

Lesson 6: Chapter 7 [Do not judge]

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_07.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

The last lesson, Matthew chapter 6, was part of the Sermon on the Mount. It focuses on Jesus' teachings about performing righteous acts with a pure heart, not for the praise of others; he instructs believers to give to charity, pray, and fast in secret, emphasizing the importance of genuine devotion to God over outward displays of piety; He also warns against worrying about material possessions and instead prioritize seeking God's kingdom and righteousness, as God will provide for all necessary needs

Memory verse:

7:12 *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”.*

Lesson opener:



What is favorable judgment? It means you would judge another person in their favor. No matter what their actions or words are, you would look past the offense (even if it's intended) and judge favorably.

My favorite example of this is when someone cuts you off in traffic. Instead of getting road-raged and upset, you would think about what could go on in their life. Maybe they feel sick and need to get home or to the hospital. Maybe they didn't see you and didn't mean to do that. Maybe they're distraught and upset about themselves for being late to work. Anything like this proves to be a favorable judgment because it brings you to a place of understanding the other person from a human standpoint, not making you superior. Because any of these things could be your situation and you would want others to be understanding with you.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus teaches the Golden Rule, stating that people should treat others as they would want to be treated.

Lesson body:

Do Not Judge (Read 7:1-6)

If you judge someone and tell him/her what they should be doing, then the odds are very good that someday you will fall in that area. When you do, you will be guilty because you did not reach the standard you set for others. God is the one doing the judging here. And He will judge those who cast judgment on others. He will judge them because they fell short of their own principles. And He will judge them because they took His role. It is also true that you will reap what you sow. If you habitually judge others, then they may respond to you in like manner.

We are to judge the sin and not the sinners. Unkind judgment of others will be wisely turned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Just imagine a person with a log or plank in their eye trying to help a friend remove a speck from the friend's eye. It's quite funny.

We should not focus on other people's sins while neglecting our own. We should always look to ourselves first. We should always examine ourselves and our own hearts and motivations first.

You should not blame others and refuse to admit your own wrongdoing. Sometimes we are blind to our own sins, the log in our own eyes. How can we better evaluate ourselves so that we will notice those logs and remove them? It's not about pointing fingers but pursuing relationships and understanding before boldly judging and making wrongful assumptions of others.

Verse 6: Some people will not value your words when they hear you talk about your religion, your church mysteries or rituals but will instead mock and ridicule. So, what should you do if you share this with someone and he mocks and ridicules? The answer is that you should move on, and never do it if you have expected this response. Who would you give a beautiful gift of pearls to? Someone who appreciates it, you won't give it to your dog to trample on it. We are to use discernment when we share with others.

Keep Asking, Seeking, knocking (Read 7:7-12)

Ask, seek and knock: The three represent earnest prayer.

We ask for what we wish; we seek what we miss; we knock for that from which we feel ourselves shut out .

Ask as a beggar→ Seek as the merchant who seeks valuable pearls → if sin has shut the door to God’s house against us, then knock, as he who desires to enter into the house.

Verse 8 – God will answer those who ask. Notice though that there is not a promise about exactly what God will give you. It says “it” will be given you. What is it? He will give you the thing which you really need even if you maybe didn’t know you needed it. Sometimes what you need is what you ask for and sometimes it is something else. You may ask for healing, but God sends patience because the sickness plus the patience will take the person to heaven but not the health.

There’s an angle of trust we need to get with asking, seeking, and knocking. Though we can make assessments and determine how things could look, we need to approach the Lord with trust that He will protect us even from the serpents and stones we could ask of Him. Sometimes we ask for things we’re not ready for, we seek for things we shouldn’t find yet, and we knock on the wrong doors because we think it’s what’s best for us. But thankfully, we have a Father in heaven who graciously protects us from our own requests and helps us get the discernment we need for ourselves and for others.

Verse 12: Jesus summarizes the main social ethic of His kingdom platform. This command is called “the Golden rule”. Jesus teaches you to treat people the same way you want them to treat you. Christ assumes a built-in mechanism of acting according to one's self-interest within every human being. Christ assumes everyone wants to be treated with fairness, kindness, and mercy. And a big part of why this principle is so powerful is because His assumption is true. Everyone always seeks what they perceive to be in their self-interest. Christ's command is a call to action.

Sometimes we omit a word from the verse and say :”treat people the way they treat you” but God did not say that. He wants us to treat them the way we want to be treated so we do not mistreat them if they do so to us.

