

Building on the Rock

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24 NIV)

The artist Michaelangelo said that:

"There is no greater harm than that of time wasted."

If that's true, then a lifetime that has been wasted is a terrible thing. It should make us fear getting to the end of our lives and looking back on a wreck of wasted time and opportunity. So how can we make sure that our lives are not wasted?

Jesus tells us a short story about wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27). It's perhaps one of his most famous and one that children have often heard in school or in Sunday School. It's so simple. A wise man builds a solid house by choosing a solid foundation. When the storms come, it stands up to them. The foolish man builds a weak house, on a poor foundation. When the storms come it collapses.

It's clearly a picture of our lives. One is not wasted, but secure and strong. One is wasted, with only a wreck left at the end. But what's the difference between building our lives on rock or building them on sand? It's all to do with our attitude to the words of Jesus.

The person with the solid life "hears these words of mine and puts them into practice." Whereas the person with the life that will collapse "hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice" (Matthew 7:26 NIV). It's worth noticing that both experience the storms of life, but only the one who listens to Jesus and does what he says will stand to the end. That person's life is not wasted.

So what are the words of Jesus? Well the immediate context is the Sermon on the Mount. However, further on in Matthew we read that making disciples involves teaching *everything* that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20). Everything is more than the teaching recorded in the gospels. Jesus' words command us to take the Old Testament as Scripture that cannot be broken (John 10:35), so we must include that. He also used his word to teach us that the apostolic words that we find in the New Testament are in fact his words for us (John 16:12-15). So for Christians, to build our lives on the words of Jesus, is to build our lives on the words of the Bible. As the apostle Paul says:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)

Recently I've heard and read some church leaders seeming to undermine the words of the Bible, as if there is a different way to know Jesus and live for Jesus. This is so sad, because it leads people from the rock to the sand. It leads people towards wasting their time and their lives. It leads people towards a wrecked house.

No, we need to take the words of the Bible seriously. We need not just to listen to them, but also to put them into practice. That means that on Sundays it's good to have the Bible in front of you when it's read and preached. It would be even better to be taking notes of the things you're learning, so that you can work out how to put it into practice.

Taking the words of the Bible seriously means that the Bible studies on Monday and Tuesday are really significant meetings to help you not to waste your life. In those studies we always work hard to listen to what Jesus says *and* to think about how to put it into practice. If you don't normally come why not think about joining us in September.

A final example of taking the words of the Bible seriously is that we should take time on our own to read the Bible so that you can ponder what it says and how you can put it into practice. Do you try to read your Bible daily? Have you got something to help with that - perhaps daily Bible study notes, or books, or a Bible reading plan? If not, come and speak to me and I can point you to some resources.

Whatever it takes for you, can I encourage you to make some steps to help you to listen to the words of Jesus *and* put them into practice, that way your life will not be wasted, but will be built on the rock.

Stephen