Passage Guide
Am I Really Following Jesus? | Week 9
Matthew 7:13-23 (Primary Passage)
November 8th, 2026

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount by challenging you to examine whether you are truly following Him. He describes two roads, two trees, and two claims to show that genuine faith is more than words, religious activity, or outward appearances. The narrow road leads to life, but following Jesus requires surrender, obedience, and a willingness to live differently from the world. A genuine relationship with Christ produces spiritual fruit that can be seen in your character, choices, and relationships. Ultimately, Jesus is not looking for religious performance but a personal relationship with Him that transforms your heart and life.

MAIN POINTS

1. Examine Your Direction – Two Roads (Matthew 7:13–14) There are two roads: one leads to destruction, and the other leads to life. The broad road follows the world's values, desires, and definition of truth. The narrow road requires you to surrender your life and follow Jesus, even when it's difficult. Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Genuine faith involves surrender and self-denial (Matthew 16:24–26). Key Truth: Your direction reveals the path you are choosing.

2. Examine Your Fruit – Two Trees (Matthew 7:15–20) False teachers may look and sound spiritual, but their lives reveal who they really are. You recognize genuine faith by its fruit, not simply by someone's words or outward appearance. Spiritual fruit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). You don't have to be perfect, but genuine faith produces ongoing growth and transformation. As you remain connected to Jesus, your life will increasingly reflect His character (John 15:5). Key Truth: Your fruit reveals the roots of your faith.

3. Examine Your Relationship – Two Claims (Matthew 7:21–23) Saying the right religious words does not necessarily mean you have a genuine relationship with Jesus. Religious activity, spiritual accomplishments, and knowing Bible facts cannot replace knowing Christ. Jesus desires more than outward obedience; He wants your heart and personal surrender. Genuine believers are known by Christ and respond to Him with faith and obedience (John 10:14, 27–28). Your righteousness comes through faith in Jesus, not your own religious performance (Philippians 3:8–9). Key Truth: Genuine faith is built on a relationship with Jesus, not religious performance.

Big Idea: The way of Jesus isn't easy, but it's worth it

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does Jesus forbid all judgment, or is He warning you against a certain kind of judgment? (Matthew 7:1–5; John 7:24) *Possible answer:* Jesus warns against hypocritical, prideful, and harsh judgment. You should examine your own heart first, but you can still recognize sin and lovingly help others follow God's truth.

2. What does Jesus teach you about God's character when He tells you to ask, seek, and knock? (Matthew 7:7–11; James 1:5–6) *Possible answer:* God is a loving Father who hears His children and gives what is good. You can approach Him with confidence, trusting His wisdom even when His answer is different from what you expected.

3. When are you most tempted to judge someone else without examining your own heart? (Matthew 7:3–5; Psalm 139:23–24) *Possible answer:* I am most tempted when someone frustrates me or behaves in a way I dislike. I need to ask God to reveal my own sin and help me respond with humility and grace.

4. Who do you need to pray for before you speak to them about a problem? (Matthew 7:7–8; Galatians 6:1) *Possible answer:* I need to pray for my boss, neighbor or spouse, ask God to check my motives, and seek wisdom so that any conversation I have is loving, gentle, and helpful.

5. How would your relationships change if you treated others the way you want to be treated? (Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 4:32) *Possible answer:* I would listen more, assume less, speak kindlier, and offer the same patience and forgiveness I hope others will show me.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus' warning in Matthew 7 reminds you that church attendance, Bible knowledge, good works, and religious activity cannot save you. You cannot earn your way onto the narrow road. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again so that we could have new life (Ephesians 2:8–9; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

If you have never trusted Jesus: Stop trusting in your own goodness, and believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Receive His forgiveness and begin following Him. He is the only way to eternal life (Romans 10:9–13). If you are already a believer: Don't settle for simply knowing about Jesus or going through religious motions. Repent of areas where you have drifted, return to Christ, and continue walking in obedience. Let your life demonstrate the transforming power of genuine faith (1 John 1:9; James 2:17).

