

Matthew 7:1-12 | “God & Others”

*Preached on June 25, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 7, and we will be covering verses 1-12 this morning.  
[pause]

We are in the midst of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, seeing in many ways how a disciple ought to live in this world. [pause]

Last week we saw what we are to truly seek after, and it’s not money, but it’s God’s kingdom and righteousness.

So in many ways, the second half of Matthew 6 was focused mainly on the disciple’s inner heart and mind.

But this week it’s focused in many ways on how we are to relate to God and others. [pauseeee]

As it’s often said, humans are social beings.

We start out being born into a family, whereby we have relationships with others. [pause]

Then we start to grow and have friends, and we meet new people, and become acquaintances with others. [pause]

We go into adulthood, relating to people in workplaces, stores, or at other events. [pause]

For the normal person, they have numerous interactions with other people throughout the week.

And the truth is that you typically can’t get by in life *without* relating to others. [pause]

Yet, as we all know, relating to other people creates occasions for good or ill.

We could show someone love, or we could treat them badly.

And so that’s one reason why Jesus speaks so often about how we are to relate to other people.  
[pause]

Yet as Christians, we also know that our relationships with others and how we treat them isn’t the only relationship that we have...

We also relate to God.

And how we approach Him, relate to Him, think about Him, and talk to Him matters. [pauseeee]

So God and others - that covers everyone, doesn’t it?

That’s why Jesus could sum up the greatest commandments as loving God and loving others.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 22:34-40.

And Jesus shows us today, through His Word, some things about how we are to relate to God and others.

Let's READ verses 1-6 to begin. [*READ*]

*We see in these verses...*

### **I. How we are to treat others.**

Jesus first speaks about not judging. [*pauseeee*]

There's a story which goes like this...

"A young couple moved into a new neighborhood.

The next morning while they are eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbor hanging the wash outside.

"That laundry is not very clean," she said. "She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap."

**Her husband looked on, but remained silent.**

Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments. [*pause*]

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband: "Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?"

The husband said, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."<sup>2</sup> [*pauseeee*]

*How many of us have acted like that judgmental woman when we look at others?*

And how many of us have had to eat our words, when we find out the whole story, and realize that we were wrong in our judgments? [*pauseeee*]

**We are so often overly critical of others, and look down upon them for what we consider to be flaws or errors in their ways.**

But Jesus tells us not to judge, lest we be judged. [*pauseeee*]

Now this passage is actually one of the most misused passages in all of the Bible.

This seems to be the passage that people throw around and use the most, but ironically, it's not correctly understood by most. [*pause*]

*Jesus is not condemning all judgments.*

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<sup>2</sup> Found at: <https://www.preaching.com/sermon-illustrations/illustration-judging-others/>.

And this is where “context is king”. *[pause]*

Look at verses 3-5.

Jesus gives this vivid illustration of someone with a log in their own eye telling someone else to get a speck out of their eye. *[pause]*

That right there is showing us that Jesus is going after hypocritical judgments.

It’s about someone who has a judgmental, overly critical attitude of another person, while ignoring their own sin. *[pause]*

Someone like that isn’t thinking about their own sin, but is only concerned with someone else’s.

Yet if we judge in that way, we will also be judged with the same measure. *[pause]*

So once again, this is about hypocritical judgments, for look at what Jesus tells us *to do* instead.

Verse 5, “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” *[pause]*

Interesting.

We all like the judge not part, but not this part. *[pause]*

Jesus is showing us the way that we should act when someone else has sin in their life.

We need to look at our own lives, deal with our own sin, and then what?

He said, “*Then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*” *[pause]*

So after self-evaluation, and dealing with our own sin, we look outward and help others take out their specks. *[pause]*

You see, the same text used by many to try to avoid people pointing out their sin is one of the very texts that shows us that we should be helping other people in their sin struggles.

But we must do so without hypocritical judgments, and we must do so with first evaluating and dealing with our own sins. *[pause]*

Galatians 6:1 shows us this truth in practice...

