



GET USED TO
DIFFERENT:
A NEW WAY TO LIVE



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

Counterfeit Prophets

Get Used To Different | Week 25 | Matthew 7:15-20

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Over the course of human history, countless sermons have been preached, but the greatest sermon of all was delivered by the greatest preacher—Jesus Christ. His Sermon on the Mount was revolutionary, challenging the cultural and religious expectations of His listeners. As Jesus nears the conclusion of His sermon, He issues a stark warning about a danger that has plagued the church from the beginning—false prophets. Unlike external threats, this danger arises from within the church. Satan attacks both from the outside through persecution and from the inside through deception. Jesus calls His followers to be on high alert, for these counterfeit prophets masquerade as true messengers of God while leading people away from the truth.

KEY POINTS

1. We Must Expect Counterfeit Prophets

Jesus begins with a clear warning: *“Watch out for false prophets...” (Matthew 7:15)*. The phrase "watch out" is a red-alert warning. When Jesus tells us to beware, He is not exaggerating—this is a real and present danger. Satan is a master of disguise, and false prophets do not come with warning labels. They appear as sheep but are inwardly ravenous wolves, mimicking the language and appearance of true believers while distorting the truth.

The Apostle Paul echoes this warning in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, reminding us that even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. False prophets are not always obvious; they blend in, using our vocabulary but redefining the meaning of core biblical truths. Their deception is intentional, making it crucial for believers to remain vigilant.

2. We Must Detect Counterfeit Prophets

While it is one thing to acknowledge the existence of false prophets, it is another to recognize them. Jesus provides the key to discernment: *“By their fruit you will recognize them...” (Matthew 7:16)*. A wolf can wear sheep’s clothing, but it cannot produce the fruit of a true shepherd.

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A false prophet can use religious language, but their teaching and life will ultimately reveal their nature. They preach a counterfeit Jesus—one who demands no repentance, promises only prosperity, or tolerates all lifestyles without a call to holiness. They proclaim a counterfeit gospel—one that offers salvation without surrender. Most deceptively, false prophets often deceive by omission. They will talk about heaven but not hell, love but not holiness, inclusion but not judgment. True discernment requires a commitment to biblical truth. We must compare every teaching to God’s Word and reject anything that distorts, denies, or dilutes the gospel.

3. We Must Correct Counterfeit Prophets

Recognizing false prophets is not enough; we are called to confront and correct them. The church cannot afford to remain silent while the truth is distorted. In Matthew 13, Jesus describes the Word of God as a seed—the foundation of true teaching. Isaiah 8:20 reinforces this standard: *“Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”*

Like trained currency examiners who detect counterfeits by studying genuine bills, we must immerse ourselves in Scripture to recognize and refute falsehood. Canada teaches its citizens a simple test to detect counterfeit money: "Touch, tilt, look at, look through." In the same way, believers must examine every message against the unchanging truth of God’s Word. If it does not align with Scripture, it must be rejected. The gospel is too precious to be compromised by false teachers. We must stand firm in the truth, preaching the whole counsel of God with boldness and conviction.

NOTES

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Get Used To Different | Week 25 | Matthew 7:15-20

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think false prophets are so dangerous to the church? How can you guard against their influence?
2. What are some practical ways to develop discernment so you can recognize counterfeit teaching?
3. How can you lovingly but firmly confront false teaching when you encounter it in your church or community?

Don't Kid Yourself

Get Used To Different | Week 26 | Matthew 7:21-23

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Have you ever heard of the “placebo effect?” It occurs when someone experiences improvement in their condition simply because they believe they are receiving treatment, even though the treatment itself has no real benefit. This psychological phenomenon is harmless when it comes to medicine, but when it comes to faith, self-deception can have eternal consequences. Jesus warns that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven. Many people claim to follow Jesus, but their relationship with Him is based on words rather than obedience. As Jesus closes His Sermon on the Mount, He delivers one of the most chilling statements in the Bible—a warning to those who think they are saved but are not.

KEY POINTS

1. A Verbal Declaration Alone Is Not A Sign of Salvation

As He nears the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...*” (Matthew 7:21). There are many who claim to know Jesus and even call Him “Lord,” but words alone do not guarantee salvation. Romans 10:9 tells us that confessing Jesus as Lord is part of salvation, but Jesus makes it clear that true faith is more than just words—it requires obedience.

