

Virtual Bible Class with Rubel Shelly

“Two Builders” - Matthew 7:24-27

Here are some review and discussion questions that might help you pursue ideas highlighted in the video segments that discuss this section of the Sermon on the Mount...

Unit 1 – Two Brothers / One Theme

1. What do you know about the family background of Jesus? The unbelief of his siblings prior to the resurrection? (John 7:1-5). The role of James in the Jerusalem church? (Gal 2:9). The *two* epistles in your New Testament from brothers of Jesus?
2. What is the “one theme” identified in the video from the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle of James?
3. How has the faith-works tension played out across Christian history? Read James 2:14-26. Summarize that text in light of Matthew 7:24-27.
4. Have you thought about the many parallels between the Sermon on the Mount and James? Look at these few examples:
 - (a) friendship with this world betrays God – Matt 5:4; Jas 4:9-10,
 - (b) show mercy to others – Matt 5:7; Jas 2:13,
 - (c) don’t trust earthly wealth – Matt 5:12; Jas 5:2-5,
 - (d) avoid oath-taking – 5:33-37; Jas 5:12,
 - (e) pursue perfection/maturity – Matt 5:48; Jas 1:4, etc.Look for others parallels that jump out to you.
5. Can you name specific situations where you were challenged to put your faith into action? Is anything going on right now that is challenging you?

Unit 2 – “Religion Is as Religion Does . . .”

1. What is the context for the statement quoted at the start of the video: “Religion is as religion does; all the rest is talk”? What would that statement have meant to Rabbi Greenberg.
2. Can you give other examples of how we often say that people’s words need to be backed up with actions? Is there anything particularly religious about such a notion? Is there anything *anti*-religious about it?
3. What does the New Testament say about racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and favoritism? Would you agree with Rubel that these are subjects where churches

have done more talking than acting, offered more pious statements than meaningful changes?

4. Why do you think Jesus chose such simple illustrations as house-building for his teaching purposes? Do you think the point of this illustration would have been grasped by his original hearers? How did he “apply” his illustration?
5. Close your reflection on this video by reading James 1:22. Pray for God to make you a person who lives above the “deception” of substituting good words for active faith.

Unit 3 – Paralyzed by Grace

1. If we use James 2:14ff as commentary on the Wise and Foolish Builders, how would each of the builders react to the situation envisioned at 2:15? Are the two brothers emphasizing the same central truth in their different illustrations? Explain.
2. Define the words *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*. Did you know the second term already? How does it summarize our theme for this section of the Sermon on the Mount?
3. “Grace is not opposed to works, doing, and good deeds. Grace is opposed to *merit*.” Explain this quotation from the video. Why is it important to have this clear in a believer’s mind?
4. Did you catch the quotation from Dallas Willard? Have you ever seen (or been!) someone who was “paralyzed by grace”? What sort of misunderstanding does that type of behavior illustrate? How does it relate to the faith-action theme?
5. Close your reflection on this section of the Sermon on the Mount by reading Galatians 5:6. How does this reinforce Jesus’ teaching? Are Paul’s words consistent with James 2?