

Conversation Starters

- Has anyone every pranked or deceived you?
- What did it look like?

Discuss

Jesus concluded his Sermon on the Mount by cautioning us about being spiritually deceived. With individualization and customization so imbedded in our culture today, religious pluralization can lead many to believe that there are many ways to God. Jesus made it clear that he is the only way.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14 NIV)

- In what ways do you see individualization and customization appear in our culture?
- What has been your experience with exposure to other religions?
- How does Jesus’ statement impact how you think about a relationship with God?

Taking it a step further, Jesus warned against religion itself. He did not want us to lose sight of what it really looks like to be spiritually authentic. It is not about religion or certain practices or events (all of which can be good or bad), but a relationship with God that allows him to transform you as a person.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves...Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:15,22-23 NIV)

- Where or whom do you look to for your spiritual guidance?
- Are you being cautious about certain practices or events that teach ideas contrary to the Bible?
- What does your relationship with Christ look like?

Finally, Jesus cautioned us against building on sand, instead of rock. He wants us to believe in him and build our lives on God’s truth and teaching, not on our own ideas, morality or will.

“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.” (Matthew 7:26 NIV)

- How does or could your life look different with God compared to without him?
- What is holding you back from building your foundation on God?
- What are some steps you can take now to build on God instead of anything or anyone else?

Next Steps

Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount with an authority that no one had ever seen or heard before (see Matthew 7:28-29). He spoke with an authority that only he, as the Son of God, could. His message has influenced much of the world as we know it today (whether we realize it or not), however, it will only fully take hold if we choose to live as he instructed us.

- What stands out to you most during Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount?
- What should be your response to it?
- What one small step can you take today toward responding appropriately?

Further Reflection

See Matthew 7:13-29; Isaiah 47:10-15; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; James 2:19-20 (The Message)

Pray

God, thank you for Jesus and his message to us in the Sermon on the Mount. Thank you for the ways it guides us and challenges us, and for the life that we can have through Jesus and by living as you instruct us. Help us to have an open mind about areas of our life that may not be reflecting what you have taught us, and give us wisdom to take the steps that we need to as we try to know you more.