

Putting Jesus' Words into Practice

Luke 6:46-49 on May 18, 2025

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Please read Luke 6:46-49 before going further in this transcript.

Over the past few weeks, we've been exploring Jesus' Sermon on the Plateau. We began with Jesus' series of blessing and woes. We considered how the values and priorities of God's Kingdom are radically different, (and exceedingly better), than the values and priorities of other kingdoms. We then considered what it means to love our enemies, to respond with kind deeds and prayers of blessing, even when we're mistreated. We discussed how counterintuitive this is, but also, how wonderful it is to be children of our Heavenly Father, children who are learning to be merciful just like Him. Last week Pastor Eric preached on "The Absurdity of Hypocrisy," and he challenged us to consider who/what is actually discipling us. We considered what it means to Behold the Father, Follow the Son, and Walk in the Spirit.

This morning, Jesus now concludes His Sermon on the Plateau with a call to Lordship:

Wise builders put Jesus' words into practice by...

1) ...Obeying them out of submission to His lordship.

In Luke 6:46 Jesus asks His followers, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" As Jesus now reaches the end of His sermon, He doesn't add any additional content; instead, He calls for a response.¹ He closes his message with an illustration that compares/contrasts two different builders, who build their houses on two different foundations. Jesus contrasts how one of these builders wisely puts Jesus' teaching into practice, while the other one does not, and this makes ALL the difference.

Now we know from Scripture, that Jesus was a carpenter, so He knew how to build things.² As a young apprentice, under His father Joseph, He'd built lots of things. And, especially early on, a lot of those things probably didn't hold up very well, because He was still learning. But, over time, he grew in skill as a tradesman, and He would have learned the value of something that was well built. Like many of us who've worked in the trades, He'd likely crossed paths with other builders of varying levels of skill, as well as varying levels of integrity. He'd probably encountered His share of shoddy workmanship. In fact, He'd likely had to fix and repair a few of their messes, or even tear something completely apart and rebuild it again from scratch. We could even speculate that Jesus occasionally heard His earthly father

¹ "...concerned [about adding] further instruction, but rather [about ensuring] a proper response to the instruction he has already given." John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1978, p. 205.

² See Mark 6:3.

Joseph say something like this: “Now Jesus, when you build something, make sure it’s something you can put the family name to. Use quality materials, and build it right the first time, so that it can withstand the wear and tear of life.”³ Now, in verses 46-49, Jesus isn’t primarily concerned with teaching His followers how to build a literal house. But, as a teacher, who was a former carpenter Himself, the right way to build a house served as the perfect illustration for the right way to build our lives: on a firm foundation.

Jesus’ concludes His sermon with a strong word of warning. In Luke 6:49 He says, “But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.” One of the best illustrations that I’ve found for the importance of a strong foundation, is the leaning Tower of Pisa. Anyone ever been over to Italy and seen it in person? (...Is it still leaning?)⁴



A guy named Matt Soniak writes this about the Tower of Pisa: “In 1172, Donna Berta di Bernardo donated 60 silver coins to the local cathedral for the purchase of stones to be used in the base of a new bell tower. The next year, construction on the tower began and almost *immediately* there were problems. The tower site sat on soft ground composed mostly of clay, fine sand, and shells (the city sits between [two] rivers). By the time the builders finished the second floor in 1178, the tower was [already] beginning to lean. [Just 6 years later!] [Over the centuries, this construction project has gone back and forth, sometimes making progress, and other times coming to a complete halt.] [At one point] To counteract the lean, the builders made the remaining floors taller on the south side of the tower. But the weight of the additional floors only made the foundation sink further, making the lean worse. Having done what they could, the builders [finally]...completed the tower around 1370. [That’s 200 years later!] Since the tower’s completion, engineers and architects from all over the world have [continued to monitor] the lean, and tried to correct it. These attempts have involved adding grout to the foundation masonry, wrapping plastic-coated steel pieces around the tower up to the second floor, pouring a concrete ring around the base of the tower, laying lead counterweights to the north side, installing anchored cable counterweights, and extracting soil from underneath the north side. After the removal of more than 70 metric tons of soil in 2008, engineers announced that the Tower had been stabilized enough that it had stopped moving for the FIRST time since construction began. [Over 800 years

³ Consider Proverbs 22:1.