Many people grow up in church, say the right things, and appear religious, but that does not mean they have a real relationship with Jesus. A person can make a verbal declaration of faith and still be deceived. True salvation transforms the heart and leads to a life of obedience.

2. A Visual Demonstration Alone Is Not A Sign of Salvation

Jesus continues: “*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 7:22-23).

Don't Kid Yourself

Get Used To Different | Week 26 | Matthew 7:21-23

There are those who rely on outward signs—miracles, good works, and religious acts—to prove their faith. However, spiritual activity does not always equal spiritual authenticity. False teachers can perform miracles, and even Judas, who was never truly saved, performed works in Jesus' name. The real test of faith is not in what we do but in whether our hearts belong to Jesus. Outward demonstrations of faith mean nothing if they are not rooted in genuine obedience to Christ.

3. A Virtual Dedication Is A Sign of Salvation

Jesus provides the true standard for salvation when He says, "... *but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21). True salvation is marked by obedience. Many people say they believe in Jesus, but their lives do not reflect His Lordship. Genuine faith is not just a momentary decision; it is a lifelong commitment to following Jesus.

Salvation is by grace through faith, but true faith results in a changed life. Those who truly belong to Christ will show evidence of that faith through obedience to God's will. Confession without transformation is empty, but a life surrendered to Jesus will bear the fruit of true discipleship.

NOTES

Don't Kid Yourself

Get Used To Different | Week 26 | Matthew 7:21-23

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:21-23 is so significant for believers today?
2. How do you distinguish between true faith and mere religious activity?
3. What are some practical ways to ensure that your relationship with Jesus is real and not based on self-deception?

Built To Last

Get Used To Different | Week 27 | Matthew 7:24-29

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

A breathtaking subdivision in British Columbia, known as the Seawatch development, was designed to be a luxurious paradise. The homes, valued at over a million dollars, overlooked pristine waters, but when winter came, disaster struck. Houses collapsed into sinkholes because they had been built on unstable ground. This tragic event illustrates a powerful truth Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: a life built on a faulty foundation will not stand. As Jesus concludes His sermon, He tells the parable of two builders—one wise, one foolish. Both build houses, both face storms, but only one house remains. This lesson is not just about building homes but about building lives.

KEY POINTS

1. Get Real – You Will See Storms

Jesus describes the reality of life when He says, “*The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house...*” (*Matthew 7:25*). Storms are inevitable. Everyone, regardless of faith, will experience trials—adversity, heartache, loss, and hardship. Some believe that a faithful life guarantees a storm-free existence, but Jesus never promises that. Rather, He prepares us for the certainty of storms. Just as natural disasters strike everywhere, storms of life affect both the just and the unjust. It is essential to recognize this reality and trust in God through both sunshine and storms.

2. Get Ready – You Will Suffer Storms

Life’s trials reveal the strength of our foundation. Two houses may look identical on the outside, but only when storms hit does the difference become clear. The world often builds on shifting sand—human opinion, cultural trends, and personal desires. When challenges arise, lives built on these unstable foundations collapse. This principle extends beyond individuals to societies, families, and institutions. Shifting minds, shifting manners, and shifting morals are the result of building on unstable ground. The only foundation that will withstand life’s storms is the unchanging Word of God.

Built To Last

Get Used To Different | Week 27 | Matthew 7:24-29

3. Get Right – You Can Survive Storms

At the end of our key passage, Jesus emphasizes the difference between the wise and foolish builders: “*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). Both builders hear the Word, but only one obeys it. True discipleship is not just about listening to sermons or reading Scripture—it is about obedience.

Consider this warning from James: “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says*” (James 1:22). Many people treat faith like an academic course they audit—absorbing information but never applying it. However, faith without obedience is a house built on sand. A life built on Christ’s teachings will stand through every storm. Those who ignore God’s Word deceive themselves, risking eternal consequences. The wise builder acts on the truth, ensuring their life is built to last.

NOTES

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Get Used To Different | Week 27 | Matthew 7:24-29

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are some common “shifting sands” people build their lives upon today? How do these fail in times of crisis?
2. How can you ensure that you are not merely hearing God’s Word but actively applying it in your daily life?
3. Think of a time when you faced a personal storm. How did your faith and foundation in Christ help you endure?
