

# Hearing the Voice of God

## A Well-Built Life - Pastor Roger Ridley

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Many of you, I'm sure, can remember some of the old television families like Father Knows Best, Ossie and Harriet, and Leave It To Beaver. In each of them, they were depicted as wholesome, well-built families. They had problems, but somehow they always came up with just the right answer, so that everything worked out okay.

As I have thought back to some of those shows, I've come to realize that there was an obvious absence in them. How did they get such well-built lives? That was never really shown. However, I think I know the answer. They came out of a generation that was still listening to and living by the teachings of God's Word.

Today, when families seem to be falling apart, and individual lives are crumbling, is it possible to still have a well-built life? I believe it is. Especially when we make it our aim to listen to and live by the voice of God as provided for us in His timeless, eternal Word.

This is precisely what the Lord Jesus Himself taught. Please open your Bibles to Matthew 7:24-27...

What we have here is a very short story, which was told at the conclusion of what we have come to call *The Sermon On The Mount*. In His sermon, Jesus took a number of Old Testament principles and explained them, with authority, as eternal principles for well-balanced living.

The story is one that many are familiar with about two men. Both of the men were builders. One of them was a wise builder and the other was a foolish builder. This difference was demonstrated in the manner by which they each built their homes.

The wise man made sure that his home had a solid foundation. Before he even began to build he dug down into the earth until he reached solid rock. Then he began to build. Up went the walls, the roof, and other essentials like windows and doors. Before long his house was finished.

The foolish builder didn't take the same precaution as the wise builder. When he began to build, he did not make sure to have a solid foundation. Instead, he began to build right away on the surface. For his foundation all he had was sand, or shifting soil. However, the walls and the roof went up, and soon, he too, had a very nice looking home.

In fact, on the surface, the two homes, built by these two builders, looked very much the same. However, there was a vast difference. The difference was in the foundation: what their house was built on.

Now for a time that difference did not seem important. You see, when the sun is shining, and the weather is nice, any house will stand. But good weather doesn't last forever, and the day came when the stability of these homes was tested by a storm.

At the home of the wise builder, the storm was intense. It rained hard. The area flooded. There was also a fierce wind that pelted against the house. But despite the fierceness of the storm, the house stood firm.

Meanwhile, at the home of the foolish man, things were different. He too had rain, a flood, and strong winds, but it wasn't very long before the storm began to take its toll. The house fell apart. Nothing was left standing. It was all washed away in the storm.

Now, Jesus didn't tell this story just to have a dramatic ending to His message. He told it to drive home a very important lesson about how to have a well-built life.

The two houses of the story represent our lives. The two builders represent how we build our lives: a wise, well-built life, or a foolish, poorly constructed life.

The story has **three aspects** that I want to share with you in this message.

## I. The Requirements.

First, I want you to notice the requirements that Jesus set forth for a well-built life. We are to hear the Word of God, and then we are to heed the Word of God. Look again at verse 24...

We have talked of the importance of both of these over the past few weeks. Repeatedly, well over 300 times, in the Old Testament, we find the admonition, *Hear the Word of the Lord*. In the New Testament, repeatedly Jesus says, *Hear My words*, or *Hear My voice*, or *He who has ears to hear with, let him hear*. God wants His voice, His Word to be heard, and so He has made it available, not only in the past, but also for us today.

As Jesus shared this story with those sitting on the mountainside listening to Him, He most specifically had in mind the sayings He had just given them, recorded in Matthew 5-6. But, more broadly, He was also referring to the whole of Scripture. In Matthew 5:18 He said, "*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*"

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

The Word of God contains all the information we need to be all that we can be. That's why it says in 2 Timothy 2:15, "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

As we study the Word, we hear the voice of God. There, He provides us with the blueprint for a well-built life. So, if we want the end result, then we have to start there.

I was sitting in my office one afternoon, and received a collect phone call from the County Jail. It was from a man that I had never met or heard of before. He wanted to know if our church helped get people out of jail. I said that I would be happy to come, meet with him, and share with him from God's Word. He then said, "*So you don't help people!*" and hung up. Clearly, his life condition was related to his unwillingness to hear God's Word.

But just hearing the Word of God by itself, no matter how good it is, is still not enough. That's why Jesus spoke of two requirements: both hearing and heeding.

Times past and present are filled with examples of those who have heard the Word of God. They were taught to read by it. They grew up in homes hearing it. In our country, you turn on the television, and you can find Bible preaching. You turn on the radio, and again, you can find Bible preaching. You go to a bookstore and there's a whole section of Bibles. In multiple surveys it has been discovered that a large majority of Americans have Bibles, read their Bibles, and believe their Bibles to be true. But as encouraging as all that is, we all must understand that it is not enough.

