

## Guided Bible Study: Week 6

April 25-May 1, 2020

During the time we cannot meet publicly due to the Corona Virus emergency, Rick is going to post a guided Bible study on here to help fill the void left by not having Sunday School and Wednesday night classes. We encourage you to read the passage in the Bible together with your family. Questions and brief comments to help guide your study appear here. We are going to feature Jesus' SERMON ON THE MOUNT from Matthew chapters 5-7. We will post the study for a new section of this passage each week.

**Matthew 7.1-5:** The first three words of verse 1 may have replaced John 3.16 as the best known verse of Scripture by the general population. [DISCUSS: What are your thoughts as we begin looking at these verses? Does this mean we can never rightly form an opinion about whether someone is doing right or wrong? Does it mean to never disagree with someone's choice or talk to them about behavior the Bible says is wrong?]

Certainly, we do not dismiss these verses. Remember there were a lot of self-righteous people around where Jesus carried out His ministry. The Pharisees, in particular, looked down on others who did not keep all of their traditions and the regulations they had built up based on the Law of Moses but not actually in the Law of Moses. Jesus is telling us, as His followers, to do better than that.

Jesus points out two important truths about judging. First, judging leaves us open to being judged in return, perhaps even to being judged more strictly than how we are judging. Therefore it behooves us to not give people anything about which to judge us negatively. Second, and related to this, Jesus says to look at our own lives and get the sin out of our own lives before we judge others. That doesn't mean we have to be perfect, because no one of the age of accountability is, but it does say not to allow any glaring sins to be present in our lives if we are going to confront others about their sins, whether publicly through preaching and teaching, or individually.

Let's be sure to see these verses in the light of other Bible passages. Down in verse 17 or this same chapter Jesus said we would recognize false prophets by their "fruit". In other words, we will be able to evaluate their teaching and preaching (judge them in our hearts) by what we see about how they live, by what are the results of what they teach and practice, and by whether their teachings match up with Scripture. READ **II Timothy 4.2**. Among other things Paul tells us to correct and rebuke. We have to form some conclusions about the sin in someone's life or the false teachings they are spreading in order to do this.

Therefore, Jesus is not totally banning us forming and voicing opinions about someone's life and teachings. Sometimes we have to do this. He IS saying to look at our own lives first and get rid of glaring weaknesses. He is saying not to judge based on opinion, rather than God's

Word. Sometimes we have to make judgments but do so without being “judgmental”. Paul spoke of “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4.15). When you must confront, do so with obvious love and a desire for the person’s best, not to make yourself look better than they do.

**Matthew 7.6:** Dogs in Jesus’ time on earth were not the precious little house pets many of you think of. A lot of them were scavengers that would eat almost anything. If you think pigs are dirty and stink, today, you should have seen how they were kept when I was little, let alone 2,000 years ago. When we approach our lives and testimony from the standpoint of grace and the outreach of the Gospel of Jesus to all people regardless of their depth of sin, this verse is hard to grasp. What is Jesus getting at?

We should realize we hold a treasure in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While it is intended to reach everyone, not every situation in which we find lost sinners is one in which there is the slightest chance they will be receptive to the message. Trying to witness in such places that are unreceptive because of the depth of sinful activity going on right then not only opens the cause of Christ to ridicule but it also puts us personally in unnecessary danger. Jesus is saying to use some discernment about the circumstances in which we talk to people about Jesus and His standards.

**Matthew 7.7-8:** Jesus moves His message back to the subject of prayer. A few weeks back we looked at the Model Prayer (also called “Lord’s Prayer”). Now Jesus is inviting us to ask God for the things we need. There are some important ideas He wants us to grasp here.

First is asking in faith. While not specifically saying it here, Jesus strongly implies it. He doesn’t say, “It might do some good.” He says we will “receive”, “find”, and get an open door to answers. READ: **Matthew 21.22** and **James 1.5-8**. [DISCUSS: When you pray, do you believe you will receive answers?]

Second is the idea of persistence, keeping on in prayer. The “seeking” and “knocking” ideas tell us that God isn’t just room service at a hotel that we can call one time and we immediately get what we asked for. Sometimes it is best that we plead earnestly with God over a period of time. It might be to teach us dependence on God. It might be because the timing isn’t right for us to receive what we are asking for. Maybe we will be better ready and able to receive it down the road a bit. Sometimes it might even be that, over a period of time asking, our eyes will be opened to a different and better answer God is giving us than the one we specifically asked Him to give us!

Let’s also remember that we ought not be asking God for luxuries and frivolous things. READ: **James 4.1-3**. [DISCUSS: What are some types of things that we might want but that we ought not be asking God to give us?]

**Matthew 7.9-11:** These verses go with the one just before, dealing with prayer. God wants to answer. God loves to answer because He loves us. If you have children, you almost certainly like to give good things to them. All but the worst of people desire to give good things to their

children. Compared to God, even the best of us are evil, so if we like to give good things, think how much more so God wants to give gifts to us. This should encourage us to pray, realizing God wants us to bring our needs to Him.

**Matthew 7.12:** This verse sums up a lot of what has already been said in this “Sermon on the Mount”. Treat others the way you want to be treated. It’s as simple as that. [DISCUSS: Do you usually treat others this way?]