

## TFTD: The Parable of the Brown M&Ms

This is the parable of the brown M&Ms.

You've never heard of it? Well you might be surprised to find you probably have.

Rock and pop stars have a reputation for being divas, sometimes. You hear of all sorts of odd requests when they're on tour. This is the original, and possibly the best.

In the early 1980s a band called Van Halen was taking touring to a whole new level, with the kind of show that we take for granted now, even at a small venue such as Greenbelt, with scaffolding and staging, and loads of cabling, and big heavy amps, speakers and lighting. They wouldn't turn up to a gig in a van. This kind of outfit took a fleet of eighteen-wheel lorries. And their contract set out all the details and all the specifications of what was necessary at the venue, including a rider which became infamous. This stated that, in the dressing room, there were to be some bowls of M&Ms but that all the brown ones should be taken out.

It's not a daft a request as it seems. In fact it was actually a flag. Once they arrived at the venue, a quick glance at the bowl of chocolates was enough to confirm whether anyone had read the contract thoroughly, or not. The presence of brown M&Ms meant that the venue people either hadn't read the contract properly, or hadn't taken the request seriously. In which case, what else hadn't they read, or taken seriously? With such a huge operation, negligence could be literally life-threatening.

The proof of this came to pass when the band played a concert at a brand-new sporting arena which had just had a specialist floor fitted. The floor collapsed under the weight of all that staging and scaffolding and gear and the cost of the damage was estimated at \$80,000. That's about \$210,000 in today's money. Van Halen pointed out that the terms of the contract had not been complied with, indicating it was highly unlikely anyone had read it properly (they hadn't) and were thus found to be not liable for those costs.

Now these days, I'm sure you'd have teams of lawyers crawling over every word of contracts such as these. Believe me, I'm very familiar with corporate travelling drafts which get bounced backwards and forward until the deal or the contract is agreed. But today's reading, which we'll hear in a moment, indicates that we need to take just as much care with our spiritual life as well.

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Jesus told the parable of a builder building a house on a foundation of sand, whereupon it very naturally fell down once it was hit by storms. I'm sure that probably got a laugh from some of his hearers. Perhaps it was a thing that had actually happened. But Jesus isn't just saying this for entertainment. No, he says that anyone who listens to his words **and does not act on them** is like that thoughtless builder. We can't just sign off the contract without signing up to what it entails. If we're going to build a faith, then it needs to be on a firm footing in order that it will stand the storms of life. Read, pray, listen and learn; it's a process, we all have to undertake, no matter where we are in our faith. We need to be so grounded it's as if our foundations are deep in bedrock, so that whatever storms come our way, we will be able to stand.

Though as far as Jesus is concerned, what you do with the brown M&Ms is entirely up to you.

Let's hear the Bible story now from the Gospel of Matthew and then we'll finish with a prayer.

Reading: Matthew 7:21-29 New International Version (NIV)

### **True and False Disciples**

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

### **The Wise and Foolish Builders**

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

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28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

### **New International Version (NIV)**

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## **Prayer**

Loving Lord Jesus

You are our Saviour and our Lord.

Help us never to take You for granted. Help us, we pray, to apply ourselves to reading and understanding what you have passed down to us through scripture and that which you continue to say to us through the Holy Spirit.

Grant that we may be doers of the Word, not just listening and forgetting, but putting into practice what you taught and what we believe, and thus working for your Kingdom on earth, grounded in the here and now. And may we do so with great joy.

Amen.