



## World Day of Prayer

Prepared by the WDP Committee of Vanuatu

March 5, 2021

**“Build on a Strong Foundation”**

**Bible Study – Matthew 7:24-27**

### **Introductory Notes**

The gospel according to Matthew had in mind a Christian community of Jewish descent. Matthew’s design was to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, the long awaited Messiah. The structure of the book of Matthew may be outlined to show Jesus the Messiah: the presentation of Jesus the Messiah [1-4:11], the teaching of Jesus [4:12-7], the healing power of Jesus [8-11:1], the progressive rejection of the King [11:2-16:12], the preparation of Jesus’ disciples [16:13-20:28], the presentation and rejection of the Messiah [20:29-27]; the resurrection of Jesus [28].

The main Bible text for the Vanuatu program comes from the session on the teachings of Jesus, with instructions about entering the kingdom of heaven. For a broader context of the story selected, please read Matthew 5:1-7:29.

Let’s review chapter 7. We find in these stories that Jesus is making a comparative analysis of a given situation. It begins with Jesus instructing not to judge others and forgetting that we will be judged according to how we judge (v 1-2). In verses 3-6, Jesus advised about noticing one’s own actions and rectifying them prior to telling others of their faults.

In verses 7-11 Jesus talked about the heavenly Father who is the source of all good things and will give to those who ask in faith. Verse 12 is the golden rule in the law and the prophets, which is “do to others as you would have them do to you” (NRSV). In verses 13-14, Jesus taught about the two ways of life.

In verse 15-20, Jesus instructed about false and true teaching and how to identify and deal with these teachings. In verses 21-23, Jesus taught about the way into the kingdom. Only the persons who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Finally we come to verses 24-27, the verses for the Vanuatu Program. The verses 28-29 of chapter 7 conclude the teaching that was began in chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. It is very important to have it in mind to give context to what Jesus said about his words to be heard and acted on (v 24). It is not an empty instruction; behind it is the full understanding of Jesus’ ministry and the kingdom of heaven. Let’s recall Jesus’ words (Matthew 5:1-11) upon which we should act on to be like the wise witness of God’s blessings.

### **Read the Bible story – Matthew 7:24-27**

Group exercise – Before reading the text, you may choose to prepare a puzzle with the phrases of the story, but without the verse number. Then, ask the participants to put the story in the sequence they think corresponds to what Jesus taught. Let people share the sequence created and discuss new insights the exercise may have brought in understanding the Bible story.

Conclude the exercise and ask volunteers to read Matthew 7:24-27, and talk about the following questions:

- ✓ Jesus used two verbs to point out the conclusion of his teaching - hear and act on (24, 26). How do you feel about that? What do the verbs remind you of?
- ✓ What is to be like a wise person or a foolish one in your context?
- ✓ Are you astounded at his teaching like the crowds were (7:28)?

Jesus was concerned about the crowd that went to the mountain and heard the word of God to live better lives. They were hungry and thirsty. All the teachings in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 deliberated on two things – hear and act or listen and do. The results that will come depend on the choices made and the actions taken. Jesus’ closing words for his teaching on the Mountain was a story of comparison. The wise builder was safe while the foolish one lost his house. The wise acted on Jesus’ words while the foolish didn’t. Let us consider this carefully prior to making our own decisions in life.

### **Connect the Bible story with the theme “Build on a Strong Foundation”**

The essence of the story of Jesus is to HEAR accurately the word of God, and ACT accordingly and precisely. We shall act inspired by God’s love and know that our faith without action is dead (James 2:14-26). When we build on the rock which is Christ, we know we are on a strong foundation that will stand the tests of life and remain solidly secure.

In Proverbs 24:3 it says, “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.” This is the house of one who is wise, who hears and acts on the word of love and builds the house on a secure and strong foundation – Jesus Christ.

Let us rise and build our homes, our nations and the world on the words of Jesus, who reminded us about the golden rule - “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you” (7:12). This is our solid foundation. This is the basic principle of our message today. This is the integral instruction of Jesus ending all the teachings in Matthew 7.

As women and leaders of life, we must rise up against all forms of violence to build a new society that is more just, peaceful and God-fearing. For with God all things are possible to them that believe. Let us stand in unity.

As we reflect on these stories, what lessons have we learned?

- ✓ What are the words of Jesus that you sustain your actions on to live wisely?
- ✓ As World Day of Prayer, HEAR and ACT are reflected on our motto “Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action. How can we build on this strong foundation?”

Prayer: God, let us remember that in life there are always choices to make. We invite you to intervene in our lives, and help us act on the words of Jesus, who we claim to be the way, the truth and the life.

Amen

This material is part of the worship service and educational resource for the 2021 WDP annual celebration.

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