

Disaster mitigation



Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study can help us understand the third stage of the disaster cycle - mitigation, and how we can take action to make our lives and homes stronger in the face of pressure.



Foundations of rock or sand?

Read Luke 6:46-49 and Matthew 7:24-27

Both Luke and Matthew include this parable at the end of a longer session of Jesus' teachings. In Luke, he has just taught about loving our enemies (Luke 6:27-36), not criticising others (6:37-42) and assessing a tree by the quality of its fruit (6:43-45). In Matthew's account the topics are similar but include God's desire to give good gifts to his children (Matthew 7:7-12) and the contrast between entering through the narrow gate and the wide gate (7:13-14).

The passage itself is not intended as guidance for house-builders! Rather, it is an instruction from Jesus to base our lives on him and on the 'rock' of his teachings, not on the changing fashions and beliefs of the world around us (the 'sands'). Nevertheless, Jesus always based his parables on familiar examples from everyday life. People presumably knew that house foundations matter – that only a house built on a solid foundation had any hope of survival when storms and floods struck.



Key points

- It is important that we not only hear the words of Jesus but also act upon them. This will give us a firm foundation for life, even when pressures and difficulties arise.
- To hear Jesus' words but not take action is foolishness, leading to ruin as soon as pressures or opposition appear.

Questions for discussion

- To whom was Jesus addressing this teaching? To what extent are the two passages a commentary on the earlier words of Jesus in Luke 6 and Matthew 7?
- In his parables, Jesus uses activities from everyday life, often from farming (eg the sower, the true vine) or from keeping sheep (eg the good shepherd, the lost sheep). Why do you think Jesus chooses house-building in the passages above (Luke 6:46-49 and Matthew 7:24-27)? What do the passages tell us about building practices at that time?

- What are the ways in which we hear and receive the words of Jesus? How can we make sure that the spiritual house (our lives) does not collapse under pressure?
- What are we doing ourselves to apply the teachings of Jesus?
- Choosing good foundations for a house would be called disaster mitigation! What other suggestions could you make to ensure that a physical house does not fall down in a time of flood, windstorm or earthquake?



Notes

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http://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disasters_and_the_local_church/