The Fall Was Great

MATTHEW 7:24-29 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

The storm is coming for every house, and the only thing that decides whether yours stands is whether you actually did what Jesus said or just liked hearing it.

Opening Lines

Two men build houses. Same storm hits both. Only one is standing at the end, and Jesus tells you exactly why.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Get everyone to name one word from this sermon they'll actually do this week, not just admire. By the end, hearing has turned into a hammer in someone's hand.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the extended wadi geography lesson if time runs short. The picture only needs 'dry ditch that becomes a flash flood' — don't turn it into a travelogue.
- Where the moment lives: Not in agreeing the rock is better than sand. Everyone agrees. It lives in the moment someone says out loud the one specific thing they've been hearing and not doing.
- Your prep: Come with YOUR own one thing already picked and already started, not hypothetical. If you're still on the shelf, they'll smell it.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Classroom opening (dry ditch / flash flood image), 4 min. Read Matt 7:24-29, 3 min. Teach the word poieo with the hammer image, ending on the keepable line and silence, 10 min. Questions 1-3 as a group, 15 min. Question 5 written on the handout privately, then a few shared aloud, 10 min. Big idea + commitments + prayer, 3 min. Transformation happens when they write and then say their one word aloud. If short, cut question 3 and protect the written commitment.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Small-group opening (honest show of hands), 5 min. Read the passage, 3 min. Teach poieo with the hammer, land the line, silence, 10 min. Questions 1-5, going deep on 4 and 5, 30 min. Table question and go-around commitments, 8 min. Prayer over their actual named things, 4 min. Transformation lives in question 5 and the check-in partner. If short, trim question 1 — the group finds the difference fast.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening ('what's actually under you?'), 3 min. Read the passage together, 3 min. Say the poieo point plainly — hearing versus doing, same storm, 5 min. Straight to questions 2, 4, and 5, 15 min. Each of you name one word and ask the other to check in this week, 4 min. Transformation happens in the mutual check-in promise. If short, drop question 2 and go straight to 'what have you heard and not done?'

Go First, Go Real

This is a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. Remember week 1, when you learned to go first and go real so the room knows honesty is safe? We're back to it now, at the sharpest possible level, because this passage is literally about doing versus only hearing — and a teacher who only talks about doing is the man on the sand standing at the front of the room. Level five rep: don't just tell a real story tonight. Before you teach, actually DO the exercise you're about to ask of them. Pick your one word from the sermon, take the concrete action this week, and walk into the room able to say 'here's the thing I'd been hearing and not doing, and here's what I did about it Tuesday night.' Not a story from years ago. This week. Go first by having already gone.

Why This Passage Matters

This is the last thing Jesus says on the mountain, and he lands the whole sermon on one hinge: not what you heard, but whether you built on it. That matters because your room is full of people who have heard a great deal. They've sat through years of good teaching. They can define grace and quote the Beatitudes. And Jesus, at the end of the greatest sermon ever preached, looks straight at people exactly like that and says some of you are building on sand and don't know it, because the sand looks like solid ground until the water comes. The terror and the mercy of this passage sit right next to each other. The terror: the storm is certain and it plays no favorites. The mercy: the rock is not your cleverness or your strength, it's a Person who already stood in the full flood and rose unmoved. You are not teaching people to try harder. You are teaching them to build their weight onto Someone who holds. When Matthew says the crowds were astonished at his authority, he's telling you what you're handling tonight — not borrowed opinions, but the very words of the one who has all authority in heaven and earth. You get to hand people that voice. Few things you'll ever do matter more.

Catch the Fire First

Before the room ever names a word, you name yours. Sometime this week — before you teach — sit down and pick the one thing from this sermon you've been hearing and not doing. Anger, worry, forgiveness, honesty, secret prayer. Then actually do it. Apologize to the person. Make the honest call. Sit five silent minutes with one verse instead of scrolling. Then walk in Sunday and, when you open, tell them plainly: 'Here's the word I'd been dodging. Here's what I did about it this week, and here's what it cost.' You cannot

fake this. If you stand up front urging people off the shelf while your own stuff is still on the shelf, they will feel the sand under your feet before you finish the parable.

