



The Two Houses

(based on Matthew 7:24-29)

One day, Jesus told a story to help the disciples think about something important:

“Two people wanted to build new houses. They both went looking for a good place to build their homes.

“The first person thought carefully about the house before the building started. She wanted a house that was strong and well built. And so, she wisely decided to build her house on a sturdy rock that would never move.

“She dug the foundations, carefully built the walls from sturdy materials, and made the house look beautiful.

“When she was finished, the wise builder looked at her strong, beautiful house and was pleased.

“The second person also wanted a house that was well built. However, he foolishly decided to build his house on sand.

“He dug the foundations, carefully built the walls from sturdy materials, and made the house look beautiful.

“When he was finished, the foolish builder looked at his beautiful house and was pleased.

“One day there was a terrible storm. Lightning flashed, and thunder roared. Rain poured down, the river flooded, and the wind blew hard on the two houses.

“The first house stood strong and firm because it was built on a sturdy rock. Nothing could move that house. When the storm passed, the house was still standing.

“The second house did not fare so well. The river washed away the sand, so there was nothing left to hold up the house. The wind blew the walls over with a big crash. When the storm passed, the house was gone.”

When Jesus finished telling the story, he sat down. Jesus knew that the disciples listened carefully to all his words. He said:

“Anyone who hears my teaching and tries hard to do what I say will be like the wise person. They will build a strong foundation for life. When trouble comes, they will be OK, just like the house built on the rock.

“Whoever hears my teaching and does not do what I say will be like the foolish person. They will not have a strong foundation for life. When trouble comes, they won’t know what to do and they will fall apart, just like the house built on the sand.”

Jesus told the story, so his friends would know it was important to follow the way that Jesus had shown them.



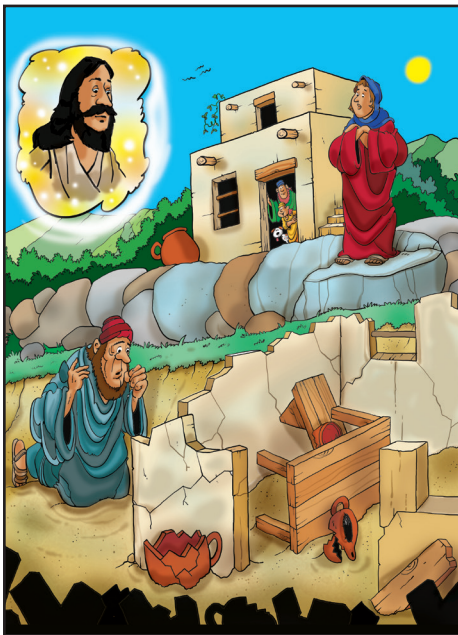
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your family members—imagine and wonder.
- Look at different styles of buildings, both tall and short. Talk about how the supports for the building go down into the ground, deeper than we can see.
- Go to an area with play sand. Experience the temporary nature of structures built with sand.
- Talk about what is rock in our lives, and what is sand.



Responding to God's Grace

- Use interlocking blocks to build a house. Snap the blocks together in the regular way (to simulate rock). Build another house, but this time, don't snap the bottom pieces together (to simulate sand). Use fingers and hands to represent rain and wind. Notice how the first house stays together but the second one does not.
- On large craft sticks, write down different ways that someone can follow Jesus' teachings, one to a stick, such as be a blessing to others, be salt or light in the world, seek God first, and treat others the way you want to be treated. You may want to add things such as pray, read the Bible, worship God, praise God, and so forth. Each week, have family members pull a stick from a jar and try to do what Jesus taught that week.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Watch the YouTube video "Wise and Foolish Builders" (bit.ly/2GJGiWA). Tell the story of the wise and foolish builders.
- Play a game like "Simon Says" to practice listening to Jesus and acting on his words. When one says, "Jesus says . . ." others act out what Jesus is telling them to do; otherwise, the action is not to be followed. Here are some ideas:

Jesus says, "Help your neighbor."

Jesus says, "Pray to God."

Yell at your friend.

Jesus says, "Read the Bible."

Jesus says, "Take care of animals."

Stomp your feet.

Cross your arms and act angry.

Jesus says, "Praise God."

- Pray this prayer each day this week:

God, help me to listen to and do what Jesus teaches so that I have a good foundation in my life. Amen.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.