⁴ Learn more here: <https://www.cnn.com/travel/leaning-tower-of-pisa-850-years-birthday>

later!] Its lean is now only about four degrees...or about 13 feet past...vertical.”⁵

Friend, as you look at your own personal faith in Jesus, is it leaning a little, to one side or the other? If it is, you may want to look down, and check your foundation: If we’re standing squarely on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ, then we shouldn’t be leaning. But if we’re standing on some other foundation, then it shouldn’t surprise us to find ourselves looking a bit like this tower. We need to build our lives on a firm foundation, or we’re going to find ourselves constantly going to extreme measures to try and keep our lives from falling apart. Jesus’ teaching highlights that His deeply devoted followers need to be wise builders, who submit to His Lordship by building their lives according to His instructions.

Wise builders also put Jesus’ words into practice by...

2) ...Recognizing we need His foundation in order to endure life’s storms.

I was especially impacted this week by a particular phrase in verse 49, “...The *moment* the torrent struck....” The house without a foundation didn’t hold up even for one minute! In just a moment, whoosh! It was gone! “It collapsed and its destruction was complete.” One of my very favorite proverbs is Proverbs 24:10, “If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!” Now, at first, this may not seem like a very encouraging Proverb. In fact, at first, it comes across a little bit more like kicking a guy while he’s down: “just look how puny your strength is!” But, what I like about this proverb, is that it reminds us of why we need to be strong in the Lord: for times of trouble, for times when the torrent strikes.

You see, being strong in easy times hardly even matters; it’s the tough times when we need strength. And if all we have access to, is our own puny strength, then we’re bound to falter; we’re bound to fail and collapse when the torrent strikes. So this proverb then becomes a vital reminder: *our* strength is indeed quite small, which is why we need to desperately depend on His foundation as our source of strength. God is our ROCK! 1 Samuel 2:2 reminds us, “...there is no Rock like our God.”⁶ Psalm 18:2 says, “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”^{7 8}

⁵ Why Does the Leaning Tower of Pisa Lean? by Matt Soniak February 26, 2018, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/28544/why-does-leaning-tower-pisa-lean> See also Wikipedia.

⁶ See also 2 Samuel 22:2-3, 32, and 47.

⁷ See also Psalm 19:14, 28:1, 31:2-3, 40:2, and 62:1-7.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:4 refers to Jesus as the rock in the Old Testament who accompanied God’s people during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, “...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” See also Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, and 30-31; 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 8:14, 17:10, and 28:16; and Habakkuk 1:12.

Jesus' Jewish listeners at the Sermon on the Plateau would have likely had these concepts in mind as He shared this imagery of building their spiritual house on a rock foundation.⁹ They would have also been well familiar with storms. You see, I didn't realize this, but my Study Bible has a note that says that... "The Holy Land is known for its torrential rains that often cause disastrous floods."¹⁰ I also did a quick Google Search, and its AI Overview added that "The Holy Land is prone to floods due to its geographic location and climate, particularly its Mediterranean climate with a dry summer and wet winter season... Significant rainfall during the winter season can lead to stream and river flooding. ...The region is situated in a watershed, with rivers like the Jordan flowing through it. This means that rainwater from surrounding areas, including mountains, can contribute to flooding in the lower-lying plains."

For some of us, this may bring to mind the flooding in the Red River valley.¹¹ Or perhaps the powerful tsunamis that have rocked various coastlands around the world.¹² Whatever the case may be, Jesus' reference to flooding, and torrents striking houses, is a metaphor for the various storms of this life which impact our spiritual house and our daily living. Storms like: health struggles, political storms, financial struggles, relational struggles, work concerns, etc. Whatever storm we have in mind as we're applying Jesus' words, we need to recognize that these torrents will indeed strike our lives. And we also need to recognize, that as long as we have Christ as our foundation, we'll be well able to endure them. Verse 48 says, "...the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." Why couldn't it shake it? Because it was well built on the foundation of Jesus Christ! Having God as our Rock-solid foundation doesn't *prevent* us from experiencing storms, but it does *prepare* us for withstanding them. (*which leads to our next point...*)

⁹ Genesis 49:24 refers to God as, "the Rock of Israel."

