



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32

Matthew 7:21-27

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray,

Lord our God, you give us such treasures in our life. Help us not to focus on the material things you give us. Help us concentrate instead on your generous gifts of strength and courage. Help us always to use your gifts to make good decisions. Like the man who built his house on rock, help us build our faith on the firm foundation of your love. In our hearts, we know that by doing this, we will live lives of peace. In Jesus' name we ask this and all things. Amen.

### Opening Life Activity

Near the top of a blank sheet of paper, sketch some storm clouds with rain coming out of them. On the remainder of the page, list things that create storms, crisis, or sadness in your life. Next to each "storm" jot down your first reaction to the problem. Think about what calmed the storm. How did you solve the problem? Who helped you? Did the result of that storm help you shape the way you handle future problems or make future decisions? Share responses with the group.

- How are the experiences shared in this discussion like the rains Jesus described in this Gospel?
- How are our responses like a house built on rock (or sand)?

### Listening to the Word of God

Moses knows the Israelites may have short memories for what God has told them so he instructs them to literally fix God's words to their head.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32

Allow for silence

### Scripture Discussion Starters

- How does Moses suggest the Israelites keep God's Word close to them?
- What will the blessing be for the Israelites if they keep God's Word?
- How will it be a curse for them if they do not?

Using the example of building a house either on sand or rock, Jesus illustrates what it is to live our faith through actions as opposed to just saying we have faith.



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Read Matthew 7:21-27

Allow for Silence

- What is wrong with just saying we believe in Jesus and the Gospel message?
- What are some ways a faith life can be built on sand?
- Why is a rock foundation important to Christians?

### **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

Moses knows that he will go no further with the Israelites, but he wants to be sure they follow God's most important command: To love God. To be sure they do not forget these words and their importance, Moses suggests that the Israelites keep the words right on their heads. We are not sure whether or not Jewish people of Moses' day actually wore boxes on their bodies, but eventually many did. To this day, some Jewish people wear phylacteries (pronounced fi-lak?L ter-?z), which is a case holding small pages of prayers and scripture. They wear this prayer box strapped to their foreheads as a reminder of God's words. Moses explains to them the importance of loving God.

The words in Matthew conclude Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus challenges his listeners to not just say they believe the words of God, but to actually live and act according to them. Jesus illustrates this point by comparing houses built on sand and rock. To simply say you believe, is as weak as building your house on sand. When the rains come (or the struggles in life), the house will shift and break away from its loose foundation. But if our actions demonstrate our sincere belief in God and our faith is built on a firm foundation, such as a house built on rock, we will be strong when the storms of life come.

### **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- What does it mean for your own house of faith to be built on rock? How does this foundation help you survive life's storms?
- How do you show your love for Jesus? Have you ever said you believe in Jesus but then did something you know was contrary to showing that belief?
- Is there something coming up in your week where the strength of your faith will be tested? If your house is built on rock, what will your response be?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

### **Doctrinal Discussion Starters**

#### **How we stand before God**

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are freed from sin and given a new birth by divine grace. God offers us this gift and wants us to accept it so that we live forever with God

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in eternity. It is, however, our own free will to accept or refuse God's love. When we exercise the virtues God has given us, we then live in a right relationship with God. In this relationship we live and act in a way that demonstrates our belief and faith in God. We don't just say we believe in the Christian message, but rather we act in a way that shows it. In order to embrace the message of salvation, we must put into action God's saving word.

- How do we cooperate between God's grace and our freedom to act?
- What choices do we have in accepting God's grace? What happens if we refuse to accept it?
- What is necessary on our part for us to be in a right relationship with God?

### **Sacrament Connection**

We enter God's family at the time of our baptism. This is when we first receive the gift of God's grace through the Holy Spirit. We become holy and graced at our baptism, but at the same time, we are challenged to walk in the light of Christ. This requires action on our part. What we do, not just our words, must show that we are children of God.

### **The Gospel in Life**

What part of your relationship with Jesus is on a weak and shifting foundation? Is there something you know you should do but avoid? Or is there something you do that you know is not pleasing to God? Take an action step today to correct the problem and improve the foundation of your relationship with God.

RCL Benziger.  
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