

Bible Study

World Day of Prayer 2021 • Supplemental Material

Prepared by the WDP

Committee of Vanuatu



Build on a Strong Foundation Matthew 7:24–27*

Introduction

The Gospel according to Matthew was written for a Christian community of Jewish descent. Matthew’s design was to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah. The structure of the book of Matthew may be outlined as follows: the presentation of Jesus the Messiah (1:1–4:11), the teaching of Jesus (4:12–7:29), the healing power of Jesus (8:1–11:1), the progressive rejection of the King (11:2–16:12), the preparation of Jesus’ disciples (16:13–20:28), the presentation and rejection of the Messiah (20:29–27:66); and the resurrection of Jesus (28:1–20).

The main Bible text for this year’s World Day of Prayer is based on the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 7:24–27, specifically his instructions for entering the kingdom of heaven. For a broader context, read Matthew 5:1–7:28.

A review of Matthew 7

Jesus makes a comparative analysis of a specific situation. He begins with instructions not to judge others, because we will be judged according to how we judge (1–2). Jesus then advises us to notice our own actions and correct them, before pointing out the faults of others (3–6).

In verses 7–11, Jesus talks about God as the source of all good things, who will give to those who ask in faith. Verse 12 is the “golden rule,” a summary of the law and the teachings of the prophets—“do to others as you would have them do to you” (NRSV). In verses 13–14, Jesus teaches about two ways of life.

In verses 15–20, Jesus instructs about false and true teaching and how to identify and deal with these teachings. In verses 21–23, Jesus teaches about the way into the kingdom of God; only persons who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Verses 24–27 are the focus of this year’s World Day of Prayer program. The end of Chapter 7 concludes what was started in Chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. This is important context as we read what Jesus says about his words, how they should be heard and acted on (v. 24). It is not an empty instruction; behind it is the full understanding of Jesus’ ministry and the kingdom of heaven. Let’s recall Jesus’ words (5:1–11) calling us to act as wise witnesses of God’s blessings.



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Read Matthew 7:24–27

Group exercise

Before reading the text, you may choose to print and cut apart sentences of scripture. **Note:** Be sure to remove the verse numbers. Ask participants to put the story in the sequence they think corresponds to what Jesus taught. Let people share the sequence created and discuss new insights the exercise may have brought in understanding this story.

Conclude the exercise by asking volunteers to read Matthew 7:24–27 and discuss the following questions:

1. Jesus used two verbs to emphasize his message: hear and act (vv. 24 and 26). How do these verbs make you feel? What other scripture do they remind you of?
2. In your context, what makes someone wise? What makes someone foolish?
3. Imagine you were part of the crowd when Jesus gave these instructions. How would you have reacted?

Jesus' concern for the crowd that gathered to hear him speak was teaching them about God and how to live better lives. All of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 7 focused on two things—hearing and acting, listening and doing. Jesus concluded his teaching with a story comparing the wise and foolish builders. The wise one heard and acted on Jesus' words, while the foolish one did not. This is our challenge and inspiration as we make our own decisions in life.

Connect the Bible story with the theme

The essence of this scripture passage is to hear the word of God and act accordingly. When we build on the rock, which is Christ, we are building a strong foundation that will stand the tests of life and remain solid and secure.

Proverbs 24:3 says, “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.” This is the house of

one who is wise, who hears and acts on the word of love and builds the house on a secure and strong foundation—Jesus Christ.

Let us rise and build our homes, our nations, and the world on the words of Jesus, who reminds us about the golden rule (Matt. 7:12). This is our solid foundation. This is our focus and it is the central teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7.

As women and leaders in life, we must rise up against all forms of violence to build a new society that is more just, peaceful, and God-focused. With God all things are possible. Let us be united in this belief.

Closing questions

1. As we reflect on this scripture reading, what lessons have we learned?
2. What are the words of Jesus that inspire you to live wisely?
3. How do you wisely turn prayers into action in your context?

Prayer

God, let us remember that in life there are always choices to make. We invite you to intervene in our lives and help us act on the words of Jesus, who we claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

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