

Lesson 7

YOU ARE ESTABLISHED

Episode Summary

Jesus meets with Nicodemus in secret. He calls Nicodemus to follow Him, and He later calls Matthew to leave his tax-collection booth to follow Him.

Key Verse

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.’” (Isaiah 43:14–15)

Additional Verses

Psalms 2:12; Colossians 2:6–7

Episode Theme

Jesus calls us to exchange what we have in this world for what He gives when we follow Him— including provision and purpose, along with stability and strength through life’s storms.

Opening Discussion

Read the following:

“Shifting Sand”

We live in an unpredictable world. There are natural disasters, terrorist attacks, car crashes, and cancer. And, as it turns out, global pandemics. While there’s definitely order in creation (math, science, patterns, logic), there’s also chaos and complexity. For goodness’ sake, 80 percent of the ocean on our globe and 96 percent of the visible galaxy beyond remain unexplored—and we know even less about our own brains. We know we have them and that they’re amazing, but we don’t fully grasp their intricacies and potential or how connections are made and lost.

The truth is that we can’t fathom all that God has made, and we certainly can’t control it. And that freaks us out. We fear life’s apparent instability because we strongly desire the opposite. We want to know our needs will be met. We want to be safe and healthy and

know that we'll have enough money to make ends meet. We want to feel solid ground beneath our feet. But in episode 7 called "Invitations," the ground is shifting, and the tax man whose life had been predictable, ordered, clean, and controlled is struggling to make sense of it.

"Everything's like sand in a flood ..."

Take heart, Matthew. Because all the things we don't know and can't control point us to the One who **does know** and **can control** and **is**.

Discuss the following question as a group:

While faith and reason are not opposites, expressing faith in God invites us to move beyond our own finite levels of human comprehension and control. Can you describe a time when your experience with God invited you to move beyond your own capacity?

WATCH THE EPISODE TOGETHER.

Discussion Questions

Read through the "Sand or Stone" section and discuss the following:

"Sand or Stone"

The nation of Israel did what we all do – they tried to establish *themselves*. Meaning, they tried to secure the lives they wanted in their own strength, on their own terms, in their own time. Which only ensured their great big fall.

"[Jesus said,] 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.' (Matthew 7:24-27)

Mary Magdalene's world was a flood until the moment Jesus grabbed hold of her and placed her on the Rock – at which point she began to experience deep-seated peace and purpose for the first time in her entire life. As she followed Jesus, she became more and more secure in His love and acceptance, experiencing firsthand that in Him there's healing of past wounds, stability no matter the circumstances, and hope for a future in heaven.

Nicodemus felt the flood but wasn't ready to abandon his plot of sand. (Not that we know of, anyway.) He'd been waiting and watching for the promised redemption of God to arrive

but was having a difficult time relinquishing his preconceived notions of what it would look like – and what it would require him to give up. So at least for the time being, he decided to keep doing life on his own terms and in his own strength.

Matthew finally relinquished his flooding beachfront property for holy ground because, unlike Nicodemus (or at least faster than Nicodemus), he reached the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Redeemer they'd been waiting for. And, man, did Matthew need one. Instead of continuing to rely on money, power, and position for security, Matthew turned to Jesus.

Simon Peter stood firmly on the Rock. By the time Jesus came on the scene, Simon was painfully aware of his inability to attain or maintain stability – he'd exhausted his own resources and was desperate, which was why he embraced a new way of life founded on the One who never changes, never fails, and never grows weary. And then Jesus established Simon: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Discussion Questions

1. **In what ways have you built your house on the sand? Mind you, even after we make the decision to follow Jesus, we're still capable of sand dwelling.**
2. **As Nicodemus struggles with the decision to follow Jesus in episode 7, he quotes Psalm 2:12: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way." Indeed, to die in the midst of sin, in the midst of not knowing Jesus and not being established in Him, would be tragic. But Jesus responds to Nicodemus with the rest of the psalm: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."**
 - **What do you think it means to "take refuge" in Jesus, and how does it relate to His teaching on building your life on the Rock?**
3. **Simon was skeptical (understatement) of Matthew becoming a Jesus follower. Have you ever been like Simon, somehow thinking it was your right or responsibility to judge other followers of Jesus?**
4. **What are the storms in your life?**
5. **Read Colossians 2:6–7. Explain the difference between knowing about Jesus and being an established believer.**

Close by reading the following:

"Jesus Is Our Sure Foundation"

Jesus doesn't promise that following Him will result in zero storms. On the contrary, He says that when storms come, His followers won't fall because they are firmly established. So what does that mean?

- The Holy Spirit lives in us.
- Our needs will be met.
- God will accomplish His purposes.

And that's just scratching the surface.

The stability and security we long for doesn't come from money, relationships, good health, or even dreams fulfilled, because all of that ebbs and flows. Outward things simply can't be counted on to provide the peace and confidence that come when our foundation is sure. Jesus is that sure foundation—the Creator in charge of everything and the One who promises to never leave, forsake, or fail us. That doesn't mean life will always go the way we want it to. In God's wisdom, He sometimes allows hard things. But it does mean that because He's both sovereign and good, He'll use *all the things* for our good and His glory. He'll keep us standing through the storm.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for His redemptive work in the Old Testament lives of the Israelites, as they pictured the coming Messiah. **Thank** Him for sending Jesus, the ultimate Redeemer, upon whom your life can now be established. **Ask** the Lord for ever-increasing faith to **stay** on firm ground in gratitude to the Holy One, your Creator, your King. **Pray** for someone you know whose house is still on shifting sand.