

# OFF THE MOUNT COURSE

(developed by Michel Larribeau MTh)

## NOTES FOR PREACHERS

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

- the instructions of Jesus in this portion of his ministry are, 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)
- a parable is a 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 !!?
- the parable is 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), 4 principles to be aware of and keep paying attention to:
- 1. the Word is to be heard** (Mt.13:23)
- 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
- 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. the Word is to be understood** (Mt.13:23)
  - 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)
  - many Scriptures show that, although He can and does, God does not 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 ...]
  - 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
  - let us not limit God and rely on Him for giving understanding if necessary
- 3. the Word is to be accepted (believed)** (Mk.4:20)
  - how to know then what we hear and understand is from God?
  - 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
  - the other extreme that is also to be aware of and avoided is the one mentioned in 1 Thes.5:19-21; despising, 'contempt', rejecting all, cynicism
  - the solution (avoiding the 2 extremes) proposed in v.21 is learning to 'test everything', that is 'examining', 'weighing', 'filtering', 'investigating', 'checking', 'assessing', 'comparing' to 'hold on to the good'
  - a great example of that is in Acts 17:10-12; 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' 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. 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
- not always so simple; in Lk.8:13b Jesus speaks of time of testing:
  - \* Jesus does not hide that 'receiving the message' comes under pressure (= 'trouble and persecution' Mt.13:21)
  - \* then in the next verse He mentions other things; 'the worries of this life', 'the deceitfulness of riches', then in Lk.8:14 it adds a third one, 'pleasures'
  - \* Jesus mentioned others elsewhere;
    - . self (habits, attitudes, ambitions, etc..) : Luke 9 :23,24 (1 Cor.9 :26-27)
    - . family: Luke 16:26 with Matt.10:37
    - . tradition/culture: religious or secular: Matt.15:2-6 (Rom.12:2)
- 'action', another great test of faith
  - \* James argues in his letter that '**faith without work is dead**' (2:20)
  - \* Peter encourages it, '**prepare your minds for action**' (1 Pet.1:13)
- 'obedience' required: 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
  - . see Lk 6:46-49, John 14:23, Rom.1:5 ('the obedience of faith'), James 1:22
  - . 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?'
  - \* Jesus promised and gave a helper to His disciples; John 14:16 and 16:7 with Eph.1:13, Col.1:9-11
  - \* repentance always available after failure: Lk 15:10-32, 1 John 1:9-2:2
- benefits to follow: in the parable Jesus speaks of 'producing & yielding a crop'
  - . Lk 11:28 (with Mt 10:29-30, 40-42, 11:28-29); what kind of blessings?
  - . 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