¹⁰ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1604 footnote on Matthew 7:25.

¹¹ "The Red River flood of 1997 was a major flood that occurred in April and May 1997 along the Red River of the North in Minnesota, North Dakota, and southern Manitoba. It was the most severe flood of the river since 1826. The flood reached throughout the Red River Valley, affecting the cities of Fargo and Winnipeg, but none so greatly as Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, where floodwaters reached more than 3 miles (4.8 km) inland. They inundated virtually everything in the twin communities. Total damages for the Red River region were US\$3.5 billion. The flood was the result of abundant snowfall and extreme temperatures." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_Red_River_flood

¹² "A massive tsunami with waves up to 30 m (100 ft) high, known as the Boxing Day Tsunami after the Boxing Day holiday, or as the Asian Tsunami,[10] devastated communities along the surrounding coasts of the Indian Ocean, killing an estimated 227,898 people in 14 countries, violently in Aceh (Indonesia), and severely in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu (India), and Khao Lak (Thailand). The direct results caused major disruptions to living conditions and commerce in coastal provinces of surrounded countries. It is the deadliest natural disaster of the 21st century,[11] one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history, and the worst tsunami disaster in history.[12] It is also the worst natural disaster in the history of Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.[13]"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake_and_tsunami#:~:text=A%20massive%20tsunami%20with%20waves,Indonesia\)%2C%20and%20severely%20in%20Sri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake_and_tsunami#:~:text=A%20massive%20tsunami%20with%20waves,Indonesia)%2C%20and%20severely%20in%20Sri)

Wise builders put Jesus' words into practice by...

3) ...Enjoying the confidence of a well-built house which cannot be shaken.

In Luke 6:48 Jesus says, "They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." Putting Jesus' words into practice gives us absolute confidence that when the torrents of this life strike, our house can't be shaken. Those of us who've built our houses wisely, have no reason to fear, no reason to dread, because we've put Jesus' words into practice.¹³ This fills us with a humble, yet bold confidence, that our spiritual house will be able to withstand any storm.¹⁴

A helpful thing about the storms of this life, is that they'll either make us or break us, and both of these are good for us. They will either break us down and bring us to our knees before God, or they'll fill us with confident reassurance that we've built our spiritual house wisely. In other words, having the storms of this life flood over us, is actually a blessing in disguise. Storms break down our stubborn human will. They bring us to our knees, and bring us to our senses, and reset our focus on our foundation. Storms break down our facades, and reveal our weaknesses and our desperate need for God. In fact, as we read through our Bibles cover to cover, it becomes clear that although God is absolutely loving and good all the time, He does permit trials and difficulties in our lives.¹⁵ God uses these difficulties and hardships to get our attention, to refine our faith, and to mature us as Christ-followers.¹⁶ There's nothing like a good ole gully washer storm to test whether our faith is genuine.¹⁷ If we've been building our lives on the Rock, our house WILL hold fast. But if we've been building our lives on something less, then a powerful storm will quickly wash away any pretending in our faith, any mere intellectual assent, or any half-hearted commitment.¹⁸

¹³ Can you hear the old hymn? "What have I to fear? What have I to dread? Leaning on the everlasting arms!"

¹⁴ My wife and I chose Hebrews 6:19 for our wedding verse, which is inscribed on the inside of my wedding ring: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain."

¹⁵ Sometimes God allows the storms of life to come as a natural consequence of living on this earth and other times it seems that He allows them for an intended purpose. Just ask the Old Testament Job about this.

¹⁶ Consider James 1:2-4, 12; Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13; Romans 5:3-5; and Hebrews 12:5-11. It's important to note that while God does allow us to be tested by challenging storms in our lives, He does NOT commit evil. The evils of sin and Satan are at work in this world, but we should never blame God for those. That said, God does sometimes allow adversity in our lives to get our attention and grow us in maturity.

¹⁷ There are actually water rides at some amusement parks called "The Gully Washer."