Bring Your Own Story

- A time you built something the cheap, fast way and the storm later exposed exactly what you'd skipped — a real one, not a metaphor.
- A word from this very sermon you have heard a hundred times and still, honestly, have not done.
- A moment a small honest choice cost you something and nobody clapped, but the house held.
- POLISHED vs REAL (sample): Polished — 'God has taught me the deep importance of obedience over the years.' Real — 'I've quoted "forgive as you've been forgiven" for a decade and still hadn't called my brother back until this Tuesday.'
- Guardrail: keep it real, not raw — a story you've already made peace with, not one you're still bleeding from in front of them.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Picture a dry ditch in the Palestinian hills in summer. Smooth sand, easy to build on, and it looks like solid ground. Then the winter rain hits the highlands and by evening that ditch is a roaring flood. Jesus ends his whole sermon standing at the edge of that ditch, pointing at two houses."

Concrete image before abstract idea — let the picture do the teaching before you explain it.

SMALL GROUP: "Quick honest show of hands, no shame in it: how many things have you heard taught that you fully agree with and still have not actually done? Yeah. Me too. That gap is exactly what Jesus talks about in the last words of this sermon."

Start with a shared confession so the room knows this is about all of us, not a quiz.

COFFEE: "Let me ask you something before we read this. If a storm hit your life tomorrow, what's actually under you? Not what you believe — what you've built on. Jesus ends the whole mountain sermon on that one question."

One blunt question that puts the whole passage on the table before you open the Bible.

Teaching the Word

The word to sit on is the Greek verb behind 'does them' — poieo. It doesn't mean 'agree with,' 'appreciate,' or 'find helpful.' It means make, do, carry out, produce. Jesus doesn't split the room into people who heard and people who didn't — both heard the identical words. He splits them by poieo. One made the words happen in his hands; the other just let them wash over him. Here's the physical image: hold your open hand out, palm up, and imagine a set of words dropped into it like a tool — a hammer. The hearer-only looks

at the hammer, nods, says 'good hammer,' and sets it back on the shelf. The wise builder closes his hand around it and drives a nail. Same tool. Same hearing. The whole difference is the fist closing. Now read them the line and stop talking: 'Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.' [Let it sit. Count silently to ten before you say another word.]

Discussion Questions

1. In the parable, what is exactly the same for both builders, and what is the one thing that's different?

Coaching note: Easy on-ramp. You want them to notice the storm is identical and the hearing is identical — only the foundation differs. Affirm the obvious answer and press: 'So the storm isn't the test. What is?'

If it stalls: Did the same storm hit both houses, yes or no? Then what was different about the two men?

2. Jesus says the foolish man 'hears these words of Mine and does not act on them.' What's the difference between hearing something and doing it — in real life, not in theory?

Coaching note: Push them off definitions toward examples. If someone gives a churchy answer, ask for a concrete one: a specific thing they've heard and not done.

If it stalls: Name one thing your doctor or your spouse has told you that you fully agree with and still haven't done.

3. Matthew says the crowds were astonished because Jesus taught 'as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.' Why does it matter that these are HIS words, not borrowed ones?

Coaching note: This is where the parable becomes personal. The scribes chained opinion to opinion; Jesus stakes your whole house on obedience to his own words. Draw them toward: the rock has a name.

If it stalls: If a stranger and your closest friend gave you the exact same advice, whose would you actually act on, and why?

4. The house on the rock doesn't stand because the builder was strong — it stands because the rock holds. Where does your trust actually rest on a hard night: in how tight your grip is, or in what you're holding onto?

