

‘Inside Out’ – Study 11 — ‘True and False; Wise and Foolish?’

(conclusion of series)

In this series we have looked at what it means to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Being transformed, seeking/obtaining inner righteousness, is a gift from God but we have to be open to receive it by taking action ourselves; and we have looked at the ‘spiritual disciplines’ which bring us/open us before God to receive. These disciplines have been the Power of Prayer, of Fasting, of The Word, of Simplicity, of Service, of Testimony, and of Worship.

1a. What do you remember about what you have heard on Sunday or talked through in your group on these subjects? Are you able to remember something from each?

1b. Can you say something about which has been the most challenging, perhaps requiring some change from you?

Read Matthew 7: 24-29

This passage draws to a close Jesus’ teaching known as ‘the Sermon on the Mount’, considered by many scholars down the centuries (inside and outside the Christian faith) to be the most original, concise yet complete moral teaching. He completes his teaching with a challenge to his audience - will their response to what they have heard be wise or foolish? A challenge which echoes down the ages.

2a. Let’s think about the criteria we use to make decisions. How do you respond to advice offered by professionals? Against what criteria do you assess the advice?

2b. How would you respond to your doctor recommending a treatment which involved short term discomfort (perhaps serious discomfort)? What criteria are you using for making your decision?

2c. Are there any parallels we can draw with decisions about following Jesus Christ? Or are decisions of faith/church subject to different criteria?

This passage seems to infer that we will be judged, not by our direct response to God himself, but by whether we hear Jesus words and do them, or are we moved by and enjoy the words but not actually allow them to penetrate our lives/actions. Perhaps we could ask – what sort of ‘houses’ are we building today?

3a. Is our own individual ‘house’ built on rock or sand? And what of the church?

3b. We know that ‘building houses’ takes time. For most, the process of ‘transformation’ also takes time, even a lifetime. What would you say is the essential response to hearing ‘Jesus’ words’?

3c. Is there a risk of making Christians feel ‘guilty’ by frequently hearing Jesus repeating the challenge – ‘are you doing my words, or only reading them, hearing them and thinking how fine they are’ – or do they reinvigorate you to continue along your faith journey?