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” *[pause]*

If that wasn’t enough, just look at verse 6...

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.” *[pause]*

That takes some discernment and judgment, doesn't it? *[pause]*

Look down at verse 15 and into 16, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits." *[pause]*

How do we know who is a false prophet and beware of them without making *any* kinds of judgments?

How do we recognize their fruits?

We make the judgment based on God's Word and seeing what they teach. *[pause]*

I could go on and on and on with Scriptural evidence as to how we have to make some judgments and evaluations...

For how can we test the spirits to see whether they are from God?<sup>3</sup>

How can we do church discipline without it?<sup>4</sup>

And how can we settle disputes among ourselves, instead of taking them to secular law courts like Paul tells us to do in 1 Corinthians?<sup>5</sup> *[pause]*

Context matters.

We must focus on, "what is Jesus going after?", and He's going after hypocritical judgments.

We must not become overly critical of others, yet blind to our own issues. *[pauseeeee]*

You see, a judgmental attitude shows us some things.

It demonstrates someone who is only looking outward, and not inward. *[pause]*

This is because as sinners, our fingers most often point out rather than in.

That just reminds us that judgmentalism is really a pride issue. *[pause]*

We don't want to look or feel bad, but we sure are quick to make others look and feel bad.

It's as if someone is saying, "I don't have a problem, but that guy sure does." *[pauseeeee]*

In our hypocritical judgments, we are blind to our own sin, and we have perfect vision when it comes to the sins of others. *[pauseeee]*

Can't we see the log in our own eyes?

Of course we can, *but we don't want to.*

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<sup>3</sup> See 1 John 4:1.

<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 18:15-20.

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

We'd rather see the speck in someone else's eye, so that we don't draw attention to our log.

*That's hypocrisy to a T. [pauseeee]*

What we tend to do in our pride is that we look down on others, and act as though we are superior to them.

*We point out their flaws so that we feel better about ourselves.*

But this not only displays a lack of humility, but a lack of love. *[pause]*

*You aren't humbly looking at your own life, but you sure are willing to hold others up to a certain standard. [pause]*

So one of the keys to battling hypocritical judgmentalism is a humble, continual reflection upon your own sinfulness, and the great grace of God in your life. *[pause]*

*They may be struggling with that sin, but just think about all of the areas that you are or have struggled with.*

And think of how gracious and patient God is with you - can't you show even a snippet of His grace and patience to that person? *[pauseeee]*

*When you truly recognize your sinfulness, and how gracious God is with you, how could you have such a critical spirit?*

Even if it's a really heinous sin, just consider, "Such were some of us,"<sup>6</sup> or even think, "Without the grace of God in my life, I would be there or worse."

*For it's only because of the grace of God, who sent Jesus Christ to take my place, that I am forgiven and have any strides of progression in godliness. [pauseeee]*

Let's stop pointing fingers, and think instead, "Would I want to be judged by this standard?"

*That would cause a lot of us to hesitate to judge others. [pause]*

So before you ever look outwards, look inwards, and think, "What about me?" *[pauseeee]*

*Now when you look at verse 6, it seems so oddly placed at first, but it actually makes sense.*

Verse 6 seems to be balancing out what Jesus just said.

*Because in verse 6, we see that we actually *should* make some judgments and use wisdom when we relate to others.*

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<sup>6</sup> See 1 Corinthians 6:11.

We are not just to be gullible to genuinely evil, antagonistic people, but we need to use wisdom.  
[pauseeee]

Jesus tells us that we are not to give dogs what is holy or throw our pearls before pigs.

The reason? They will trample these things underfoot and attack us. [pauseeee]

What is holy here most likely points to the Gospel and the sacred teachings of Scripture.

Dogs and pigs refer to those who disregard the value of these truths and treat them horribly: they trample them. [pause]

So these people are people with hardened contempt for the things of God.

