

# OFF THE MOUNT COURSE

(developed by Michel Larribeau MTh)

## NOTES FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

Aim: 'to learn how to build life on good foundations'

### COURSE PLAN

(Jesus' commands in the 4 gospels,  
based on the chronological order of Luke's Gospel)

**Title:** OFF THE MOUNT COURSE (23 instructions in Luke 8 to 16)

**Aim:** to learn to build life on solid foundations

*sample below for preview*

**SESSION 1** - built on God's Word  
(Mt 13:18-23 with Lk 8:11-18)

*for the rest of the course contact us*

**SESSION 2** - built away from sin  
(Mk 7:1-23 with Mt 15:1-20)

**SESSION 3** - built on humility  
(Mt 18:1-14 and Mk 9:33-37)

**SESSION 4** - built on reconciliation (Mt 18:15-35)

**SESSION 5** - built away from hypocrisy (Lk 12:1-12)

**SESSION 6** - built away from conceit (Lk 14:1-24)

**SESSION 7** - built on stewardship (Lk 16:1-13)

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## SESSION 1 - built on God's word

① Read Matthew 13:18 to 23 with Lk 8:11-18 & Mk 4:13-25

② to start

- **what is the instruction of Jesus in this portion of his ministry in Mt.13:9?**  
[*'Whoever has ears, let them hear' and Luke adds in 8:18, 'Therefore consider carefully how you listen'*]
- this is the conclusion given to his disciple following the first of His many different parables in the Gospels (around 30)
- **what is a parable?** [*ordinary story with hidden lessons & truths, revelations*]
- astonishing reasons for teaching in parables given in Mt 13:11-17 = a God given privilege (grace) just for disciples !!?
- **what is the parable about?** [*the very familiar event of a farmer sowing seeds with the seeds falling on 4 different types of soil and 4 outcomes ) 3 negative and 1 positive*]
- very often this parable used in an evangelistic context (encouraging unbelievers to accept the good news of Jesus the right way)
- Jesus' main purpose for this parable is to warn his disciples (Lk 8:18)
- lasting fruitfulness even of the Word of God is not guaranteed but care and attention must be given to how it is heard, listened to
- let us consider how to make sure that the seed of the Word of God falls in the right kind of soil and is as effective as possible

③ THE WORD OF GOD

- from Jesus' words in all 3 Gospels (Mt. 13:23, Mk. 4:20, Lk. 8:15), **what are the 4 principles to be aware of and keep paying attention to?**
- 1. from Mt.13:23?** [*the Word is to be heard*]  
[*- Jesus says the Kingdom of God works like a farmer who sows seeds*  
*- so God, like a farmer who sows seeds, speaks and keeps speaking His word*]
- **does God speak today?**  
[*- from Genesis to Revelation, God being revealed as "The Lord who speaks", not just "who spoke at the beginning", Gen.1 'let there be...'*  
*- some Christians believe that when the Bible was completed God did not need to speak any more but the Kingdom of God is about the Lord who speaks*]
- if God speaks even today, **so whom does God speak to?** Helpful questions

④ (the Word of God continued)