I have been here for 8 years now. I believe that I have faithfully taught the whole Counsel of God. But you could have been at every service and heard the truth week after week, and not have received any benefit whatsoever. It takes more than hearing God's Word for a well-built life. It takes heeding what you hear. That is why in the vision statement of our church we refer to both *preaching and practicing the timeless Word of God*.

Like David said, "*God's Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" (Psalm 119:105) It provides the light, but our feet have to follow it for the light to be of any use.

In Joshua 1:8 God said to Joshua, "*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"

Luke 11 describes an occasion when Jesus was teaching a crowd that had gathered about Him. Verse 27 reports that a woman of the group lifted up her voice and said, "*Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts which nursed thee.*" A nice thing to say, giving honor to Mary, the mother of Jesus. But Jesus raised the standard to a much higher level. In verse 28 He replied, "*Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*"

A life that is blessed, a life that is well-built, is one that both hears and heeds the Word of God. As you evaluate your own life, can you say that it meets those two basic requirements?

## II. The Reasons.

In His story, Jesus also mentioned the reasons for having a well-built life. He said the rains descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon the house.

As I mentioned already, when the sun is shining, and the weather is nice, any house will stand. But, good weather doesn't last forever. Storms come.

(1) It doesn't matter how we've built our lives, the rains will descend, floods will come up, and the winds will blow. They might come in the form of a family difficulty, a temptation, a severe illness, the death of a loved one, financial pressure, and the list could go on and on. But storms will come. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that they are common to all people.

We often think that we are the only one with struggles, but that is just not the case. We all have them. No matter how we have built our lives.

Often, when difficulty comes, we wonder what terrible thing we did to deserve it. But that is not necessarily the reason for it at all. Storms come, no matter how we have built our lives.

Think about Job in the Old Testament. He was an upright, honest, God-fearing man. He lost his family. He lost his possessions. He lost his health. And it wasn't because of anything wrong that he did. Storms are simply common to man.

(2) They are also out of our control. You and I do not determine the difficulty. Nor do you and I determine the intensity of the difficulty.

I am a person that likes to be in control. By that I mean, I like to have a handle on what happens in my life, family, and ministry. But the circumstances of life continue to teach me just how little control I really have.

Job had no control over the events that took place in his life. And you and I don't either.

In the story, Jesus said that the storms struck both lives: that of the wise builder and the foolish builder.

We all face many situations and circumstances over which we have no control. Something happens that no decision of ours could have done anything to change, and yet, we are deeply affected by it. Somebody else makes a decision that we had no part in, but still our life is terribly disrupted by it.

Such things are common to all of us. So Jesus warns, *Be careful how you build. Be sure to hear and heed the Word, the voice of God.*

In light of the storms, how have you been building?

### III. The Results.

That is such an important question because of the results that we then experience in life.

There is both a present and a future result to consider.

First, Jesus says that the life that is built upon hearing and heeding His Word will weather the storm.

That doesn't mean that it is going to be easy. That doesn't mean that there won't be frightening moments. That doesn't mean that there won't be some damage done. But it does mean that when the storm is past, you will still be able to stand.

Repeatedly, I have heard people say, "*Without my faith, I don't know how I would have made it.*" Such words testify of the truthfulness of what Jesus said in His story.

Several years ago I heard the testimony of a woman that was very moving. She had cancer and was not expected to live. She was spending a lot of time in the hospital. To further complicate her situation, she was pregnant, and the doctors kept urging her to have an abortion. The stress of everything was apparently too much for her husband. During one of her hospital stays, he left her and filed for a divorce. What a storm she had!

However, she gave birth to a healthy, well-formed baby, the cancer went into remission, and last I heard, she was enjoying a very happy, fulfilled life.

What enabled her to endure, and her husband not to endure? She said, throughout her difficulty, she depended on the Lord for strength, and He never let her down.

Jesus said that a well-built life will stand, and the poorly built life will not. When difficulties hit your house. The life you have been building. Do you have that kind of confidence?

There is yet a second, and even more crucial result to consider: your future. Hebrews 9:27 says, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" There is no greater test of how we have built our lives than death and judgment. And so, there is no greater reason to have a well-built life: the result is eternal. Look at verses 21-23...

Verse 24 then says, *THEREFORE, (on the basis of this) be careful how you build. Make sure you hear God's Word and heed God's Word.*

Nothing is more important to your life today and tomorrow. Do you have a well-built life?

First, have you asked Jesus to be your Savior from sin and death?

Second, Are you certain that you are trusting in Him and not just doing religious things? 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...*”

Third, Even as a truly born-again Christian it is possible to get off the foundation while building. I have seen some actual buildings that have done just that. Christians are capable of doing the same thing with their lives. What a mess it creates. But 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that the Lord provides a way out. 1 John 1:9 says... And so, a clean start is possible.

Whichever decision you might need to make, will you take care of it today? Don't just be a hearer of the Word, be a doer as well. That is how you have a well-built life.