

CORE Seminar
Spring 2024
Sermon on the Mount
Course 7: Matthew 7:1-12

ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to the Sermon on the Mount – **week 7**. Today we’re going to dig into **Matthew 7:1-12**. In this passage of the Sermon, we encounter misunderstood verses, as well as teachings that challenge our perceptions of judgment, prayer, and conduct towards others. Jesus invites us to reflect on how we interact with others, urging us to approach judgment with humility and compassion. He unveils the power of prayer, assuring us that our requests are heard and answered by a gracious God.

So, let’s pray and then we’ll dig into Scripture.

PRAYER

Ok – let’s open our Bibles and dig into **Matthew 7:1-2**

Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:1-2

7 “Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” **And immediately** – the light bulb should come on and you are saying to yourself, “I’ve heard this one before!” In fact, this is one of the most famous verses – not because of the depth of it or the awesomeness of Jesus’ Words. It is famous because it is one of THE most quoted [or misquoted] verses of all time! It’s basically in the “Hall of Misquoted Verses,” along with:

- **Philippians 4:13**

- **Jeremiah 29:11**
- **And, 1 Timothy 6:10**

So yeah, this verse is misquoted, and the reason it is misquoted is because they misunderstand the verse. They seem to think/ hope that Jesus is commanding a universal acceptance of **ANY** lifestyle or teaching – especially theirs!

- “So don’t judge me! Who are YOU to judge me” type responses – right?

Since this verse is misquoted, we need to start off talking about what this verse does not mean. Jesus is not teaching here that we cannot make judgments about other people. He’s not teaching that we cannot have an opinion about someone else’s actions or a right to instruct someone else on how they should live. Jesus doesn’t imply any of this when He said, “Judge no, that you be not judged.”

- In fact, throughout Scripture we are given a command to judge. [*John 7:24, 1 John 4:1, in just a few minutes in Matthew 7:6 the reader will be asked to judge the difference between dogs, pigs and God’s children. And even later in Matthew, Jesus teaches His disciples how to judge false teachers by their fruit.*]
- So, based on the teaching of Scripture Jesus can’t be meaning here that we are unable to judge.

But, what He is teaching is that we should not judge **hypocritically**. Hypocritical judgment is being critical of others while there is unrepentant sin in our lives. This kind of judgment is absolutely despised by God, because this is an attempt to step into God’s **position**.

This is what **verses 1-2** are warning against this attempt to step into the judgment seat of God. The reality is there is One Judge [**with a capital “J”**] of the universe. He’s the Judge of judges, the King of kings and the Lord of lords – and He’s the only Judge that sees everything perfectly! There are no question marks at the end of His judgment.

WE judge **imperfectly**. [case in point – “we” are the ones who picked King Saul. He’s tall, handsome and ripped – and LOOKS like a king.]

So, Jesus is warning against judging hypocritically, because when we judge imperfectly/ unfairly, then that same standard **“will be measured to you.”**

QUESTIONS: Are Christians forbidden from ever judging others?

- **So what kind of attitude should we have about judging?**

A lot of sinning believers or unbelievers will say that Christians are judgmental and intolerant. They give Jesus’ dealing with the adulteress women as an example that we should we be

tolerant. Do they have a point? [Use what God said, not our own opinions. Do it God's way and let His Word do the talking.]

What does it mean "or you too will be judged?" By who?

- **How do we balance confronting people with their sin and the fact that God is THE judge?**

Any questions?

Let's move on to **Matthew 7:3-6**

Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:3-6

³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You 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. 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.

Jesus takes it a step further in **verses 3-5**, when He compares a person's hypocritical judgment to a type of **blindness**. And His point is crystal clear – the hypocrite notices every fault/ shortcoming that others have BUT they are blind to the MASSIVE flaws [**log**] in their life. They're like the kings and queens of self-righteousness, and strut around thinking they're superior to everyone else.

For example, how many times do you not want to go over to someone's house OR invite them to your house because THEY are "weird"? When we make those comments it's almost like we assume we're the sane ones! "They" dish out criticism left and right, but when it comes to facing their own shortcomings, they're nowhere to be found. It's no surprise that nobody takes their judgments seriously because, let's face it, they're the personification of hypocrisy.

