

# **Bible Study July 30, 2025**

## **MATTHEW 7 (NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)**

### **Judging Others**

***<sup>1</sup> “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.***

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. We often feel a perverse pleasure when we bring someone down. But often the faults that bother us in others are the very traits we dislike about ourselves. Our bad habits and behaviors are the very ones that we most want to point out in others. Do you find it easy to catalog others' faults while excusing your own? Criticism of others will lead to disdain for them and eventually will make you feel contempt for another person also created in God's image. If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then kindly forgive the other person.

***<sup>3</sup> “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.***

By saying, “Do not judge others,” Jesus was rebuking the hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build oneself up. This is not a blanket statement to overlook sinful behavior of others but a call to be discerning rather than negative. Turning a blind eye to things done wrong shows that we have lost our moral compass. This leads to relativism, a worldview in which all actions, moral or not, are equally acceptable. Jesus said to expose false prophets (7:15-23), and Paul taught that we should exercise church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-2) and trust God to be the final judge (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

***<sup>6</sup> “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.***

Pigs were unclean animals according to God's law (Deuteronomy 14:8). Anyone who touched an unclean animal became ceremonially unclean and could not go to the Temple to worship until the uncleanness was removed. Jesus may have been referring to the contemptuous religious leaders who were so hostile to him. He was saying that we should not entrust holy teachings to people who don't want to listen and will only tear apart what we say. We should keep on giving God's Word to unbelievers, but we should be wise and discerning as we witness so that we will reach the people God has prepared to hear us.

### **Ask, Seek, Knock**

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

Jesus tells us to persist in prayer. People often give up after a few halfhearted efforts to pray and then conclude that God doesn't listen. But communicating with God in prayer takes faith, focus, and follow-through, and Jesus has assured us that we will be rewarded as we develop a deep relationship with him. Don't give up in your efforts to seek God. Continue to ask him for more knowledge, patience, wisdom, love, and understanding. He will give these things to you. The more you talk to him, the more you will be able to recognize his voice when he speaks to you.

**<sup>9</sup> “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?**

The children in Jesus' example asked their father for bread and fish—good and necessary items. If the children had asked for a poisonous snake, would the wise father have granted the request? Sometimes God knows we are praying for “snakes” and does not give us what we ask for, even though we want it desperately and persist in our prayers. Nor will God give us “stones” or “snakes” instead of what we need. He doesn't grant every foolish or naive request, but he does give us what we need most, and he gives it when we need it. As we grow in discovering God better as a loving Father, we learn to ask for what is good for us, and then he grants it.

**<sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

Here Jesus is showing us his Father's heart. God is not selfish, begrudging, or stingy, and we don't have to beg or grovel as we come to him with our requests. As a loving Father, he understands, cares for, and comforts us. If humans can be kind, imagine how kind God, the creator of kindness, can be.

Jesus used the expression “you sinful people” to contrast sinful and fallible human beings with the holy and perfect God.

**<sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

This is commonly known as the Golden Rule. In many religions it is stated negatively: “Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.” By stating it positively, Jesus made it more significant. It isn't usually very hard to refrain from harming others; it is much more difficult to take the initiative to consistently do good to them. The Golden Rule as Jesus formulated it is the foundation of active goodness and mercy—the kind of love God shows to us every day. Think of a good and merciful action you can do for someone today.

## The Narrow and Wide Gates

***<sup>13</sup> "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.***

Jesus calls the gate that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven narrow. John noted that Jesus explained to his disciples that he is the gate (John 10:7-9). Jesus did not mean that it is difficult to become a Christian but that only one gate leads to eternal life with God and that only a few discover the difficult road that leads to it. Jesus' teaching that he is the only way to God's Kingdom grates against our normal sense of fairness. But God created the heavens and earth. He owns them. He alone determines the requirements for who can enter into his Kingdom. Believing in Jesus is the only way to the Kingdom of God, because he alone died for our sins and made us acceptable to God. Living his way may not be popular or easy, but it is true and right. Thank God that he has provided a way for us to be with him.

## True and False Prophets

***<sup>15</sup> "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.***

False prophets were common in Old Testament times. They prophesied only what the king and the people wanted to hear, claiming it was God's message. Jesus warned that false prophets were just as prevalent in his time (24:11; Mark 13:22-23). Today, false teachers are just as common. Jesus says to beware of those whose words sound religious but who are motivated by money, fame, sex, or power. You can tell who they are because in their teaching they minimize Jesus and his teaching and glorify themselves.

***<sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.***

We should evaluate teachers' words by examining their lives. Just as trees are consistent in the kind of fruit they produce, good teachers consistently exhibit good behavior and high moral character as they seek to live out the truths of Scripture. This should not encourage witch hunts, throwing out Sunday school teachers, pastors, and others who are less than perfect. Every one of us has shortcomings and is subject to sin. In addition, no one can understand fully what every passage of the Bible teaches or God's full intentions, so we will be wrong about some things as we strive to interpret Scripture. We must show the same mercy to others that we expect for ourselves. When Jesus talks about worthless trees, he means teachers who deliberately teach false doctrine or live immoral lives. We must examine teachers' motives, the direction they are taking, and the results they are seeking.

## 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.***

Some self-professed athletes can “talk” a great game, but that tells you nothing about their athletic skills. And not everyone who talks about heaven belongs to God’s Kingdom. Jesus is more concerned about our walk than our talk. He wants us to do what is right, not just say the right words. What you do cannot be separated from what you believe.

***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?’***

Judgment Day is the final day of reckoning when God will settle all accounts, judging sin and rewarding faith. (For more on the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament, see Joel 2 and Zephaniah 1:14-16.)

***23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’***

Jesus exposed people who sounded religious but had no personal relationship with him. On Judgment Day only our relationship with Jesus—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter. Many people think that if they are “good” people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Jesus is what will count at the judgment.

## 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.***

To build “on solid rock” means to be a hearing, responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. Practicing obedience forms the solid foundation, enabling us to weather the storms of life. We learn how to do this by following God’s Word as he intended. (See James 1:22-27 for more on putting into practice what we hear.)

***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.”***

Here Jesus gives four examples of the choices we have to make in our lives. Each has two distinct options: (1) The narrow gate or the broad road (7:13-14)—which will you take? (2) The good tree or the bad tree (7:15-20)—what kind of fruit will you produce? (3) True or false

discipleship (7:21-23)—what kind of commitment will you make? (4) A solid or a shaky foundation (7:24-27)—which one will you build your life upon?

The two people Jesus compares at the end of the Sermon on the Mount have several points in common: they both build, they both hear Jesus' teaching, and they both experience the same set of circumstances in life. The difference between them isn't lack of knowledge but that one ignores Jesus' words. Externally their lives may look similar, but the lasting, structural differences will be revealed by the storms of life. When you follow Jesus, the immediate differences between your life and the lives of others may not be obvious at first, but the benefits will eventually affect your eternal destiny. Are you a wise builder, practicing the powerful teachings and promises Jesus gave in this sermon?

Like a house of cards, the fool's life crumbles. Most people do not deliberately seek to build on a false or inferior foundation; instead, they just don't think about their life's purpose. Many people are headed for destruction—not always out of stubbornness, but sometimes out of thoughtlessness or ignorance. Can you help others stop and think about where their lives are headed? What can you do to point out the consequences of ignoring Jesus' message and help people see the benefits of following him?

***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.***

The teachers of religious law (religious scholars) often cited traditions and quoted authorities to support their arguments and interpretations. But Jesus spoke with a new authority—his own. He didn't need to quote anyone because he is the original Word (John 1:1)