Coaching note: The gospel turn. Some will confess their grip feels thin. Don't rush to fix it — sit with them, then land the mercy: his grip on you doesn't slip. Let that breathe.

If it stalls: On your worst night this year, what did you tell yourself to get through it — 'I've got this' or 'God's got me'?

5. Over these weeks you've heard about anger, worry, forgiveness, honesty, secret prayer. Name the one you've been hearing and not doing — and say what doing it would actually look like this week.

Coaching note: This is the whole point of the night. Don't let anyone stay abstract. Push every 'I should be more loving' toward 'I'll call my sister Thursday.' Have your own answer ready and go first.

If it stalls: Finish this sentence out loud: 'The thing I keep agreeing with and not doing is _____.'

Questions You May Hear

"Isn't 'doing the words' just earning your salvation by works?"

No — doing doesn't earn the rock, it reveals you're already standing on it. As James put it, be doers and not only hearers; obedience is the fruit of a foundation you've already come to, not the payment for one.

"What actually is 'the rock' — is it Jesus, or his teaching, or obeying?"

It's his own words, which are inseparable from himself. Paul says it plainly: no one can lay any foundation other than Jesus Christ. To build on his sayings is to build on him.

"Why does Matthew make such a point of him teaching 'with authority, not like the scribes'?"

The scribes taught by citing earlier rabbis, stacking one borrowed opinion on another. Jesus said 'these words of mine' and staked a man's whole house on them — no footnotes. The teacher was himself the rock.

"Does 'the fall was great' mean these are unbelievers who lose their salvation?"

The passage right before this shows people who said 'Lord, Lord' and did religious things but never did the Father's will. The house on sand is what religious activity looks like when there was never any real foundation underneath it.

For Experienced Leaders

- Don't over-explain the wadi. One sentence about a dry ditch becoming a flash flood does the whole job; a geography lecture kills the tension.
- When someone confesses their grip feels thin, resist fixing it fast. Let the sentence 'his grip on you doesn't slip' land in silence before you move on.
- Hand your Timothy one section of next week's passage — ten minutes, fully theirs. Meet first and ask, 'What's the one thing you want them to leave with?' Push them off summary toward one real question, warn them to count to thirty in the silence, and don't rescue them mid-teaching. Afterward, name one thing to keep and one to fix — not everything at once.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Go around and have each person say out loud the one word from this sermon they're going to do this week, and one concrete step. Then land this week's table question: ask someone at your table to check in with you about it.

Close by praying out loud over the specific things people just named — the actual apology, the honest call, the five silent minutes. Don't reach for a written prayer; say their real words back to God so they hear their own commitment carried up.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to question 2 or 3 because someone got

honest, stay there. A real conversation about one thing they've heard and not done is worth more than finishing all five.

Midweek follow-up: Midweek, text each person one line: 'Did you do the thing you named Sunday?' No sermon attached. Just the check-in. That text is the storm-proofing.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/matthew/7-24-29/lesson

Handout

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During the lesson:

- One thing you've heard taught and fully agree with — and still haven't done:

- In the parable, both houses got the same storm. In one sentence, what was the ONLY difference between the two men?

- The rock holds; the builder doesn't have to. On a hard night, where does your trust actually rest — in your grip, or in what you're holding? Write what's true, not what sounds good:

- The one word from this sermon I'm going to DO this week (anger / worry / forgiveness / honesty / secret prayer / other):

- Who at this table is going to check in with me about it:

Take-home actions:

- At home tonight: if you snapped at a family member, apologize before bed — name the specific words you regret and ask them to forgive you.

- At work tomorrow: watch for the small choice where honesty costs you something — the inflated number, the shifted blame — and choose the true, costly thing. Nobody applauds, and the house holds.

- In your rest today: before the endless scroll, sit five minutes with one verse from this sermon and pray it back to God. Give your quiet moments something solid to stand on.

Every wadi is dry until the rain comes. Pick one word from this sermon and do it today, before you sleep.