Preschool–Grade 6

The Wise and Foolish Builders

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Saying the right things and hearing the right things are not enough. Jesus calls us to do His sayings.
Bible passage: Matthew 7:21–29, with James 1:22–25. Students read them out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:" *Matthew 7:24 (KJV)* and "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." *James 1:22 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 5–7 and James 1:22–25. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Looks Strong (5–10 minutes)

Read each one and have students vote "strong" or "weak": 1) A bridge with fresh paint and cracked supports underneath. 2) A tree with green leaves and almost no roots. 3) A plain house on a deep concrete foundation. 4) A phone with a new case and a broken battery. Ask: *Why can't you always tell what is strong from the outside? When do you find out?* Say: "Jesus told a story about two houses that you could only tell apart when the rain came."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Set the scene: Jesus saw the multitudes, went up into a mountain and taught (Matthew 5:1–2). Matthew 5–7 holds what He taught, and today's passage is how He ended it.
Read out loud: Matthew 7:21–23. Old words in this passage:

- **saith** (7:21): says; **Lord, Lord**: calling Jesus Lord with words
- **doeth the will of my Father** (7:21): does what God wants
- **prophesied** (7:22): spoke messages from God; **wonderful works**: miracles
- **profess** (7:23): openly say; **work iniquity**: keep doing sin

Read out loud: Matthew 7:24–29. Old words in this passage:

- **whosoever** (7:24): anyone; **heareth** and **doeth**: hears and does; **sayings**: the things Jesus taught
- **liken** (7:24): compare. This is a parable, a story Jesus told to teach a lesson.
- **descended** (7:25): came down; **beat upon**: hit again and again
- **founded upon a rock** (7:25): built on a rock that held it up
- **great was the fall of it** (7:27): it fell completely
- **astonished at his doctrine** (7:28): amazed at His teaching; **authority** (7:29): the right to say what is true and be obeyed; **scribes**: the teachers of the law

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Talk through it: In 7:21–23, people say the right words ("Lord, Lord") and even point to great works, but Jesus says the one who enters is "he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Then the parable shows the same thing with two houses. Both hear (7:24, 7:26). Both face the rain, the floods and the winds (7:25, 7:27). Only the one who does Jesus' sayings stands.

Read out loud: James 1:22–25. Old words: **deceiving your own selves** means fooling yourself; **beholding his natural face in a glass** means looking at his face in a mirror; **straightway** means right away; **continueth therein** means keeps on in it. James says a hearer who doesn't do is like someone who looks in a mirror and forgets what he saw.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Matthew 7:21–22 describes people who said the right words and did impressive things. What do you think it means to do "the will of my Father"?
2. Both builders heard Jesus' sayings (7:24, 7:26). What is the difference between hearing a sermon and building on it?
3. Jesus never said the wise man would have no rain (7:25). Why does it matter that the rain, floods and winds came to both houses?
4. James 1:22 says hearing without doing is "deceiving your own selves." How can a person fool themselves about this?
5. Pick one saying from Matthew 5–7 (for example 5:44, 6:14 or 7:12). What would it look like to do it at school this week?
6. The people were astonished because Jesus taught "as one having authority" (7:29). How does knowing who is speaking change how seriously you take His words?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 7:24 this week; keep working on James 1:22 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Hearing the gospel is not the same as obeying it. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). On the day of Pentecost, when the people heard Peter preach, they 'were pricked in their heart' (it cut them deep inside) and asked, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37, KJV). Peter answered: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized' (Acts 2:41, KJV). They heard, and they did."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Which saying of Jesus have I heard many times but not really done?
2. What is one way I can do it this week, and when?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Matthew 5, 6 and 7 (one chapter every two days). Each day, pick one saying and do it.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for the words of Jesus. Don't let us be hearers only. Help us do what He says, at home, at school and with our friends, so our lives are built upon a rock. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks whether Matthew 7:21–23 means they could be lost: answer gently and honestly. Jesus' words are serious, and they are also an invitation. He told this parable so we would build on the rock, hearing His sayings and doing them. Encourage the student to keep reading His words and to talk with you, their parents or their pastor.

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