow and wide gate choices.

The narrow gate and the wide gate represent two distinct life paths. The wide gate, characterized by ease and self-indulgence, leads to destruction. In contrast, the narrow gate, though challenging and less traveled, leads to life. Jesus calls us to choose the narrow gate, which requires self-control, holiness, and following Him despite the challenges. The eternal consequence of the wide gate is destruction, while the narrow gate leads to eternal life.

3. What challenges do we face when choosing the narrow gate? How can faith help overcome these challenges?

Choosing the narrow gate involves significant challenges, such as self-denial, persecution, and loneliness. However, faith in Jesus provides the strength to overcome these difficulties. Following the narrow path, though not easy, is rewarding as it leads to a life of holiness and, ultimately, to eternal

life. Faith in Jesus offers guidance, comfort, and the power of the Holy Spirit to navigate this challenging path.

4. What characteristics distinguish false prophets, and how can these traits disrupt a church or faith community?

According to Matthew 7:15-20, false prophets appear good on the outside but are inwardly corrupt. They can be identified by their fruits – their actions and teachings. Recognizing and addressing false prophets helps protect the church from disruption and ensures that the focus remains on Jesus and His teachings.

Signs of a False Teacher:

- They downplay Jesus
 - They distract from Jesus and give a different message than Jesus.
 - They put down the Bible
- They love to argue
 - 1 Timothy 6 says they have an unhealthy craving for controversy
 - They love to disrupt, to slander, and to create division within the church
- They are greedy
 - They see serving God as a means to getting rich
 - Church family – let's be on guard for people who downplay Jesus, stir up division, and are ruled by greed

5. How does Jesus' teaching about appearing religious versus truly knowing God challenge common perceptions of religious activity and authentic faith?

Jesus' teaching about appearing religious versus truly knowing God challenges the superficiality of religious activities. It emphasizes that genuine faith involves more than outward actions; it requires a personal relationship with God. Those who focus solely on religious activities without knowing God will ultimately be rejected. True faith is demonstrated by doing the will of the Father and living a life submitted to Him.

6. What steps can one take to move from merely appearing religious to truly knowing God, as discussed in Matthew 7:21-23?

Moving from merely appearing religious to truly knowing God involves developing a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ. This means entering through the narrow gate, living a life submitted to God's will, and making a difference for the Kingdom of God. It requires more than just participating in religious activities; it involves a heartfelt commitment to follow Jesus and live according to His teachings.

7. How does the metaphor of building a house on the rock versus the sand illustrate the importance of a strong faith foundation? What are the practical applications of this teaching?

Building on the rock, representing Jesus and His teachings, ensures stability and resilience in facing life's challenges. Conversely, building on the sand or rejecting Jesus' teachings leads to collapse when difficulties arise. This teaching emphasizes the necessity of grounding oneself in Christ for enduring strength and security.

8. What about this lesson challenged you the most? What was your biggest takeaway?