

Introduction

Not long ago, a Christian told me that his granddaughter had just moved in with a young man and that they’re now living together. He was thinking about talking with her about the immorality of what she was doing but didn’t know if he should. **“So what do you think I should do?”** he asked. **“What ‘the’ authority on the subject says,”** I replied. **“Do you mean someone like Dr. Phil?”** he asked. **“No,”** I quickly answered, **“I mean Jesus.”** Today, I’m going to preach about one of the absolute convictions of my life. That conviction is this. Jesus is “the” authority on human life. We see that in Matthew 7:24-29.

Not Intending to Do What Jesus Says

Look first of all at verses 24 and 26 and the phrase there, **“these words of mine.”** That phrase encompasses everything Jesus says in chapters 5-7. Those chapters contain what is called *The Sermon on the Mount*. This is an organized sermon that Jesus preached to one group of people at one time. But the phrase **“these words of mine”** goes beyond this sermon. It encompasses everything He says in His written word the Bible as well, from Genesis through Revelation.

Now look at verse 26, which reveals how many people respond to what Jesus says. They **“hear”** it but don’t **“act”** on it. That they hear it means they know it. That they don’t act on it means they don’t intend to do it. That is the condition of many churched people today isn’t it? They know but don’t intend to do much of what Jesus says.

A former business partner of his sued a Christian I knew in Akron for \$10,000. Knowing I had practiced law, he called me and asked me what I thought he should do. So, I told him: **“It’s what Jesus says in Matthew 5:40. Don’t be a relational adversary of this former partner of yours. Love and care about him instead and if he wins a judgment against you but has further need, act to meet it if you can.”** That was not though what he wanted to hear. **“You’ve got to be**

kidding me,” he declared, **“No one in his right mind would do that.”** To which I replied, **“I’m just telling you what Jesus says.”** That Christian, who was a leader in his church, had no intention of acting on the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:40. He didn’t even try.

And he isn’t alone. The fact is that many professing Christians are just like him. They hear but don’t act on much of what Jesus says.

Why People Don’t Do What Jesus Says

There’s one reason more than any other that they don’t. It’s because they think what He says isn’t vitally relevant to them.

I counseled a Christian years ago who was upset about the bad marriage she was in. We talked for an hour and identified the most critical issues she faced. I then suggested that we examine what Jesus says in Matthew 5 and Romans 12 about those issues. But she had no interest in doing so. **“I need practical help, not theology,”** she said, **“to solve the problems I have.”**

That was an instructive comment. It represents how many professing Christians regard Jesus. They don’t see Him as a real-life personality who deals with real-life issues like Dr. Phil does. They see Him as a sort of magical figure instead whose main concern is a feathery realm that He calls “the kingdom of heaven.” The things He says are lofty, noble, and true but don’t speak to “real” life. They’re irrelevant to the practical things we experience and do in our daily lives. As one author says it, the realm of Jesus is a realm of **“supposed-to-be’s”** not a realm of **“the way things really are.”** Doing what He says, therefore, only makes real life harder than it already is. That’s what the Christian who was being sued thought. Jesus is out of touch with reality and anyone in a lawsuit who does what He says will be prejudiced.

The bottom line is this. Many Christians think the teachings of Jesus aren’t vitally relevant to them. That explains the obvious disinterest they show in what He says. They quickly push it aside as having no real significance to the aims and challenges they have in their daily lives.

Jesus as "the" Authority

They couldn't be more wrong. Look at verse 28. The crowd to whom Jesus spoke was "**amazed**" at what He said. Verse 29 explains why. It's because "**He was teaching them as one having authority, not as their scribes.**" The spiritual leaders of the day, the scribes and Pharisees, based everything they taught on the authority of expert rabbis. They were always appealing to and quoting those rabbis when they taught. But Jesus didn't. According to verse 29, He taught them as "**one having authority.**" He was His own authority, in other words, and didn't appeal to or quote anyone else in that regard.

Verse 29 teaches one of my favorite truths about Jesus. He is "the" authority or expert on the universe and life in it. In His life on earth, He knew more about the universe and life in it than anyone else ever has or will. There is no equal or higher authority to whom we can go. Do you realize what that means and don't ever forget this. What Jesus says is the best possible information about the most important matters in human life. No one gives better information about those matters than He does.

Having been an attorney, for instance, I learned a large mass of information about lawsuits over the years. But I can honestly say this. The best information about lawsuits I ever learned was from Jesus in Matthew 5:25-26 and 5:40. Believe me, people knowing and doing what He taught there would revolutionize the practice of law.

What are the issues, good and bad, that you're facing today? Maybe they're marriage, divorce, finances, dead end jobs, promotions, layoffs, rebellious children, unreasonable neighbors, co-worker conflict, dress, influencing people for good, and much more. Whatever they are, Jesus is "the" authority on those issues. He is quite simply "the" expert on the best way to live our lives. He doesn't tell us everything there is to know about every issue. But He does tell us the most important things there are to know about the most important issues.

