

## Unit 1: The Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 7 | April 12, 2026

Committed to Christ

### Study Text

Matthew 7:13–29

### Central Truth

Jesus expects full commitment from His disciples.

### Key Verse: Matthew 7:13

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at(KJV).

“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way”(NLT).

### Learning Objectives

- Students will choose to follow the narrow path of life.
- Students will discern between authentic and false authority.
- Students will move beyond theoretical Christianity and actively live for Jesus.

### Introducing the Lesson

Did you know that the term “commitment phobia” first appeared in a self-help book in 1987? Since then, psychologists have studied how the fear of commitment affects everything from relationships and home life to school and career decisions.

### Fully Committed

What are some things in life that require full commitment? (*Examples: marriage, physical therapy, skydiving*)

In Wilkie Collins’ novel *The Moonstone*, one of the characters says, “I am an average good Christian, when you don’t push my Christianity too far.” But is it enough to just be an “average good Christian”? Does such a category even exist?

As Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount drew to a close, He began guiding His listeners toward making a commitment. This wasn’t your usual altar call. Instead of asking for bowed heads and a sinner’s prayer, Jesus placed a set of life-altering choices before the crowd: Will you take the narrow road to life or the wide road to hell? Will you produce good fruit or bad fruit? Will you do the will of the Father or try to disguise your sin by doing good deeds in God’s name? Will you build your life on the solid rock of Jesus’ teachings or ignore Him and build your life on sand?

### Part 1—Choose Carefully

#### Two Roads

Matthew 7:13–14

Matthew 7:13 marks a turning point in Jesus' sermon. His moral teaching has ended, and now Jesus begins to call His listeners to apply what they have heard.

Jesus' audience included both close followers and curious listeners. As His sermon ended, Jesus called all of them to a new level of commitment. Using a common Old Testament metaphor of "two ways" (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Jeremiah 21:8; Psalm 1:6),<sup>1</sup> Jesus clarified the choices that His listeners were required to make. He placed them at a fork in the road where they would have to choose between the wide path that leads to destruction and the narrow path that leads to life (Matthew 7:13–14).

Jesus' illustration is easy to visualize. On one side, picture a wide road inviting you on a comfortable journey. There is plenty of room for all the people who choose to go this way. It is the path of least resistance. It's downhill all the way and requires no discipline or resolve. But where does this road end up? According to Proverbs 14:12, "There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death." Jesus clearly reveals that this road leads to eternal death, not just physical death.

On the other side, picture a narrow gate and a difficult road. It's hard to find and even harder to follow. There are dangerous cliffs and well-disguised traps all along this journey: persecution, family alienation, spiritual pride, and physical suffering—just to name a few. Jesus warned His disciples what the trip would be like: "All nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

Imagine Jesus' true followers listening to the Sermon on the Mount, standing at the fork in the road and then taking that first step onto the narrow road. They could not have known the troubles that lay ahead. Within a few years, they would witness Jesus' suffering and death. As the Early Church grew over the next several decades, many would be driven from their homes, rejected by their families, or even martyred for Jesus' sake. But *this* is the road that leads to eternal life. And no one—then or now—has ever walked it alone. Not only do we have the support of other believers, but we also have the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, and empower us with each step. Paul understood this when he wrote, "Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Philippians 3:13–14).

### **Walking the Right Road**

Students will reflect on a time when they had to choose between right and wrong.

? Why is the road to destruction so easy and the road to eternal life so difficult?

? Imagine a friend standing at the fork in the road. How would you explain why they should take the narrow path? How would you prepare them for the journey?

### **Two Kinds of Fruit**

Matthew 7:15–20

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<sup>1</sup>Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33A (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 178, Accordance.

In his book *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens wrote, “When the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion, he goeth about in a shape by which few but savages and hunters are attracted. But, when he is trimmed, smoothed, and varnished ... he is the very Devil.” In other words, it’s not that hard to recognize and resist the devil when he’s acting like the devil. But when he’s in disguise, that’s when he is most dangerous. Jesus knew His disciples would be susceptible to the enemy’s deception, so He explained how they could see through the disguise.

Jesus warned His listeners that they would be the target of false prophets (Matthew 7:15). These predatory teachers and messianic pretenders might look harmless, but they were lying about themselves and about God. Just like their master, the devil, their secret mission would be to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). But Jesus immediately explained how His followers could identify them: Look beyond first impressions and evaluate the person’s actions (Matthew 7:16–20).

Scripture often uses the metaphor of fruit as an outward indicator of the inner condition. Fruit trees produce either sweet or bitter fruit, and so do people. A grapevine cannot produce apples, and a sinful person cannot produce righteousness. Appearances don’t matter. Spiritual talk is cheap. Even Satan can quote Scripture (Matthew 4:6). So evaluating behavior is the key to recognizing if someone is a false prophet.

