

Location! Location! Location!

Matthew 7:24-29

Introduction

The Similarities between the authentic Christian and the pseudo-Christian.

1. They both _____ the Bible.

2. They both have the same _____.

Both the Christian and the pseudo-Christian want the same thing:

1. They both want their sins _____.
2. They both want _____ in their lives.
3. They both have a desire to live a _____ life.
4. They both have a desire to get into _____.

3. They both will have _____ come into their lives.

God's grace is shown to all. (Matt 5:44-45)

- The rains coming down might be like unexpected _____ coming into our lives.
- The flood waters rising can represent the _____ that come upon us.
- The winds are like the attacks of _____ and his _____ in our lives.

The Differences Between the Christian and the pseudo-Christian.

The pseudo-Christian _____. (Luke 6:47-49)

How do they cut corners in a potential relationship with God?

- They don't study the _____.
- They rely on their own _____, _____, and _____.
- They pick out what _____ to them.

The pseudo-Christian wants God's _____ but without the desire to _____ God or _____ Him.

The Christian puts what he's learned into _____.

1. He desires to build for _____.
2. He desires to do it _____, following instructions by the _____.

The Results:

The true Christian will _____ forever.

The pseudo-Christian will _____ with a great crash. (John 14:23-24)

Questions for Discussion:

- Authentic versus pseudo: Can you tell the difference between the two types of Christians? Why or why not?
- Where have you cut corners in your life? Has that spilled into cutting corners in your faith?
- In trying to live out life as an authentic Christian, what are some ways you need to change your thinking, ways you need to change your behavior?

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Introduction

In October, 1989, I was in my house in the S.F. Bay Area lying on top of my bed studying for one of my seminary classes. The world series was taking place across the bay at Candlestick Park. All of a sudden, my bed began to rattle. I thought it was the vibration from the freeway traffic that runs behind my house. But the rattling turned to violent shaking as my house swayed back and forth for what seemed an eternity. And then as quickly as it came, the Loma Prieta earthquake whose epicenter was located 50 miles south in Santa Cruz was over. Surprisingly, my house, along with all the other homes in my neighborhood had no damage. In fact, from the most violent earthquake in recent history, my house didn't even have a hairline crack. It wasn't the same for my aunt's neighborhood. Many of the homes in the San Francisco Marina district either crumbled or burned to the ground. Why the difference in outcomes? My house sits on top of a limestone base. My aunt's house sits on top of landfill, remnants of the rubble from the great 1906 San Francisco earthquake. It's ironic that multi-million dollar homes, because they sat on top of dumped garbage, fell apart, while my modest 2 bed room, 1 bath, 50 year old home, built on top of rock, withstood the violent shaking.

Those of you who know your Bibles may get the picture I'm trying to paint. It's the one Jesus gives at the end of his Sermon on the Mount. He concludes his preaching by giving a vivid parable:

24 "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. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

I used to be a very trusting soul, believing what I was told by others. The homeless beggar who came to the church asking for gas money to see his relatives in Tucson. Husbands and wives reassuring me that their marriage was great. Sales people telling me they're Christians and to trust them on a good deal. But I'm not so naïve anymore. I found that people are very good at covering up, not only the reality of their lives, but who they really are. Evidently, the Lord experienced the same thing in his ministry. If you were to take time to read his sermon, specifically that part found in Matthew 7, you see he warns about having a false faith.

In vs. 15-20, he warns his listeners to be aware of false prophets; in vs. 21-23, he challenged his audience to see if they are false believers, and now finally in vs. 24-27, he is telling them, and by inference, us, to be aware of having a false reliance. What do you rely on to keep you firm in your faith? How can you tell whether you're a true Christian or just a pseudo-Christian, someone who looks, acts, and talks like a believer, but isn't one? This morning, we're going to

look at in our final parable of this series the similarities and differences between those who are authentic, and those who are fake. PRAY

The Similarities between an Authentic Christian and the pseudo-Christian.

