

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Oct. 10: Jesus' teachings extend far beyond morality_100404

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Jesus' teachings extend far beyond morality

Luke 6:1-49

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What makes Christian faith superior? It not only is that it has a sound moral teaching. It is the life- changing power of God's word.

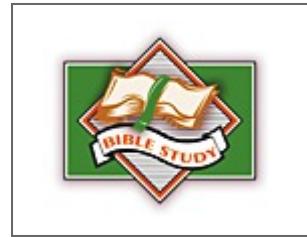
This chapter has the most-admired moral teachings ever given in human history. Many great thinkers were inspired by these teachings, even though they were not Christians. Even so, moral teaching itself cannot change life. We have hundreds and thousands of moral theories written by great thinkers in the past 3,000 years. The moral situations of human beings basically have not shown great improvement.

What is lacking in our moral life? This is what Jesus wants to address after

giving the moral teachings in his discourse.

Two principles (vv. 20-26)

After selecting 12 disciples, Jesus went down from the hill. People surrounded him for his word and healing. Jesus took this opportunity to preach a very important sermon on morality. There are two golden rules in this sermon—the kingdom principle and the principle of reciprocity.



Verses 20 to 23 promise those who suffer for God's kingdom will be blessed. Paul encourages us that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). We, as Christians, are willing to suffer for Jesus because we know God will turn sufferings into blessings to bless us, and also through us to others.

There are also warnings to people who think they are self-content and ignore the gospel. When the days come, those who are self-content will no longer be contented. They will mourn and weep for their ignorance and selfishness.

Christians should be aware of whom we serve and what we seek. If we serve only people's desires and our own selfish needs, we will be in trouble. People will turn against us some day when they need us no more. Our selfishness will condemn us and leave us only vanities.

To others (vv. 27-42)

Verses 27 to 42 give us the principle of reciprocity. We can sum up this

paragraph with this verse: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (v. 31). Jesus asks us to go beyond legalism. These are difficult teachings for Christians to hear, so they are very selective in what they use or they will find ways to explain them to fit their understanding and desires. But Jesus our Master set the example, for he did what he preached. He said, “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (v. 40).

Two parables (vv. 43-49)

Jesus used the images of a good tree and a bad tree and their fruits to illustrate the relationship between behavior and inner self. “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit” (v. 43).

Morality goes beyond behavior. Just as good fruit comes from good trees, good behavior comes from good character. Jesus is more than a moral teacher. He knows very well the problem of our moral life. Our behavioral and social problems have deeper roots. They are the problems of the heart (v. 45).

Sometimes people may manage to display an acceptable behavior in public life, but their hearts still are evil. The first moral discipline for us is to reflect on our inner life. Jesus wants us to be transformed first in him so we will be renewed as a new being (2 Corinthians 5:17). Even good behavior of a hypocrite will not sustain and will not truly benefit anybody, for no good fruit will come from a bad tree.

In the second parable, Jesus used wise and foolish builders to illustrate the foundation of life. We all are builders of our lives. Every act in every moment is a brick we lay on our lives. God is our final inspector who will inspect our buildings (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

From this parable, we first learn that Jesus is our only foundation of life. He

is the rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). There is no other foundation that will give us eternal security-only in Jesus Christ will we be saved and have eternal life (Hebrews 9:11-15).

Second, we learn we must build our lives on this foundation, which means we should rely on Jesus in our daily lives.

How can we rely on Jesus? We love him and obey his word (John 14:15). Christians today are very weak and cannot face challenges from the world. Our lives are not transformed by Christ, but rather conform to the world (Romans 12:2). Even if we want to obey God's word, we do not obey completely or wholeheartedly. We listen to Jesus very selectively.

A lot of times, we think God's word will not work in this world and our life situations. We choose part of Jesus' teachings that fit into our lives or our understandings of our life situations. When we approach God and his word, we act like a customer shopping in God's warehouse to select what fits our needs. That is the reason our foundation is so shaky, and it will be shattered if confronted by any pressure or challenge.

Discussion question

- ◆ What is your life foundation?
- ◆ Are you a wise builder when you build your life?
- ◆ How fully will you listen and obey God's word?

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