

# The Wise & The Foolish

A Nine-Session Bible Study on Jesus' Discipleship Parables

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."  
(Proverbs 9:10)*

**Written by Rev. Scott W. Block**

With additional materials by Rev. Steven E. King

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# Session 1

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## Two Builders

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.* (Matthew 7:24)



### Opening Prayer

O God, help us to be wise so that we may build upon you, our rock and salvation. You know the foolish things we have tried to build without you. Graciously you have forgiven us our sins and shortcomings and turned our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. For that we give you thanks and praise. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen



### Scripture Text for Session 1

**READ: Matthew 7:24-29**

*(Synoptic Text: Luke 6:47-49)*

### Initial Observations:

- a) This parable, with only four verses, appears in two Gospels. It may be short, but it contains a clear and precise message. Like the crowds, do the teachings and authority of Jesus astound you?
  
- b) In this parable, who are the wise and the foolish? For what reasons are they wise or foolish? With whom do you identify? Why?

### Introduction to the Word

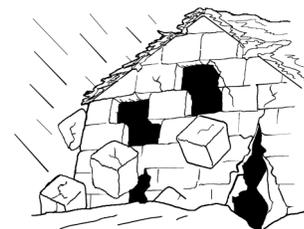
The parable of the two builders comes at the end of an extended teaching discourse by Jesus. The wisdom and foolishness demonstrated by the builders serves as an illustration of a believer's response to Christ and his Word.

The literary device of placing the wise person next to the foolish person is called *juxtaposition*. Placing the wise and foolish together is a typical feature found in Old Testament "wisdom literature." This is clearly seen, for example, in the book of Proverbs. The difference here in the New Testament, is the specific place where we get wisdom from — the word and teachings of Jesus.

The two builders are contrasted here and have close parallels. The significant difference in the wording emphasizes their contrasting fates. Matthew's imagery suggests multiple assaults. The storm brings battering winds and driving rain associated with heavy flooding. It is not that the wise are somehow immune to the assaults of life, but that faith provides a foundation to allow us to endure.

Another key point in the parable is the connection between hearing and doing. It is assumed in both cases that the Word has been "heard." Thus it is the failure to act on what is heard that is the difference between foolishness and wisdom.

In addition to incorporating the Word into a person's everyday life, many commentators suggest that the parable also has underlying themes pointing to the "last days" of the earth and the return of Jesus. One could speak of Judgment Day like a flood to disclose which "spiritual" structures will endure and which will be destroyed.



In this way, God will reveal the difference between authentic and inauthentic faith, as not simply a matter of having *heard* of Christ, but having had one's life founded on Christ, and having *lived* that faith through the good and bad of life.

## Session 1 - Scripture Conversation

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### Discuss: Matthew 7:24-29

- 1.1 What is the difference between “hearing” and “acting” upon the Word? How are they related? Is it possible to have one without the other?
- 1.2 What do you consider to be rain, flood, and wind in your life? In what sense do times of crisis test both our faith and our endurance?
- 1.3 The word “foolish” in verse 26 is the Greek word *moros* (mow-ross), from which we get the English word “moron.” Does it make any difference for how you hear this story if you substitute the word “moron” for “foolish” in the reading?
- 1.4 In each case, where do the two builders place their faith? Does this parable speak about Jesus being a cornerstone too?
- 1.5 What does it mean in verse 29 where it says “for he taught them as one having authority”? How do you know authority and what does it look like? What is authoritative for you?
- 1.6 What was the “great fall” that the foolish builder experienced? When it comes to our lives of faith, what might Jesus mean by warning us of a “great fall”? Is there an experience from your own life you could share to illustrate this?

### Compare: Luke 6:47-49

- 1.7 What is different in Luke’s version of the parable compared to Matthew’s? How do the differences provide another angle or nuance to the parable? Do they change the main point?
- 1.8 The word “foundation” appears in Luke’s version. What is the *foundation* of your faith? What is the *rock* on which it is built?
- 1.9 In Scripture, the word “house” is often used to refer to a person’s household, family, or lineage (e.g. “the house of David” = his dynasty). How can one person’s “faith foundation” affect an entire household?

### Compare: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

- 1.10 Normally, how visible is the foundation of a house? What indications might you have from the house itself that a foundation is bad?
- 1.11 What exactly is the “foundation” that is referred to here? Is it the same as in Jesus’ parable? How are *works* and *faith* related?

### Closing Prayer

Lord God, we know you are with us in good times and in bad. You see us at our best and our worst. Help us to turn to you in our need, and to cling to the promise that you are at our side no matter what type of storm comes, so that nothing will break the foundation that we have in Christ Jesus. Amen