Do What Jesus Says

So, do what He says. That's the punch line of Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5-7. He closes it out in verses 24-27 by telling us, "**Just do it.**" Doing what He says, according to verse 24, requires two things.

First, we must "**hear**" what He says. To those in His presence 2000 years ago, that meant listening to His oral word. To us today, it means learning His written word, the Bible.

Take one of most pressing issues we face. How should you and I conduct our sexual lives in a sex-saturated culture? Jesus tells us in passages like Job 31:1-12; Proverbs 7; Song of Songs 1-8; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. Do you know what Jesus teaches in those texts? If not, you don't know the best information there is to know about sex. But you can know it by learning those texts. Study them on your own or listen attentively in Sunday school and church. I've preached and taught about each of those.

What we do with sex, we do with all the issues that matter to us, like lawsuits, money, tattooing, dressing, gossiping, manipulating others, eating, and many more. Hear what Jesus says. Learn what He teaches in the Bible about them.

Doing what Jesus says requires a second thing. We must "**act on**" what we hear. Once we learn what Jesus says, we then intend to live it out. We try the best we can to conform to it in literally every experience and event of our daily lives.

We learn from studying 1 Corinthians 13:4, for instance, that we shouldn't be "**windbags**," which is the literal meaning of the Greek word translated "brag." Jesus says there that we should be "**you-deep**" not "**me-deep**" in conversation. So we do what He says. We discern the thoughts, opinions, interests, concerns, experiences, likes, dislikes, and so on of others and direct the conversation to that.

That then is what Jesus Himself calls us to do in verse 24. Hear what He says and act on it.

The Result

The two celebrated similes in verses 24-27 reveal what will happen if we do or don't.

In the first, those who do what Jesus says are like a man who builds his house on a rock. And when the floods and winds come, it stands firm. The floods and winds here represent the pressures of life. Jesus is claiming that those who do what He says will bear up under those pressures. They will have sanity, meaning peace and joy, in their lives. Their lives will be abundant and full.

In the second simile, those who don't do what Jesus says are like a man who builds his house on sand. And when the floods and winds come, it falls. Jesus is claiming that those who don't do what He says will collapse under the pressures of life. They will not have the sanity - the peace and joy - that everyone desires and seeks.

Not long ago, one of you came to me and testified that you are now playing to an audience of One, God, and not many, people – just as Jesus says in Matthew 6. You also testified that you have a lot less stress and a lot more peace in your life as a result. You've learned that doing what Jesus says is a truly liberating and fulfilling thing.

Which explains His imagery, the wise man and foolish man, in these similes. That imagery makes His point a clear one. We're fools if we don't learn and do what He says. We're wise if we do.

There's a buzzword that some of you have heard, "**life-strategy.**" So many people today are talking about and developing a life strategy. I know a man in fact who paid for and went to a seminar about just that. But let me tell you something. The teachings of Jesus are the best life-strategy that you'll ever get. Which means we're fools if we don't do what He says and wise if we do.

Be What Jesus Was

But having said that, I must also say this. We can't do what Jesus says unless we become like Jesus is. Oswald Chambers said it this way, "**The teachings of Jesus are for the life that He puts in (us).**"

The celebrated British philosopher Bertrand Russell was well known for his atheism. But he had been raised in a Christian home and knew the teachings of Jesus. Listen to what he said in that regard, referring to Matthew 5: **“The Christian principle, ‘Love your enemies is good . . . There is nothing to be said against it except that it is too difficult for most of us to practice sincerely.”**

He was right in this sense. If you and I remain what we naturally are inside, in our inner dimensions, we most certainly will not be able to do much of what Jesus says. We most certainly will fail in our efforts to love those who sue us, be grateful to those who criticize us, forgive those who harm us, and more.

That shows what our primary aim should be - not to do something, what Jesus says, but to become something, what Jesus is. It's to become the kind of person who just naturally conforms to His words.

Well, there's only one way to become that. It's to apprentice ourselves to Him. We make the decision to arrange our affairs around being with Him in order to learn and do all that He says. Then, as we carry that decision out, He, through the Holy Spirit, over our lifetimes, works His life in us. That in turn makes us the kind of people who naturally do more and more of what He says.

So, if you haven't, do it today. Decide to be a disciple of Jesus.

Conclusion

Back in January of this year, Oprah had what she called *Best Life Week* on her daily television show. During that week, her guests were authorities like Suze Orman, Bob Greene, Elizabeth Lesser, and others who taught viewers how to have the best of lives. But the great irony was this. Neither Jesus nor anything He says was mentioned, even once. That demonstrates the utter disregard the world has for Jesus as thinker and teacher. May you and I not make the same mistake the world does. Hear and act on His words. That's the wisest thing you can do. Why? It's because He's "the" authority on human life.