1. They both know the Bible. Vss. 24-25 describe the believer. Vss. 26-27 describe the pseudo-believer. Note that in both vss. 24 and 26, it says that they hear the words of Jesus. It's not that pseudo-Christians don't know the Word of God. They come to church, they go to Bible study or Sunday School. They can even quote verses like John 3:16. They have been around the church long enough to know the basic teachings of Christ.

2. They both have the same desires.

Note again that both built homes. They desired to have a place where they could raise their families, enjoy security. Neighborhoods aren't usually segregated into Christian/non-Christian area. Most likely these builders lived in the same block, and perhaps even used the same architectural plans. 5 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath, 3 car garage, same colored stucco, earth-tones, of course, with concrete tiled roofs. Superficially the houses look identical. If you drove down the street to visit the Christian or the pseudo-Christian, from the outside appearance of their homes, you couldn't tell them apart.

Putting this in spiritual terms, both the Christian and the pseudo-Christian want the same thing:

1. They both want their sins forgiven; that is they want peace with God.
2. They both want comfort in their lives. They want security knowing that they're being taken care of.
3. They both have a desire to live a good life. Both want to follow the Golden Rule, and the 10 commandments.
4. Finally, both have a desire to get into heaven. Blaise Pascal, the great physicist had it correct when he said that within every person is a God-shaped vacuum. As human beings, made by God, we have an innate desire to know the Creator, and to eventually spend eternity in heaven with him.

Standing outside his home in the middle of his front lawn, the pseudo-Christian gazes at his house. He thinks he's got it together. He looks across the street at his Christian neighbor's home and he says, "There's no difference between me and him. I just got my home a lot cheaper." He feels self-satisfied - safe, secure, and proud.

3. They both will have trials in their lives.

Note again, that in verses 25 and 27, the language is the same - the rains came, the streams rose, and the wind blew on both builders. . . On the Christian and the pseudo-Christian. How is this so? Look at what Jesus said earlier in his sermon: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matt 5:44-45)* In seminary, we call this theological truth, common grace, that is God's grace is shown to all. He is no respecter of giving good things both to the authentic believer and the pseudo-believer when it comes to rain, fall crops, decent paying jobs. But the converse is also true. Both

Christians and pseudo-Christians are blessed by God, but also trials are inevitable in the lives of both the authentic Christian and the pseudo-Christian.

Getting back to our text, Palestine, just like central Arizona, is situated in a dry desert climate. When you build in the desert, you don't have to worry about earthquakes or forest fires like what they have in California. But you do have to be concerned about flash floods. It's during those times that you have to be thinking about your safety. Jesus says three things happen: The rains come, the streams rise, and the wind blows. I don't think these are symbolic of any particular ills. I think Jesus is just waxing poetic. But in bringing this to application, the rains coming down might be like unexpected **ills** coming into our lives. Disappointment over a lost job, grief over losing a loved one, your retirement account loses 50% of its value, your car's transmission goes out.

The flood waters rising can represent the **worldly values** that come upon and seemingly try to engulf us. Rampant materialism, sexual temptation, worldly philosophies, the pressure to succeed at any cost. The winds that accompany the storm are invisible, but you feel their power. They're like the attacks of **Satan** and his **demons** in our lives. The enemy constantly tries to tear us away from God and the things of God. But the point is that whether it's losses, temptations, or Satanic attack, all of these trials are inevitable whether you're a believer or not. Good things don't only happen to Christians, and bad things don't only happen to pseudo-Christians. Both good and bad happen to all people. In this way the authentic Christian and pseudo-Christian are similar. Those are the similarities. But there are...

also Differences Between the Christian and the pseudo-Christian.