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday – Choose the Narrow Road
Key Verse: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:14)
Reflection: Jesus makes it clear that there are two roads in life, and each lead to a different destination. The broad road follows the world's values and desires, but the narrow road follows Jesus, even when obedience is difficult or unpopular. Choosing Jesus means trusting His direction instead of simply doing what feels right to you. The narrow road isn't always easy, but it leads to something far greater than anything this world can offer, a dynamic life with your Creator, Savior, and Lord!
Application Question: Is there an area of your life where you are choosing what is easy instead of what Jesus is asking you to do? *Possible Answer:* I may be avoiding a difficult conversation, holding onto a sinful habit, or putting my own desires ahead of God's Word. I need to trust Jesus and take the next step of obedience, even when it is uncomfortable.
Prayer Response: Father, help me choose Your way instead of the world's way. Give me the courage to obey You, even when it is difficult. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday – Count the Cost of Following Jesus
Key Verse: "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24)
Reflection: Following Jesus involves more than believing certain things or attending church. It means surrendering your life to Him and allowing Him to lead your decisions, relationships, priorities, and desires. Sometimes following Jesus will cost you comfort, popularity, opportunities, or even relationships. But whatever you surrender to follow Christ is worth it because nothing in this world compares to knowing Him and experiencing the life He gives.
Application Question: What is one thing you need to surrender to Jesus so that you can follow Him more faithfully? *Possible Answer:* I may need to surrender my need for control, my desire for approval, or a habit that keeps me from growing spiritually.
Prayer Response: Lord Jesus, help me surrender my desires, trust Your plans, and put You first in every area of my life. Remind me that following You is worth the cost. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wednesday – Look for the Fruit
Key Verse: "So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit." (Matthew 7:17)
Reflection: Jesus teaches that you can recognize a tree by the fruit it produces, and the same is true of genuine faith. Your words, attitudes, decisions, and relationships should increasingly reflect the character of Christ. This doesn't mean you will be perfect or never struggle with sin. It means that as you remain connected to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will continue changing you from the inside out, producing spiritual fruit in your life.
Application Question: What kind of spiritual fruit are people seeing in your life, and where do you need to grow? *Possible Answer:* I may be growing in kindness and patience, but I still struggle with frustration or self-control. I need to depend more on the Holy Spirit and allow Him to shape my attitudes and actions.
Prayer Response: Father, help me remain connected to Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to grow His character in me. May my life reflect Your love and goodness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday – More Than Religious Activity
Key Verse: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)
Reflection: Jesus gives a serious warning that religious words and activities cannot take the place of a genuine relationship with Him. You can attend church, serve in ministry, know Scripture, and still neglect the most important thing: personally knowing Jesus. Good works do not earn your salvation; they are the evidence of a life changed by God's grace. Jesus wants more than your religious performance. He wants your heart, your trust, and your daily surrender.
Application Question: Are you spending more time doing things for Jesus than actually growing in your relationship with Him? *Possible Answer:* I can become so busy serving, attending church, and taking care of responsibilities that I neglect time with God.
Prayer Response: Lord Jesus, help me grow in my personal relationship with You. Keep me from simply going through religious motions, and teach me to follow You with all my heart. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Friday – Keep Following Jesus
Key Verse: "Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'" (John 6:68)
Reflection: Following Jesus is a lifelong journey of trusting Him, surrendering to Him, and becoming more like Him. There will be days when the road feels difficult, when you struggle with temptation, or when the world encourages you to turn away. But Jesus is worth following because He alone offers forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.
Application Question: What is one step you can take this week to grow in your relationship with Jesus and remain faithful to Him? *Possible Answer:* I can commit to spending consistent time in God's Word and prayer, obeying what He teaches me, and trusting in the Holy Spirit to change me from the inside out. I want my life to reflect that He is my Lord.
Prayer Response: Father, strengthen my faith and help me remain faithful to Jesus each day. May my words and actions point others to Him. In Jesus' Name, Amen.