

STUDY GUIDE



TRANSFORMED
TRANSFORMED BY MY CHOICES
MATTHEW 7:13-27
10/16/2016

MAIN POINT

Choose to follow Jesus.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Would you say that you are generally good at making choices?

When have you found yourself with too many choices? What did you do?

When faced with a tough decision, how do you go about making your choice?

Our culture overwhelms us with choices. Even soft drink vending machines in restaurants are now offering up to 127 choices. Choices can encourage our individuality, but choices—especially too many choices—can be stressful. The biggest choice we must make, however, does not need to be hard. Life boils down to one choice with two options: take the road that leads to life in Christ or take the road that leads to destruction. Jesus met His followers on a mountainside and taught them about growing in discipleship. His instruction has come to be called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). As His disciples lived out what He taught, their lives would outwardly display the inner transformation that had taken place. He brought His instruction to a close with a series of comparisons. Each comparison challenged them to make the wise choice of devoting themselves to Him completely.

WATCH THE SESSION 6 VIDEO.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:13-14.

Why is the path that leads to God described as narrow?

Why is a gate an appropriate and telling description of Jesus?

How have you experienced the truth of these verses?

In these verses, Jesus used the imagery of a narrow gate and a wide gate to describe following God. Jesus told us to enter through “the narrow gate” (v. 13). As the one who makes it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins, Jesus Himself is the gate. His sacrifice on the cross allows us to be forgiven of sin and able to approach our holy God. The path that leads to God is narrow, not because it is difficult to become a Christian, but because you can get to Him only one way—through faith in Jesus. All other religious systems have at their core a works-based system; these religious systems believe you can only come to God by doing certain things. But in Christ, He has done all the “doing.”

If a friend asked you why you think Jesus is the only way to heaven, how would you respond?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:15-23.

What are some practical examples of good and bad fruit?

Warning about false prophets, Jesus said we would recognize them by their “fruit” (v. 16). Those who follow Christ will have attitudes and behaviors that will reveal a deeper relationship with Him. Nothing but Christ-like character traits can come from a relationship with Jesus just as a “good tree bears good fruit” (v. 17). Those who do not follow Christ will display habits and behaviors that don’t resemble Christ. Some may claim to be Christ followers, but their lives will reveal the truth.

What is our role in producing fruit?

In what ways do we often try to “produce fruit” in our own strength? Is this an impossible task? Explain.

What fruit have you seen God producing in your life this past year? What fruit has God produced in the life of your church this past year?

God, working through the Holy Spirit, produces spiritual fruit in our lives. Our role is to surrender to His leadership, to seek to live according to God’s commands and ways, and to determine to trust Him completely.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:24-27.

What are some sandy foundations people often try to build upon? What sandy foundation are you most tempted to build upon?

What dangers exist for those who build on a foundation other than Christ?

Without a solid foundation, our lives are at risk. Jesus has given us a steadfast foundation. He said, “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” (v. 24). Building a life on the solid rock of Jesus and His teachings often calls for hard choices—but it’s worth it. Every time.

When has your foundation in Christ helped you through a major storm?

What does it look like for us to build our lives on the “rock” that is Jesus?

How can we help one another continue to build on the right foundation?

What do you find challenging in these verses? What do you find comforting in these verses?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What spiritual fruit are you in need of right now?

Look back and evaluate the decisions you've made in the past week. Have your choices been based on your relationship with Christ, or on what feels right for the moment?

What are some difficult choices you are facing right now? How can you lean on the true Rock as your Source of support and courage?

PRAY

Ask God to develop in you spiritual fruit so that your life will point others to Jesus.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 7:13-27

7:13-14. The narrow gate symbolizes the exclusive nature of Christ's kingdom. Entrance requires the disciple to do the will of the Father in heaven (v. 21). The gate that is wide indicates that hell grants unrestricted entrance and that many will enter through its gates. The difficult (lit "narrow") ...road may symbolize the life of hardship and persecution that the disciple must face. However, since Jewish literature often used the symbol of the road to represent a moral path (Jdg 2:22; Isa 30:21; Jer 6:16; 2Jn 6) and because the law was portrayed as a narrow road from which a person was not to deviate (Dt 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Jos 1:7; 2Ki 22:2), the narrow road probably represents Jesus' morally restrictive teaching. The wide road permits travelers to meander and pursue worldly desires, but the narrow path requires travelers to stick to God's will (Mt 7:21).

7:15-20. False prophets don sheep's clothing to disguise the fact that they are ravaging wolves masquerading as true disciples. However, a prophet's character and behavior (his fruit) indicates whether he is true or false. Other NT texts insist that a teacher's doctrine must also be examined (1Jn 4:2-3). True disciples bear the fruit of good works, and this confirms their identity as Jesus' disciples (Mt 7:21-23). The image of cutting down and burning a bad tree portrays the judgment and eternal punishment of false disciples.

7:21-23. By referring to Himself as Lord and depicting Himself as the ultimate Judge of humanity, Jesus implied His deity. True disciples affirm Jesus' lordship, submit to His authority, and obey His commands. Jesus insisted that a person is confirmed as a true disciple not by prophecy, exorcism, or working miracles but by living a transformed life made possible by God. The disobedient lifestyles of lawbreakers are inconsistent with genuine discipleship. Jesus' words, I never knew you, show that these were never truly disciples.

7:24-27. The adjectives sensible and foolish describe a person's spiritual and moral state, not his intellect. Whether one is considered sensible or foolish is determined by his response to Jesus' teaching. Since OT writers described God's wrath using the image of a great storm (Isa 28:16-17; Ezek 13:10-13), the storm that destroys the house on the sand is a picture of divine judgment. Hence, the person who hears and acts on Jesus' teaching is prepared for judgment. The one who hears but doesn't act on Jesus' words will be destroyed in the storm of judgment.