The pseudo-Christian cuts corners. Basically, the only difference between the two homeowners is not their homes, or the elements that come along, but it's what you don't see. In Luke, 6:47-49, Dr. Luke relates the same parable of the two builders, but he gives some extra details that help us to see the difference between the two:

47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Luke tells us that the pseudo-Christian builder didn't lay down a firm foundation for his house. The wise man, however, dug deep, building a solid foundation. Some of you have had the privilege of buying a new home in Phoenix. If you're like me, you went to visit the site regularly. The one aspect of building a home that takes the longest is the least visible from the street. It's the foundation. The builder tamps down the dirt to ensure that it's stable. He then digs a deep trench around the building site and pours concrete. As a further measure of protection, they spray chemicals to ward off any termites in the ground. All this takes about a month to two months to do. But the time is worth it. For you see, the foolish pseudo-Christian builder doesn't do this initial step.

1. He doesn't have the **patience**. He wants the good things in life, and he wants them now.
2. He doesn't listen to **instruction**. He's told by the wise person about the need for a strong foundation, but he thinks he knows everything. So he considers instruction unnecessary.
3. He doesn't think **long term**. Because of his desire for immediate gratification, the pseudo-Christian doesn't think about permanence, the eventuality of what he's doing. He sees the beautiful stream running by his home and thinks, "How beautiful," not recognizing that some day, when he least expects it, it will turn into a torrential river.

I know it's a movie, and it has nothing to do with real life or our faith, but in the 1980's movie, *Poltergeist*, the reason why the spirits came back to haunt the family was because their beautiful home was built atop a graveyard. The builder didn't take the time, energy, cost, or concern to move the coffins and relocate the grave sites. He just built this community right on top, and if you've seen the movie, he paid for cutting corners. The same goes for the pseudo-Christian, the man or woman who wants all the goodies of being a Christian, but isn't willing to work to get them. How do they cut corners in a potential relationship with God?

- They don't study the **Word of God**. They think all of God's wisdom and instruction will just enter them through osmosis. No, learning the truths of God is hard work. Those of you who are taking my How to Study class are beginning to understand this. But for those of you who aren't, think of how you studied in school to help get your job. How much more should we be studying God's word to please our Heavenly Father, than spending time on our math homework to get a good grade to please our earthly parents? Yet we focus on the temporal over the eternal.
- They rely on their own **strength, intelligence, and wisdom**. The pseudo-Christian gives lip service to seeking God's will, but inwardly they rely on themselves to get through life.
- They pick out what **appeals** to them. Again, God's will takes a back seat to their own will. They seek the temporal pleasures of life over the eternal treasures that God promises to those who obey Him.

Basically, the pseudo-Christian wants God's **blessing** (ie. a nice home, nice toys, great life), but without the desire to **know** God or **obey** Him.

The authentic Christian (however) puts what he's learned into practice.

The wise builder desires two things:

1. He desires to build for **durability**. He's in it for the long haul. He wants what he builds to be permanent. In regards to faith, the person who seriously considers being a Christian doesn't make a knee jerk, emotional conversion. They don't want to be for Jesus one day, then off after some other way to happiness another. They weigh the cost of true discipleship, and want it to last.
2. He desires to do it **correctly**, following instructions by the **Book**.
Again, the main difference between the two builders was in the foundation. The wise builder realizes that what seems to be the least significant thing about the house because it's

underground out of sight, it the most vital. And so against expediency, he takes the time, expense, and sweat necessary to do things to code. In my old house, when I first moved here and was young and single, and seemed to have all the time in the world, I landscaped my backyard all by myself. I built the pond, laid the flagstone, shoveled the river rock, and installed the hot tub. I even put in the 220 line myself. But I cut corners. Code says that I need to place the conduit 18" underground. I put it 6" and laid a 2 x 4 over the entire length so that if I go digging around that area, I'll hit the wood before I hit the live wire. Does it work? Yes it does. Is it smart? In terms of getting my hot tub running, it is, but in the long run, if someone gets hurt, it's not. It's not wise.