¹⁸ See D. A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matt. & Mark, #9, Rev. Ed.*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010, p. 231.

Wise builders also put Jesus' words into practice by...

4) ...Obeying them out of a loving relationship with Him.

In Luke 6:47 Jesus says, "As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like." Back at the beginning of Jesus' sermon, Luke highlighted how a huge crowd of people had traveled from far and wide to hear Him teach, and to be healed. But another thing which kept them interested, and committed, was the incredible love and mercy that Jesus displayed. Jesus' authoritative words wouldn't have had nearly so much lasting appeal were it not for His great love for His followers. So our obedience comes not only out of our submission to His Lordship, which we talked about earlier, but also out of an overflow of our love for Him. In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commands." 1 John 5:3 agrees, "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands."¹⁹

You see, everyone there had just heard Jesus' words, but now, the pertinent question, was how many of them would put His words into practice? How many would trust Him enough, and love Him enough, to devote themselves in obedience? All of us are well aware of the fact that "hearing" something and "putting it into practice" are 2 very different things. Anyone ever HEAR...

...your dentist tell you that you should floss your teeth every day?

...your parents warn you not to touch the hot stove?

...your teacher tell you not to stick your tongue on frozen metal?

...your mechanic remind you to retorque your tires after 100 miles?

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, I hear you! I hear you!" Yep, we've all heard things like this, but we haven't always put these things into practice. We dare not make that mistake with the words of Christ! There's a lot more hanging in the balance here than just getting a cavity or getting our tongue stuck on the flagpole. Just hearing Jesus' words isn't enough. In fact, even saying that we believe his words isn't enough. If we are truly in a loving relationship with Jesus, then we need to respond in loving obedience, by practicing what He preaches.²⁰

¹⁹ Also consider 1 John 2:5 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

²⁰ [God's will is not something to simply be admired, or to be discussed, or praised, or debated. God's will is something to be DONE. It is not something to be theologically analyzed or merely esteemed for its high ethical tones; it is to be DONE.] D.A. Carson, *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018 ed., p. 172.

Wise builders also put Jesus' words into practice by...

5) ...Giving them preeminence over all other words.

Our EFCA Statement of Faith has a great way of phrasing how we should view God's Word: God's Word is... "the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged."²¹ If we consider ourselves a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, then His words should have ultimate authority in our life. Jesus' authoritative teaching is the very Word of God. It must be preeminent over any other words that we're hearing.

> Jesus' words must be preeminent over the words of our society. Jesus' authority must guide our conduct in society, whether that be in our workplace, at school, or anywhere throughout our community. Despite what others might say is "socially acceptable," our driving passion must be to pursue what is acceptable before Christ. Whether it be opinions over same-sex relationships, or the refugee crisis, or abortion rights, or whatever else it may be. The authoritative teaching of Jesus Christ garners our highest devotion. We direct our lives according to God's truth, which is found in the words of Jesus.

> Jesus' words must be preeminent over the words of our politicians. Our devotion to Jesus' teaching must supersede our devotion to this nation, and to any political party or affiliation. This includes avoiding the pitfalls of syncretism, which is the mixing together of different ideas and teachings; it's the amalgamation of different schools of thought. We need to be careful not to mix other people's words, in with Jesus' words, as if to suggest that they're on the same level. This kind of syncretism waters down the pure and supernaturally powerful words of Jesus Christ.²²

> Jesus' words must also be preeminent over the words of our family and friends. Our obedience to Jesus must surpass our desire to please our family, or our willingness to give in to peer pressure from our friends. As much as we love our friends/family, and want to honor them, and keep our relationship with them, they come 2nd; our first and foremost concern must be pleasing Christ.

Friends, our greatest allegiance must lie at the feet of Jesus. He is our Lord and our Master (unless He's not). Therefore, I ask you: Are you putting Jesus' words into practice? Are you wisely building your life on the Rock? Or, are you foolishly building your life on the foundation of someone else's words?

²¹ Article 2, "The Bible: We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises." Evangelical Free Church of America, 10-Point Statement of Faith. <https://www.efca.org/resources/document/efca-statement-faith>

²² John 6:68-69 says, "68 Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.'"