When we look at the context of this passage, we can see that it is part of Jesus’ larger message about choosing between two alternatives:

- Which path will you take—the wide road or the narrow road? (7:13–14)
- Who are you truly serving—God or yourself? (verses 21–23)
- Where will you build your life—on rock or on sand? (verses 24–27)

The context shows us that Jesus’ main purpose in verses 15–20 is probably not just to warn against false prophets, but to set yet another choice before His listeners: What kind of fruit will you bear? All of us will produce either good or bad fruit, depending on the condition of our hearts. If we disregard Jesus’ teachings and live for ourselves, that will show up in our sinful actions. But if we commit to live in the Spirit and follow Jesus along the narrow road, we will bear good fruit that lasts (John 15:16).

? How can you tell if spiritual fruit is good or bad?

? What is the key to producing good fruit (see John 15:1–17)?

## **Part 2—Obey and Know God**

### **Two Kinds of Followers**

Matthew 7:21

When Jesus drew a contrast between false and true disciples, His listeners were compelled to choose which kind of followers they would be. Even now, each of us must make the same choice.

Jesus issues a strong warning near the end of His sermon: merely recognizing Him as Lord is not the way to enter the kingdom of heaven (verse 21). In Jewish writing and teaching, repetition represents increased intensity. So the cry “Lord, Lord” suggests that those who are calling out to Jesus are desperate. They believe they know Him and even acknowledge that He is Lord. But this is not enough. James makes the same distinction when he says, “You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?” (2:19–20).

Who, then, are Jesus’ true disciples? He explains that the only ones who will enter the Kingdom are “those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). A true disciple is someone who is following Jesus and who, like Jesus, is doing the will of the Father (John 6:38). “What finally matters is obedience to God, and here at the end of the sermon the focus is upon the will of God as it has been spelled out”<sup>2</sup> in Jesus’ teaching. His closing parable about building on rock or sand will bring this message home.

? What is the connection between faith and obedience?

? Why do you think Jesus gives this strong warning as His sermon ends?

## **Two-Faced Miracles**

Matthew 7:22–23

Once this life has ended, it will be impossible to change the choices we have made about following Jesus. Paul expressed the urgency of this decision when he wrote to the Corinthians, “We beg you not to accept the marvelous gift of God’s kindness and ignore it. For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation I helped you.’ Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:1–2).

On the Day of Judgment, all people will be confronted with the consequences of their decisions. Jesus explains that there will be people on that day who recognize Him as Lord—and have even backed up those claims with miracles—who will not enter the Kingdom (Matthew 7:22–23). Does this mean they are lying about prophesying and performing miracles in Jesus’ name? Or were they able to do these things despite their own sinful condition?

Nothing in the text indicates these individuals are lying to Jesus. In Matthew 12:27, Jesus mentions exorcists among the Pharisees who were able to cast out demons, suggesting that supernatural gifts given by God can be used by people who are not in right relationship with Him. One Old Testament example is Samson, who was far from righteous. As a judge of Israel, he made deals with the Philistines, committed revenge killings, and allowed his sexual lust to overpower him time and again (Judges 14–16). But despite Samson’s sin, he was allowed to wield supernatural strength to exact God’s judgment on the Philistines. Miracles alone are not proof that someone is in right relationship with God.

Jesus’ implication is that these people were relying on their spiritual accomplishments “as a substitute for the righteousness taught by Jesus. We may conclude that charismatic activities, done apart from righteousness, have no self-contained importance and are in themselves

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<sup>2</sup>Hagner, 187.

insufficient for entry into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>3</sup> This should be a wake-up call for every believer, but especially Pentecostals. We must keep first things first and ensure that we are following Jesus and obeying His teachings.

Jesus issues a chilling response to the false followers in Matthew 7: “I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws” (verse 23). As one commentator points out, “The phrase ‘I never knew you’ was used by rabbis in excommunication formulas.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus was not saying He had no knowledge of who these people were; instead, they were not part of God’s family. In the end, knowing God or knowing about God doesn’t save us; what matters is whether God knows us (Galatians 4:9; James 2:19).

Good works alone are not enough. Entering the kingdom of God requires obedience. Jesus says in the Gospel of John, “If you love me, obey my commandments” (14:15). Jesus knows His own—those who are redeemed by His blood and growing in righteousness. Paul put it this way: “Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy” (Ephesians 4:21–24).

? How can believers make sure their foundational relationship with Jesus stays strong while continuing to do good works in His name?

### **Part 3—Make Jesus Your Foundation**

#### **Two Foundations**

Matthew 7:24–27

Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with a powerful parable to illustrate how people should respond to His teaching. The choice Jesus presented to His listeners in first-century Israel is the same one He presents to us today.

