

*Read also Deuteronomy 30:11-20. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

There are ways to ensure your success. Did you know that? In almost every area of life, you can get help to guarantee your success.

In spring, storms assail this area. Roofs get torn off by wind. Hail breaks windows. These storms can create major expense. If there was a free seminar on making your home more “weather worthy” would you take advantage of it?

You can travel to Epcot at Disney World, go to the StormStruck exhibit and sit through a hurricane-strength storm to assess your home’s storm-worthiness. Then you can improve your home—not without cost, of course.

Or, if you want to ensure your financial success, you can take a Bible-based course through Financial Peace University. You must pay for the course, of course, and then rearrange your finances according to their advice.

Just like there are helps for your property and money, you can get emotional advice from a counselor. There are ways to ensure your success.

If you need help with your body you have help! There’s Weight Watchers or the gym or even surgical help. There are ways to ensure your success. But for success to actually happen, you do have to follow the advice of the expert.

What about spiritual training? Do you consider success in spiritual matters equally as important? I do! And I sort of think Jesus does too. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount could be entitled something like “Foundations for Spiritual Longevity.” And, if you follow His advice, you are guaranteed success.

So listen to Jesus’ closing words to the Sermon on the Mount. READ Mt 7:15-29

Jesus ends His sermon by warning you against false prophets. How do you identify them? A false prophet is someone whose words and actions are incongruent.

When you engage someone to work on your house, have you ever had a contractor who could not produce what they said they could do? We have. A few years ago we needed to replace some tile and a friend recommended someone.

But when the contractor tore out the old tile, he used his eight-year-old son as his helper. The man did not tape off the room, and “forgot” to tell me to turn off the air conditioner. So all that dust was circulated throughout the entire house. He laid tile backwards. Then, he broke the water line on the refrigerator when he moved it, flooding the carpet in the next room. He informed us it was his first ever tile job. He failed to mention that ahead of time, and I hadn’t asked him that question.

When I told my friend, *I thought you said this guy was great*, she replied, “Wow, I’m so glad he didn’t lay tile at my house!”

He was like a false prophet: he appeared on the surface to be fine. He had a little card that said *professional*. But it was a false claim. So the false prophets pretend to proclaim the truth while their actions show otherwise.

False prophets are everywhere, in all realms of life; and not just religious life.

Jesus said to follow a false prophet is like putting yourself in the hands of a ravenous wolf.

How, then, is truth found, faith encouraged, and knowledge incorporated into your life? Eugene Peterson says identify them in this way:

“Don’t be impressed with charisma; look for character. Who preachers *are* is the main thing, not what they say. A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook. These diseased trees with their bad apples are going to be chopped down and burned.” (*The Message*)

When you listen to His advice, remember that Jesus has eyes to see into the heart. He lives by very close association. Again Eugene Peterson interprets this way:

“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’

You know the saying, “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” (Abraham Lincoln)

You cannot *ever* fool Jesus *any* of the time! Jesus has an eye for congruity. Jesus is an active agent in your life. This is a good thing! ~A gift to you. This helps you.

When I was a child, I sucked my thumb. My parents persecuted me because of it. ☺ Each night when I was put to bed, after a few minutes my mother would call out from the kitchen, “Virginia, take that thumb out of your mouth!” I thought she was “ever present.” I believed she could see through walls, like Jesus.

Disciples of Jesus Christ live very close to His presence. By doing that, you “catch” His way of living, which we have been studying in the Sermon on the Mount. Being with Him is kind of contagious for following His ways, but if we never read the Bible or pray, and we disregard His ways time and time again, then we are far from Him and He eventually says “I never knew you.”

Think of someone you know whom you feel knows you really well. Why do you say that? They know what you like, dislike, what matters to you. Jesus wants you to know Him like that. He is saying here to those who casually call Him Lord:

*These things I've shared are from my heart. They are the way I am. To reject them is to reject me. I never knew you.*

But the converse is true: to follow Him is to know Him.

Who are you going to become? Are you invested in Him? If so, you will follow His ways.

This is the consistent message throughout the New Testament; all the disciples taught it.

- James said, “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (Ja1:22).
- John said, “the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever” (1 Jn 2:17).
- Paul said, “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Ro 2:13).

This is consistent with the Old Testament, as you heard from Deuteronomy. These are beautiful encouragements that lead you to life.

Isn't it absolutely marvelous to see congruence in the whole Bible? To know that Jesus and the Father are one in this? You have a choice given to you by God. Now what are the results of your choice? Here's how Eugene Peterson expresses it:

“These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

“But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.” (v. 24-27)

So build on The Rock. The Rock has been around for a very long time.

- The Rock was in the desert with the children of Israel, flooding water coming from it to sustain a thirsty people. The Rock was Christ.
- The rock was the tomb which Jesus burst forth from when resurrected, assuring you that no “tomb” you may experience is too great for Him.
- The Rock is the good news which builds the church, which Peter proclaimed when he said, “You are the Messiah, Son of the living God.”
- The Rock became the cornerstone, over which people stumble and fall, unless they believe in Him; stumbling because they disobey the Word
- but those who believe will not be put to shame. (Ro 9:33)

What does your foundation look like? Are you building on the rock?

As you obey; not out of duty but because you begin to know this fantastic Person, Jesus, you realize what it means for Him to love you, not judging you but guiding, disciplining, maturing. And you become strong; standing against all storms, nothing short of transformation.

It's an amazing, living Rock that you stand on. Stand strong.

AMEN