- is it normal
  - . for a child to hear his father? [*Who is our heavenly Father?*] see Jn 1:11-13
  - . for a sheep to hear the shepherd? [*Who is our great Shepherd?*] see John 10
  - . for a disciple to hear his teacher? [*Who is our teacher?*] see John 13:12-17
- God wants to speak to **every** Christian, it is NORMAL for a Christian to hear God, to hear the Word of God: read **John 8:47**
- so **let us expect** God to speak to **us** as soon as becoming a child of God
- 2. still from Mt.13:23?** [*the Word is to be understood*]  
[*- as Jesus warns in the context of this parable (Mt 13:10-18) it is possible to hear God but not understand, even for his disciples (v.18)*]
- from these examples, Num.12:1-9, Num.22:21-36, 1 Sam.3:1-10, Dan.7, Act.8:26-35, Act.10:9-23, Act.16:6-10, 1 Thes.2:13, **does God always speak in a personal direct approach and a simple clear way?**  
[*God also uses various 'agents' (such as people, angels, animals, ...) and diverse 'methods' of communication (like words, pictures, visions, dreams, feelings..)*]
- let us not limit God and rely on Him for giving understanding if necessary
- 3. from Mk.4:20?** [*the Word is to be accepted (believed)*]
- how to know then what we hear from God? See Lk.8:18 & Col.2:16-19  
[*Jesus says 'be careful how you listen' (Lk.8:18), so God does not mind us being cautious, not all that is claimed to be of God is necessarily so (Col.2:16-19)*  
*- being gullible, naïve not an option, but an extreme to be avoided*]
- what is the other extreme that is also to be avoided? See 1 Thes.5:19-21  
[*despising, 'contempt', rejecting all, cynicism*]
- **what is the solution (avoiding the 2 extremes) proposed in v.21?**  
[*learning to 'test everything', that is 'examining', 'weighing', 'filtering', 'investigating', 'checking', 'assessing', 'comparing' to 'hold on to the good'*]
- **why is Acts 17:10-12 a great example of that is?** [*reliability of sources, eagerness to receive the message, still examination of Scriptures (2 Tim.3:16)*]
- **what about when no clear indication one way or the other in Scriptures?**  
[*principle hinted in Acts 20:23 = Paul warned more than once*  
*= principle of 2/3 witnesses = 2/3 different confirmations*]
- after God has spoken to us and it has been established, He wants us to believe him without reservation, to have faith in what He says
- examples: Gen.15:6, Jonah 3:5, Luke 1:45, Acts 27:25: Rom. 4:21
- the definition of faith in **Heb. 11:1** is very good but not quite complete, telling us 'what' (to be sure, certain) but not 'how'
- the way (how) to be sure and certain is to hear and to believe God's Word, God speaking to us, either about Himself (trust) or our situation (faith)

⑤ (the Word of God continued)

- 4. from Lk.8:15?** *[the Word is to be retained (persevered with)]*  
*[once the Word has been heard and believed, it must be retained, hold on to, remembered; we must continue to believe it, to have faith in it*  
*- a sign of true discipleship: John 8:31]*
- **is it always so simple?** see Lk.8:13b, *['time of testing']; Jesus does not hide that 'receiving the message' comes under pressure*
  - **what kinds of pressure?**
    - \* see Mt.13:21 *['trouble and persecution'!!?]*
    - \* see Mt.13:22 and Lk.8:14 *['the worries of this life', 'the deceitfulness of riches', 'pleasures']*
    - \* others mentioned others elsewhere;
      - . see Luke 9 :23,24 (1 Cor.9 :26-27) *[self (habits, attitudes, ambitions, etc...)]*
      - . Luke 16:26 with Matt.10:37 *[family]*
      - . Matt.15:2-6 (Rom.12:2) *[tradition/culture: religious or secular]*
  - **is obedience another test?**
    - \* see James 2:20 *[argued that 'faith without work is dead']*
    - \* also 1 Pet.1:13 *[Peter encourages it, 'prepare your minds for action']*
    - \* see Lk 6:46-49, John 14:23, Rom.1:5 ('the obedience of faith'), James 1:22 *[more often than not the 'action' required is obedience*  
*. the best proof that we believe what God has told us is to do what he says]*
  - whatever excuses are put forward that diminish or nullify the notion of obedience for Christians is not from God (Lk 8:15, 'by persevering')
  - carefully note and communicate that obedience is ultimately to Jesus and His commandments and not to a human institution, organisation, local church or leadership; Paul could say 'follow me as I follow Jesus' (1 Cor.11:1)
  - a normal reaction would be **'Who is equal to the task?'**
    - \* see John 14:16 and 16:7 with Eph.1:13, Col.1:9-11 *[Jesus promised and gave a helper to His disciples]*
  - **is repentance always available after failure?** *[Lk 15:10-32, 1 John 1:9-2:2]*
  - in the parable Jesus speaks of 'producing & yielding a crop',  
**what 'crop' can be expected?** or in other words what benefits?
    - . see Lk 11:28 (with Mt 10:29-30, 40-42, 11:28-29)
    - . Mt 7:24-27 *[wise and strong [with John 15 & 2 Pet.1:5-11 (v.10)]*
    - . John 8:31-32 *[true discipleship and freedom]*
    - . Col.1:9-11 *[pleasing, fruitful & knowing Him better]*
    - . last but not least Luke 6:40 *[to be like Him]*

⑥ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- accept that God wants and does speak to all His children in various ways
- realise our need of being careful, avoiding being gullible and cynical but ready to test everything when it comes to hearing God
- make sure to accept that the Bible is our final authority and to know and refer to it as much as possible
- hold on and persevere in believing what is true and doing what God tells us to do