Jesus explained that the wise people in the crowd would not only listen to His teaching, but they would also live it out (Matthew 7:24). They were willing to submit to Him, making a life-altering decision that would establish the very foundation of the rest of their lives—and their eternal destiny. A home builder does not lay a strong foundation by accident; it represents an intentional, forward-thinking decision. When someone chooses to build a house by the sea, they must think about the conditions that might eventually threaten it. They need to plan for hurricanes and build on a sturdy foundation, so the house doesn’t collapse when the storm hits.

Likewise, Jesus said His followers should build their lives on the solid foundation of His teaching. “To build on the rock a person must first be in right relationship with Christ, born again, saved by grace through faith. But the only way one can show continuing faith is by continuing obedience to His Word.”<sup>5</sup> There will be storms, but a house built on the rock will

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<sup>3</sup> Hagner, 188.

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Study Bible*, ed. Ralph W. Harris, Stanley M. Horton, and Gayle Garrity Seaver (Tulsa, OK: Empowered Life, 1994–2000), Accordance.

<sup>5</sup> Hagner, 189.

survive (verse 25). In fact, James explains that “when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow” (James 1:3). Those who are anchored in Jesus’ teachings are resilient and stable. Their faith is not easily shaken, because it is built on the unchanging truth of God’s Word.

Foolish people, on the other side, are those who hear Jesus’ teachings but fail to apply them (Matthew 7:26). An intellectual understanding is not enough to withstand the storms, much like an intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. These are merely houses built on sand. When the hurricanes hit, these houses collapse (verse 27). Building our lives on anything other than Jesus’ teachings is short-sighted and is guaranteed to lead to destruction—if not in this life, then in the next.

- ? What does it look like in practical terms when someone’s life is built on sand?
- ? What are some ways that spiritual growth requires intention and planning?

## **Two Kinds of Authority**

Matthew 7:28–29

Many people heard Jesus teach these life-changing lessons over the course of His ministry. Their reaction says a great deal about the power of Jesus’ words.

Just think about all the revolutionary teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. It includes the Golden Rule, the Lord’s Prayer, the Beatitudes, and a completely new interpretation of the Law. *You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Turn the other cheek. Love your enemies. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. Don’t worry about your life. Seek first the kingdom of God. Ask, seek, and knock. Enter through the narrow gate.* Every sentence Jesus spoke could have been its own sermon. And although the people had heard many sermons from many religious leaders, they realized that this one was different.

First-century scribes were legal experts who carried out duties from transcribing contracts to teaching the Law. They often relied on rabbinical tradition as their source of authority. Instead of interpreting the Law for themselves, they focused on passing down the traditions of past teachers. But Jesus was different. He did not quote others to give authority to His words. He often spoke in the first person, making declarations like “You have heard” followed by “But I say.” Jesus authoritatively expanded on the traditions that had been taught for centuries. Though the people may not have fully understood all He was saying, they recognized His authority as God’s messenger and “were amazed at his teaching” (Matthew 7:28–29). Only Jesus had the authority to interpret God’s laws with complete authority and even claim that He had come to fulfill the purpose of the Law and the Prophets (5:17). Speaking with this kind of authority set Jesus apart and gave force to His appeal that they should not just listen to Him but also do what He said.

As Jesus’ representatives, we have also been given the ability through the Holy Spirit to speak His words with authority. We can see this illustrated in the story of Jesus’ disciples. Jesus told them in Matthew 10, “When you are arrested, don’t worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking—it

will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (verses 19–20). As we follow Jesus today, we have access to the same power (John 14:12; Acts 1:8).

? How do you think Jesus’ listeners were able to recognize His authority?

? What are the differences between speaking with human authority (like the scribes) and speaking with divine authority (like Jesus and the disciples)?

### **What Is God Saying to Us?**

Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount show us that theoretical Christianity is not enough. If we want to truly follow Jesus, we must listen to Him and then do what He says. Each of us must choose which road we will take, which fruit we will bear, and which kind of foundation we will build. Ultimately, these choices will determine what kind of disciple we will be—and whether we will one day hear “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23) or “Well done, my good and faithful servant” (25:21).

### **Living It Out**

#### Ministry in Action

- Spending time prayerfully considering the alternatives presented in this lesson. Are you headed in the right direction? Or do you need to start living out Jesus’ teachings?
- Think about the people in your life who are on the wide road to destruction. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts, and then share the gospel with the urgency it deserves.
- When fellow believers are going through difficult seasons, offer prayer and encouragement. If they are faithfully following Jesus, their lives are built on an unshakable foundation.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Evaluate Prophets

Deuteronomy 18:15–22

Tuesday:

Find Strength in God’s Word

Psalms 119:25–32

Wednesday:

Past and Future Disobedience

Jeremiah 7:21–29

Thursday:

Build Your Life on God’s Word

2 Timothy 3:10–17

Friday:

Draw Near to God

Hebrews 11:4–7

Saturday:

Test the Spirits

1 John 4:1–6