What's the definition of wisdom? I'm sure you have an opinion, perhaps even a Sunday School answer. But you don't have to go anywhere else to find out because Jesus gives us the answer right here. Jesus says in verse 24 that the wise man is the one who hears his words and puts them into practice.

In this case, the words Jesus gives are from the Sermon on the Mount. To put them into practice, he's saying be salt, be light, don't lust, don't divorce, don't be anxious, don't judge, pray in your closet, love your enemies. A wise man doesn't just hear the words of Jesus; he does them. That's what separates the wise builder from the foolish builder; the wise Christian from the pseudo-Christian.

Note that what Jesus is saying is not that we have a works-based faith. Putting Jesus word's into practice doesn't save you. Rather, it is by your faith that causes you to practice what you know is true. The Apostle James puts it this way: Faith without works is dead. By that, he's saying that it's not enough to talk about having faith. The faithful believer, the true believer hears the instruction, and then does it. He obeys. He doesn't pick and choose what he wants to believe. Rather, he listens to the whole counsel of God. He places his entire life, his salvation, firmly upon Jesus Christ, the rock, not relying on himself, but on Christ who is the chief cornerstone as 1 Peter 2:6 puts it.

The Results:

The true Christian will stand forever. He will remain secure because he knows that he has pleased God. That security isn't just for this lifetime, but for the hereafter. He knows that he will stand before the Lord and he will say, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Enter into my rest." On the other hand. . .

The pseudo-Christian will fall with a great crash. That's what is says in verse 27. His home won't deteriorate or erode, it will come crashing down, suddenly, horrendously. Again, the allusion is speaking of eternity. The pseudo-Christian looked like the Christian; from the outside, he wanted the same house, he built the same house, but he will be lost forever. At the judgment seat, God will say to him, "Depart from me for I never knew you."

Those who merely profess faith in Christ, or make an intellectual commitment, or enjoy Jesus in small doses are foolish builders. They're foolish because when real trouble comes along, their

faith, along with everything they are will come crashing down. My friends, don't talk about the fact that you love God unless you can back it up with obedience. Jesus says, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (The contrast) He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.* (John 14:23-24)

Words are cheap. Cutting corners in your faith is dangerous. Think about it: The tree of the knowledge of good and evil looked like any other tree. But God made it clear that it was off limits, and Adam and Eve gambled that God was joking when he asked them to obey. And their disobedience cost them eternity. They were foolish builders.

Conclusion

As I said, I come from the Bay Area. Maybe you heard of the Loma Prieta earthquake when you saw pictures of the broken section of the Oakland Bay Bridge. But if you'll recall, there was no sustained damage on the Golden Gate Bridge, and the reason is because it's a suspension bridge. In this picture you see *them laying the span back* in the late 30's, almost a hundred years. Do you realize why a suspension bridge is strong? It's because of its anchor points. The large cable you see is made up of smaller cables which are bundled from even smaller cables, and which form even smaller cables. At the end points, the cables are exploded in a cave where each individual cable of which there are hundreds are individually anchored to rock. It is the fact that the anchor point, the foundation is strong, that the Golden Gate Bridge stands. They couldn't do the same for the Oakland Bay Bridge because there was nothing to anchor a suspension bridge in the East Bay. And isn't it interesting that after 90 years, they had to replace the Bay Bridge, not the Golden Gate.

My friends, it is the foundation that determines the ability of whether the structure can withstand the elements. Our foundation must be Jesus, the truth that he is God, that he alone has saved us from our sins, and that in believing in this truth and living out this truth means we will stand forever.

You have two choices: You will either:

1. Put His Words into practice in which case you are wise because you build upon Christ.
2. Not put His Words into practice, in which case you are foolish, because you build on the sand.

Questions for Discussion:

- Authentic versus pseudo: Can you tell the difference between the two types of Christians? Why or why not?
- Where have you cut corners in your life? Has that spilled into cutting corners in your faith?

- In trying to live out life as an authentic Christian, what are some ways you need to change your thinking, ways you need to change your behavior?