Jesus teaches that to fix this kind of blindness, we need to remove the log out of our own life – take a long hard look at our own shortcomings – and THEN we will be able to remove the speck from someone else's eye.

But, before we finish this section, we also need to look at **verse 6**. In the context of the first 5 verses against hypocrites, Jesus may be saying that the **dogs** and **swine** represent those

who continue to judge hypocritically. Those that practice this kind of judgment should not be offered the “pearls” [the treasure of the gospel] that belong to the Church.

QUESTIONS: What is Jesus’ point in verses 3-5?

- How does His use of the word “hypocrite” show us the problem He is speaking against here?
- How can we avoid being a hypocrite?

What do the speck and the plank represent?

What is the meaning of verse 6 and how is it related to the rest of the passage?

Let’s move on to **Matthew 7:7-8**

Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:7-8

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Again, another verse that is often misinterpreted. Some take this as ask God for anything and He’ll give you everything! This is not what Jesus is teaching here. Jesus is teaching His disciples about the importance of **prayer**. And this is an AMAZING transition for Jesus after teaching about judgment. In order to judge properly [as commanded in Scripture], we should be seeking the wisdom of God in prayer.

This is something that Jesus practiced consistently throughout His ministry. Traditional Jews in the 1st century would pray regularly 3 times each day. In the Gospels, it is mentioned in 25 different occasions that Jesus prayed for Himself, went away to pray, taught His disciples to pray or prayed for others. So, not only is Jesus teaching the importance of prayer but He is also **modeling** the importance of prayer.

So, He teaches them to “ask,” “seek,” and “knock.” In these commands, we see different aspects of prayer and different aspects of its reward.

- Prayer is the process of **asking** that the will of God be “done.”
- Prayer is like **seeking** in that we search after the will of God. When we pray this way we are seeking for what God has kept secret.
- Last, prayer is constant and consistent. Just like **knocking** on a door until it is opened. Have a consistent prayer life is crucial in discerning when God’s will is revealed.

QUESTIONS: How does this passage motivate you in your prayer life?

- Who should we ask?
- What should we ask for?
- How often should we ask?

What do we learn from Jesus' illustration?

Let's conclude with **Matthew 7:9-12**

Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:9-12

⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 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!

¹² "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Last, Jesus is teaching the fruit of an obedient prayer life – that prayerfully seeks the wisdom of God. A wisdom that is useful in judgment and in seeing our own faults. If in our prayers, we ask, seek and consistently pray for God to reveal His will and wisdom – then our **“Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”** Regular prayer helps us remember that God is kind to us, and it helps us to develop an even deeper **love** for Him and for others.

So, of course to bring this teaching full circle, Jesus ends this section with the “Golden Rule.” The Golden Rule was not invented by Jesus; it has been found in many forms in highly diverse settings. It was recorded [about AD 20] that the Rabbi Hillel was challenged by a Gentile to summarize the law. The stipulation was that the Rabbi had to do so for as long as the Gentile could stand on one leg. At this challenge, the Rabbi reportedly responded, “What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”¹ You can almost hear the disgust in the Rabbi’s voice in response.

As Jesus taught this rule to His disciples, He taught it with a positive spin – He taught it with **love** and **devotion**. Because this is what He wanted His disciples – and His church – to teach to the world. Later on in **John 13:34-35**, Jesus expounds on the principal taught in the Golden Rule by stating:

¹ D.A. Carson. "Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary" Volume 8 (Matthew-Luke) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

This especially applies to Christian fellowship. If we would experience love and have people reach out to us, we must love and reach out to others.

QUESTIONS: What do these verses show us about God's heart?

What do these verses show us about our position as God's children?

- **What kind of things count as "good gifts?"**

How does verse 12 relate to the passage? What does it show us about the importance of our actions toward others?

CONCLUSION

Today, we learned from Jesus how we can display the wisdom and character of Christ to those around us through His message about judgment, prayer, and the golden rule. Jesus urges us to refrain from hypocritical judgment and instead show compassion and understanding towards others. He emphasizes the power of prayer, assuring that those who seek will find and those who ask will receive. Finally, he encapsulates the essence of moral conduct in the golden rule, encouraging us to treat others as we would like to be treated. These teachings serve as guiding principles for living a righteous and compassionate life, fostering harmony and love within communities.

PRAYER

Next Week: Read Matthew 7:13-29