

I. Review

A. Wisdom and Exhortation for the Purposeful Gardener - Jesus has called us to a radical lifestyle of self-denial and wholehearted love. He knows our human frame better than we know ourselves and in His deep care for us, He provides six exhortations that keep us anchored in intimacy and righteousness as we endeavor to live a SOTM lifestyle.

1. Judging in righteousness.
2. Relentless Dependence upon God.
3. Embracing the difficulty of the counter-cultural lifestyle.
4. Intentional community with people in like-minded pursuit.
5. Prioritizing the SOTM above all other forms of discipleship and ministry.
6. Assures our hearts that this lifestyle is the pinnacle of the wisdom of God.

II. Embracing the Difficulty of the Counter-Cultural Lifestyle (Matt. 7:13-14)

A. The context of this passage is clearly speaking about the difficulty of the SOTM lifestyle that leads us further on in the journey of sanctification or holiness. It is very much out of context to quote this passage to mean the way or road of salvation.

1. It can be difficult to harmonize the clear truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, with the frequent, unwavering call for us to walk in righteousness. We are constantly exhorted to uphold righteousness in our heart and activities in order to attain the kingdom, and to keep ourselves from being disqualified from it. We run into this difficulty more than a few times in this sermon. This is where understanding the progression of salvation, and the language of “legal position” vs “living condition” in your relationship with Him can be very helpful. (Mark. 16:16; Lk. 7:50; John 3:14-18; Rom. 3:20-28) (Matt. 5:29-30, 6:14-15, 7:14, 7:21-23)
2. It is my interpretive position that the Sermon on the Mount was in no way intended to be a discourse or teaching on how to attain or maintain your “legal position” or the salvation of your spirit. Rather, Jesus is teaching us the way forward into the salvation of our soul (mind, will, and emotions), the fullness of life or “living condition”.

B. Jesus presents two ways people walk out their faith. Both of these groups are saved by faith alone, through grace alone (legal position). What Jesus is addressing is what happens after the initial salvation experience (living condition). This could be referred to in today's language as the approach to discipleship or the Christian walk. The broad way is not being intentional with the SOTM lifestyle and the narrow way is setting your heart upon the wisdom and exhortation to walk in the SOTM lifestyle.

1. *The broad way*: This way is careless or unintentional with the lifestyle put forth in the SOTM. This way is popular because it has few restrictions; it is easy on the flesh. There is room for various opinions about morality, truth, and Christian discipline. Those on this road can follow their desires and not have to leave behind pride, unforgiveness, greed, self-sufficiency, reputation, success by cultural standards, etc. It is the road of tolerance and permissiveness. In our day there is actually a pride concerning being very tolerant and broad-minded with issues of morality and Christian lifestyle. This way progressively leads to more and more open doors to thoughts and activities of destruction and death that greatly hinder wholehearted love and the fullness of life Jesus desires us to walk in.
2. *The narrow way*: This way is intentional and steadfast in disciplining themselves to live a SOTM lifestyle. Few choose this because it is difficult on our fleshly desires that must daily be denied (Mt. 16:24). It is also a difficult way to sustain. Many set their heart to live out the SOTM for a season but because of the difficulty, they back off on the intensity of pursuing it. It has clear boundaries defined by God. To walk on this road, we must leave everything behind that is not in God's will—our lust, pride, covetousness, various fleshly comforts, etc. Jesus assures us that this way will lead us progressively to more and more wholehearted love and the experience of fullness of life He desires for us to walk in. (Gal. 5:16-26; Phil. 3:8-19; 1 Pet. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:18-19;)

III. Intentional Community, with Like-Minded SOTM Pursuit (Mat. 7:15-20)

A. At first glance it appears that Jesus is simply warning us against wrong teachings and messengers who are false and directly oppose the SOTM lifestyle. That is certainly a biblical application of this passage, however, there is much more to it when you consider the passage in its fullness and cultural context.

1. Wolves - Jesus compared false teachers to wolves because their ideas and aspects of their lifestyle are extremely dangerous. Wolves kill sheep so the imagery that Jesus presents to us are teachings that are opposite or not in line with the SOTM which produces life, but rather kills the heart and produces death.
 - a. It is very important to understand that most false teachers and prophets are very sincere in their heart and truly believe that what they are teaching and living out is righteous and good. This understanding is critical to maintaining proper perspective to love them, and when appropriate, to address their error. (Matt. 7:1-6)

2. Fruits - The context for the fruits in this passage is not success in ministry, followers, popularity, or the sales of a book or teaching. Fruit, in context, is also not calling people to—or engaging in—the activities of waging war on the hindrances, or intentionally pursuing the positioning activities. Those are that which can help produce the fruits. The fruits are the 8 beatitudes which can only be discerned through relational interaction and must be displayed in that relational context, not just simply talked about. (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; Heb. 12:11; Jam. 3:13-18)
 - a. You will know them - The cultural context of Jesus's day was that teachers and prophets were those you did life with and were part of your community. There is a massive underlying theme to this section of exhortation that places a great emphasis on intentional relationships with like-minded believers, knowing that those relationships greatly hinder or encourage your intentionality to the SOTM lifestyle.
 - b. This means that Jesus is calling us to identify individuals (sheep or wolves) based upon the eight beatitudes flowing from their lives, and pursue intentional relationships with those individuals who bear the fruits of kingdom love exhorted to us in the SOTM. (Matt. 5:3-10)