

**Primary Text:** Matthew 7:24–27

**Date:** January 11, 2026

**Opening Reflection** - A new year brings fresh hope—but it does not erase the reality of storms. Some enter this season with joy and anticipation; others carry silent burdens: uncertainty, grief, pressure, or fear. Jesus never promised a storm-free life, but He did promise peace in the storm. **John 16:33** – “**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**” This study invites us to examine the foundation of our lives and to build with intentionality for whatever lies ahead.

**Key Text: Two Builders, One Storm - Matthew 7:24–29**

Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a vivid picture:

- Two builders    Two foundations    One unavoidable storm

#### **Four Foundational Truths from the Text**

1. **Both builders heard the same words** – The difference was not information, but obedience.
2. **Both houses looked the same from the outside** – Appearances can be deceiving.
3. **Both faced the same storm** – Faith does not exempt us from difficulty.
4. **One stood, one collapsed** – The storm revealed what the sunshine concealed.

**Key Insight:** You cannot stop the storm, but you can choose the foundation.

#### **1: Storms Reveal What We Build On**

Storms expose the true condition of our foundation. What feels stable in calm seasons is tested in crisis.

- Storms reveal whether faith is built on **conviction or convenience**
- Whether identity is rooted in **Christ or culture**
- Whether trust is formed through **prayer or panic**

Jesus is not condemning those whose house fell—He is inviting them to rebuild on something stronger.

#### **Biblical Examples of Storms**

**Jesus calming the storm** – Mark 4:39–41    **Paul’s shipwreck** – Acts 27    **Jonah’s rebellion** – Jonah 1

**Job, David, Elijah** – personal and spiritual trials

**Isaiah 43:1–3** – God promises His presence *through* the waters and fire.

**Psalms 46:1** – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Storms are not evidence of God’s absence—they are often the places where His presence becomes most real.

### Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of “storms” most often reveal the condition of our spiritual foundation?

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2. How have past storms clarified what you were truly trusting in?

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3. Why is it important to remember that storms do not have the final word—Jesus does?

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### 2: You Can’t Control the Future, But You Can Prepare for It

Storms feel overwhelming because they are unpredictable. Life can change in a moment. Jesus teaches that strength in the storm is developed **before** the storm. **Matthew 7:24** – “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...” Hearing, agreeing, or admiring Jesus’ teaching is not enough. Spiritual resilience is formed through obedience—especially in the small, daily choices.

**Illustration: Deep Roots** - Like the **Algarrobo (white carob) tree**, which survives harsh desert climates because of its deep root system, believers endure because of what is happening beneath the surface. You can’t control the climate, but you can choose the depth of your roots. A life rooted in Christ will withstand pressures that cause others to collapse.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why is obedience more formative than knowledge alone?

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2. What “small” spiritual disciplines strengthen us for future storms?

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3. Where might God be inviting you to deepen your roots this year?

### 3: A Connected Life Is a Protected Life

Storms tend to isolate people, but Scripture teaches that hardship is not meant to be faced alone. **Ecclesiastes**

**4:9–10** – “Two are better than one...”     **Galatians 6:2** – “Carry each other’s burdens...”

**Hebrews 10:24–25** – “Do not neglect meeting together...”

The early church survived persecution not through individual strength, but through shared life and mutual support. The church is a foundation to build on. A family to belong to. A support to lean on.

**Isolation cools the soul. Connection reignites it.**

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do storms often push people toward isolation instead of community?

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2. How has the Christian community strengthened you during difficult seasons?

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3. What practical step can you take to deepen your connection to the Body of Christ?

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**Core Truth to Remember** - The presence of storms does not indicate the absence of God.

- **Exodus 14** – God made a way *through* the Red Sea
- **Daniel 3** – God joined them *in* the fire
- **Mark 4** – Jesus spoke authority *over* the storm

**Jesus does not promise storm-free living. He promises a foundation that will not fail.**

### Responses to the Message

**Response 1: Choose the Right Foundation** - Examine what your life is truly built on—habits, priorities, decisions. Make intentional choices to align daily life with the teachings of Jesus, not just agree with them.

### Practice This Week:

- Identify one area where obedience needs to replace intention
- Take one concrete step of faith in response to God’s Word

**Response 2: Prepare Before the Storm**— Commit to spiritual disciplines that strengthen your inner life—Scripture, prayer, worship, generosity, and obedience.

- Commit to the New Year Bible Reading Plan on the COG-MJ app

- Join a COG Group, register for Path to Purpose or Soul Care courses.

**3: Build in Community:** Refuse isolation. Let others support you and allow yourself to support them.

**Next Steps:** Join a small group

- Sign up to serve at the **Next Step Station**
- Attend the **Connect Lunch – January 25**

**Community doesn't just fill a calendar—it fortifies a foundation.**

**Closing Encouragement** - Storms may shake your circumstances, but they do not have to shake your foundation. Uncertainty does not have to define your future. When your life is built on Christ and strengthened through community, you can stand firm—no matter what comes.

*Let us build wisely, deeply, and together.*