

LEADER GUIDE — FORMED BY THE GOSPEL

SESSION 1:5 | BUILT ON THE WORD

Overview for Leaders

This session centers on Jesus' closing words in the Sermon on the Mount and His parable of the two builders in Matthew 7:24–27. Jesus reveals that everyone is building their life on something but only one foundation is strong enough to withstand real life: His Word lived out in obedience. Gospel-formed living is built on a foundation that holds when pressure comes. This session guards against two dangers: 1) Hearing without obeying, and 2) Knowing Scripture without coming to Jesus for life.

Big Idea

We build our life on the Word of God like Jesus did by hearing, obeying, and trusting that His Word is the only foundation stable enough to hold when real life hits.

Your Role as Leader

Create space for honest self-examination without fear or defensiveness. Keep the focus on direction, trust, and formation, not perfection or performance. Resist the urge to moralize obedience. Instead, continually point participants back to why Jesus' words can be trusted: because He is alive, faithful, and good. You are helping people identify what they are building on and inviting them to choose *the* foundation that holds.

Session Flow – *Adjust as Needed*

- Icebreaker
- Scripture Engagement (reading + context)
- Discussion (10 questions) — 40–45 min
- Application Challenge — 5 min
- Prayer & Reflection — 10 min
- Announcements — 2 min

Key Scriptures

- Matthew 7:24–27
- James 1:22–25
- 2 Timothy 3:14–17
- John 5:39–40
- John 8:31–32
- Psalm 1:1–3

LEADER NOTES, GROUP QUESTIONS, & COMMENTARY

(Use these notes to frame discussion and connect themes)

Icebreaker Purpose – Surface assumptions about stability, trust, and foundations. Suggested options:

- Who or what shaped the way you think about life the most growing up?
- What does a “stable life” look like in our culture?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Everyone Is Building – Read: Matthew 7:24–27

Question: *Jesus assumes everyone is building a life. According to this passage, what are the similarities between the two builders—and why is that important?*

Leader Insight: Same sermon. Same storm. Different foundation.

Cue: Help the group see this is not a believer vs. non-believer contrast.

2. Wisdom – Read: Matthew 7:24

Question: *Why does Jesus define wisdom not by hearing His words, but by doing them? What does that reveal about trust?*

Leader Insight: Obedience is not performance, it's confidence that Jesus is right.

Cue: Guard against turning this into legalism.

3. Storms Are Not the Exception – Read: Matthew 7:25, 27

Question: *Why do both builders experience the same storm? What does this teach us about life and discipleship?*

Leader Insight: Faith does not prevent storms; it prepares us for them.

Cue: Normalize suffering without minimizing hope.

4. The Subtle Danger of Sand – Read: Matthew 7:26–27

Question: *Why does building on sand often feel stable at first? What makes it so dangerous over time?*

Leader Insight: Sand fails gradually—then suddenly.

Cue: Invite reflection, not fear.

5. Self-Deception and the Word – Read: James 1:22–25

Question: *How does James describe the danger of hearing God’s Word without living it? Why does he call this self-deception?*

Leader Insight: Knowledge without obedience gives a false sense of security.

Cue: Keep the tone invitational, not accusatory.

6. Scripture’s Purpose – Read: 2 Timothy 3:14–17

Question: *According to Paul, what is Scripture meant to produce in a person’s life—not just what it teaches?*

Leader Insight: Scripture is formative before it is informational.

Cue: Emphasize training over trivia.

7. The Word Points to a Person – Read: John 5:39–40

Question: *How is it possible to search the Scriptures diligently and still miss life with Jesus?*

Leader Insight: The Bible is not the destination; Christ is.

Cue: Gently challenge Bible familiarity without intimacy with Jesus.

8. Abiding Leads to Freedom – Read: John 8:31–32

Question: *Why does Jesus connect freedom not just to knowing truth, but to abiding in His word?*

Leader Insight: Truth liberates when it is lived, not just admired.

Cue: Ask for lived examples, not abstract answers.

9. Foundations Revealed Under Pressure – Read: Psalm 1:1–3; Matthew 7:24–25

Question: *How do seasons of pressure, loss, or suffering reveal what our life is actually built on?*

Leader Insight: Storms don't create foundations—they expose them.

Cue: Handle this tenderly; some may be in storms now.

10. Kissing the Waves – Read: Matthew 7:24–25; Romans 8:28

Question: *Charles Spurgeon said, “I’ve learned to kiss the waves that throw me up against the Rock of Ages.” How does this quote reshape the way we think about storms, suffering, and God’s Word?*

Leader Insight: The storm did not weaken Spurgeon’s faith—it drove him deeper into Christ.

Cue: Land the plane here: storms can become means of grace.

APPLICATION (Leader Version)

Application Focus: This application is about examining what currently functions as the foundation of our life. Jesus' parable exposes that everyone builds, but storms reveal whether our foundation is sand or rock. The goal of this application is to help each person identify one area where Jesus' words need to move from being heard to being lived, trusting that His Word is not restrictive, but freeing.

Leader Tip: Ask: *"What is one concrete way this week you will build on Jesus' words rather than merely hear them?"*

Examples:

- Trust: Choosing Jesus' words over anxiety, control, or self-reliance
- Obedience: Acting on a clear teaching of Jesus you've delayed because it felt costly
- Formation: Letting Scripture shape decisions instead of emotions or secondary narratives
- Reliance: Turning to God's Word before reacting to pressure or disappointment
- Foundation Shift: Naming one place where your life is currently built on "sand" and intentionally re-anchoring it to Christ

Group Prayer Time at End:

- Discernment to recognize false foundations
- Trust in the reliability of Jesus' Word
- Courage to obey when it costs something
- Grace for those currently in storms

Close with: "Jesus, help us build our lives on Your Word. Teach us to trust the Rock that holds, especially when the waves come. Amen."

Leader Follow-Up Midweek

- Name the Foundation: Ask where life's pressure this week is revealing what they're building on.
- Encourage Obedience: Invite one small step of living out Jesus' words rather than just reflecting on them.
- Gospel Reframe: Remind them that even the waves can drive us deeper into Christ, the Rock.