

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 4
WEEK OF OCT 11



Growth Group Fall 2020
Obedience

Week 4 – October 11, 2020 - Matthew 7:13-27

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

The verses we are looking at this week come at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was Jesus’s longest exhortation during his ministry. It is famously quoted and used often to explain the moral trajectory of the Christian life. As the sermon wraps up, Jesus becomes increasingly more rigid in his judgments and words. Matthew 7:13-27 is sometimes called “The Warnings.” It is made up of stories about two gates, two paths, two prophets, two kinds of disciples and two houses.

The first story is about two gates and two paths. These verses urge listeners and readers to enter through the “narrow gate.” This is interpreted as converting to Christ alone. The narrow gate is submitting your morality, your life, your everything to the rule of Jesus Christ. This path provides clear boundaries and limits, as opposed to the wide gate and wide path of the world which does not have any boundaries.

In verses 15-23, Jesus addresses two dangers related to false teachers/disciples. The first group are people who “look” like Christians from the outside. They claim to be Christ followers, but in no way live a life that represents a relationship with him. Jesus urges his followers to test these people by looking at their fruits, their actions. Do they teach Christ alone? Are they themselves walking through the narrow gate and encouraging others to do so? Are they caring for the least of these, or only living for themselves?

Another group is made up of disciples who have prestige, power and authority. These “believers” arrive in heaven claiming that they followed Jesus and have done his works. However, Jesus says that is not enough because he never knew them. Jesus warns that one must submit their whole life to Jesus Christ, not just the part that everyone sees.

The final image is that of two houses. When troubles come and false teachers speak, and storms hit, where is your foundation? Are you taking the easy way and building on the sand, listening to the words of Jesus, but never applying them to your life? Or are you daily choosing Christ, and discerning the “Christian” voices in your life that bring encouragement, and are being a “doer” of the faith? Jesus says that kind of “house”, or that kind of life, is one that is built on a solid foundation and will withstand the storms that come.



Exploring the Text

Read Matthew 7:13-27

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Share about a time in your life when you didn’t listen well or weren’t paying attention. What lesson did you learn?
- 2) How do we approach the idea of a “narrow gate and narrow way” when we live in a culture that is dominated by “inclusivity” and “numerous ways or options”?
- 3) Can you think of a Christian leader who you felt “let you down?” This could either be someone you knew, or someone who you admired. How did you handle this?
- 4) How do we faithfully discern which Christian messages or voices to listen to?
- 5) Jesus talks about a life that does not bear good fruit, in verse 19. What does it look like to live a life that bears good fruit? How do you know if your life is bearing good fruit?
- 6) The themes of these stories are all around the issue of obedience. What does it mean to you, to be obedient to Jesus?
- 7) How does this parable, of the wise and foolish builders, relate to the story that Jesus tells, about the narrow way and the gate?
- 8) What is one practical step that you can take today, in order to build the foundation of your life on Jesus Christ?