They treat the precious truths of God's Word as trash, and attack the messenger. [pause]

This doesn't refer to just any unbeliever, but this is pointing to someone who persistently and viciously rejects the gospel. [pauseewee]

There is a point where we must "shake the dust off our feet",<sup>7</sup> and leave that person in God's hands.

To know when to do this is a serious step to take and should be taken with caution and only in extreme cases.

In the early church, it seems that they used it sparingly and only with those who knew better.  
[pauseeee]

So how are we to treat others?

Not with hypocritical judgments, but humble love.

And we should lovingly share the gospel, but use wisdom when it's treated with great contempt.  
[pauseeee]

Then in verse 12, Jesus sums it all up nicely by saying, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." [pauseeee]

This is such a good summary of how we are to treat others: we treat them how we would want to be treated. [pause]

The truth is that we all want to be shown love.

No one says, "I want to be treated horribly."

No one thinks, "I don't want people to go out of their way to show me love and kindness."

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<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 10:14 and Acts 13:51 for just two out of many examples.

But we *want* people to act in love towards us.

So we need to imagine that we were in their position, and show them the love that we would want. *[pause]*

This goes against our natural tendencies, doesn't it?

Our natural tendency is to only think about ourselves.

We want to be shown love, but we don't always think about if that other person would want to be shown love right now. *[pauseeee]*

So what would this look like?

Let me give you an example from my own life.

I'm certainly not perfect at this, so please don't get that idea, but recently I thought about this verse.

And there was this moment, where something had to be done, and I really didn't want to do it.

I was tired from a long day, and just wanted to go and relax.

But then I thought, "If I were Kate, wouldn't I want love shown to me by doing this simple task?"

And the answer was, "Of course, I'd want that done for me," and so I did it. *[pause]*

That's the basic idea.

Think, "If I were going through a surgery, what would I desire others to do for me?"

"If I had a long day, how would I want to be treated?" *[pause]*

This teaching that Jesus gives us is active: "whatever you wish that others would *do* to you, *do* also to them."

So we are to actively go out of our way to show love to others. *[pauseeee]*

How are we to treat others? With love!

We aren't to treat them with judgmental attitudes, but grace.

We are to certainly be wise in how we handle people, but ultimately, we show them practical love, just like we would want to be shown love. *[pauseeee]*

*That's how we treat others, but we also see...*

## **II. How we are to approach God.**

As we all know, relationships are hard and take work.

It's not always easy to not judge or to do unto others as we wish that others would do unto us, and therefore, *we need prayer*. [pause]

We need God's aid, and that may be why Matthew puts this teaching on prayer right in the midst of teaching about relating to others.

So let's READ verses 7-11. [READ]

There are different thoughts about God among people, and our thoughts about God affect how we approach Him in prayer. [pause]

Think about it this way...

If you think that God is a mean tyrant, who begrudgingly listens to your prayers, you are going to approach Him with hesitation and trepidation. [pauseeee]

Sadly, for some people, they think of God in this way.

Maybe for them, their earthly father was an intimidating, unapproachable, and distant guy.

They were afraid of asking their earthly father for anything because he would get mad or be grumpy about it all.

He wasn't kind, gentle, and loving, and now they picture God as being like that. [pauseeee]

Others don't need a mean earthly father for them to think this way.

They grew up thinking that God was a cruel dictator, just ready to hit them over the head for any little mistake. [pause]

Maybe it was because of the way that God was portrayed in their church, or even a misunderstanding of who God is on their part.

But they picture God as an easily angered, bitter God, ready to rain down fire on a whim.

And so for you, going to God in prayer is like going to touch a stove, not knowing if you will be burned or be able to touch it. [pauseeee]

What's *your* view of God as you approach Him in prayer?

Here in Matthew 7, Jesus shows us a compelling picture of who the Father is and how we are to approach Him in prayer.

And what we find is that He's not some mean tyrant, he's not like your grumpy earthly father (if you had one like that), but He's your loving, Heavenly Father. [pauseeee]



Look there at what Jesus tells us to do: ask, seek, knock. *[pause]*

There is a certain *simplicity* to those three words.

Anyone can ask, seek, or knock.

There's no rope that cuts us off from prayer, where only the elites get to experience it, but all it takes is asking, seeking, and knocking. *[pause]*

**Prayer is inherently simple, and thank God it's simple!**

Do you realize that it's simple, and do you simply go to Him? *[pauseeee]*

Here's the thing though, it may be simple in regards to the method, but prayer takes *humility and dependence*. *[pause]*

Think once again of the terms: ask, seek, and knock.

There's *humility and dependence* that's involved. *[pause]*

By asking, I'm revealing that only He is able to give me something that I can't get on my own.

**By seeking, I'm displaying that He has the answer, not me.**

And by knocking, I'm demonstrating that I can't open the door, but He can.

So we go to Him in *humility and dependence* like a child going to a loving Father. *[pauseeee]*

Asking, seeking, and knocking also involve *earnest persistence*.

To ask, you must *earnestly want something*.

To seek, you must search.

**And to knock, you must earnestly want in.**

This takes persistence, for these three words are imperatives in the present tense, showing continuous action.<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

**We must be earnestly persistent in our prayers.**

We don't just say, "Well I asked one time in 1975," or, "I knocked quietly 2 years ago."

**But go to God in earnest persistence!** *[pauseeee]*

Amazingly, Jesus tells us that when we ask, seek, and knock, we will receive, find, and the door will be opened. *[pause]*

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<sup>8</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 148.

### How can Jesus say such a thing?

He gives an illustration of how when children ask for bread, their earthly father wouldn't give them a stone.

And if they asked for a fish, their earthly father wouldn't give a serpent. *[pause]*

The conclusion is verse 11...

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” *[pause]*

It is God's loving, gracious character that assures us that our asking, seeking, and knocking will not be in vain.

He is not a mean despot, who gives us harmful things when we ask for good things, but He is a loving, Heavenly Father, who always gives good things to those who ask!

So we must go to Him, knowing that we have a loving, caring Heavenly Father, who listens and can answer. *[pauseeee]*

Know the power and love of the Father when you pray!

He is not only *able* to give you good things, but He *will* give you good things - it's in His character to do so! *[pauseeee]*

Good, earthly fathers love and provide for their needy children, so how much more our perfect Heavenly Father, who *is* love?<sup>9</sup>

He wants to give good things because He loves us with a never-ending, deep, deep love. *[pause]*

His love is so deep and wide that He sent His only Son to give His life for us, even while we were still sinners.<sup>10</sup>

As Paul declares, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”<sup>11</sup> *[pause]*

If you ever doubt God's love, just look at the Cross and stand in awe. *[pauseeee]*

He loves you, so go to Him in simplicity, dependence, and persistence.

He listens, He cares, and He wants to give.

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<sup>9</sup> A reference to 1 John 4:16.

<sup>10</sup> A reference to John 5:8.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:32.

It may not always be what we ask for, for we sometimes ask wrongly,<sup>12</sup> but know that He gives only and ever “good things”. *[pauseeee]*

*What we looked at this morning showed us that...*

### **How we relate to God and others matters!**

Jesus doesn't want us going around being judgmental, unloving hypocrites, as His disciples.

*He doesn't want us caring only about ourselves, but treating others with the love that we would want shown to us. [pause]*

And we are to remember the love of God as we approach Him in prayer. *[pause]*

*We are able to do all of this by humbly recognizing our sin, and remembering the grace of God in our lives. [pause]*

How could we point fingers in disgust at others when we recall the mercy and love of Christ for us as His blood dripped down that wooden cross? *[pause]*

*And that very love is the reason that we can go to God our Father, who gave His Son for us, and who even now listens, cares, and wants to give us good things. [pause]*

What amazing love of God, who has done so much for us, so let's treat others with love, and go regularly to our loving God in prayer.

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<sup>12</sup> See James 4:3.