“The Golden Rule” is a positive flipflop of the Jewish Golden Rule that says, “Whatever you would not wish done to you, do not yourself to another.” This same negative admonition is also found in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. “Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them.”

The Narrow Way (7:13-14)

It is the application of the whole preceding discourse. When the Lord says “Enter”, He meant enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Think for example about a hiking trip. When hiking a mountain, have you ever had a choice between walking up the paved road and walking up an almost wild path with stones, and mud, and plants? The narrow way is the more difficult way. It requires more discipline.

Broad roads accommodate a lot of traffic, and are easier to navigate, so they have greater appeal to travelers. The small gate and narrow way appear not only to be less appealing and more difficult to navigate, but they also seem hard to find.

The narrow way is saying “no” to self and saying “yes” to Jesus no matter what the cost.

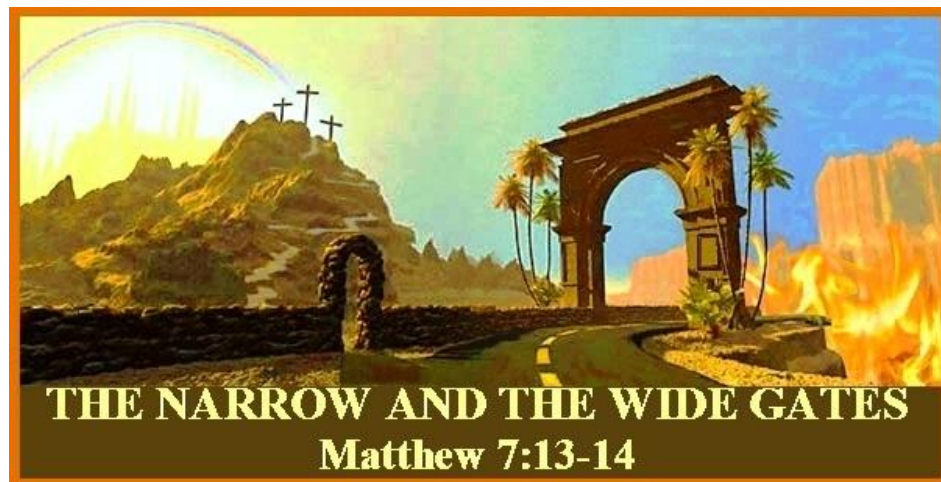
The way of the world is wide –It is easy – You will not have to say “no” to yourself. You can do whatever you like and go down that road. It requires less effort and less discipline. Like to sleep in and be a couch potato? No problem! Like to work like a dog to receive that promotion? Sure, go ahead!

It is easy to find – People are born walking on it. You won’t have to do anything different to follow it.

It is popular – Follow the crowds. Your worldly friends and peers can help you. They will give you advice to help you go down this road. And it is crowded. Most people are going down this road. So simply follow the people. The result is destruction!!!

The gates do not represent a once-and-for-all decision. Jesus will later tell His disciples to daily take up their cross to follow Him (Luke 9:23). Following Jesus is a choice we must make hour by hour. And every decision we make is an entrance leading to destruction or leading to life. Christ's commands to seek His kingdom and His righteousness, and to enter through the narrow gate are perpetual

Do you follow your own desires and live for your own pleasure, or do you set your eyes on and follow Jesus?



You Will Know Them by Their Fruits (7:15-20)

The false prophets have to disguise themselves – When people see a wolf coming, they run. But when people see a sheep coming, they say, “Ah, it’s so cute!”

Even though false prophets appear like you, talk like you, pretend to be like you, they are not like you. How can you detect them? Pay attention to their work. You will know them by their fruits (v. 16). If their works are bad, they do not represent God.

Jesus has just said "Do not judge," and now He is saying you can recognize a person's character by his actions. Jesus is drawing a distinction between judgment and discernment. We are not to get the idea that Jesus is saying never make distinctions between right and wrong in others. Good and evil are clearly opposites, and we should not be afraid to distinguish between them. This is discernment. But judgment involves making assumptions, acting on half-truths, finding fault in areas outside morality, or treating the person who behaves with evil actions--recognized by discernment--with condemnation instead of forgiveness.

I Never Knew You (7:21 -23)

The Lord has shown that the entrance into the kingdom is through the narrow gate, here He shows what is needed to enter and who would not be allowed to enter.

Jesus asserts He will refuse many people entrance into His kingdom on the Day of Judgment because they did not know Him or follow His Father's will. Despite their claims of performing mighty works in His name, their deeds and hearts violated God's law.

St. Augustine says that for Christ to say, I never knew you, is only another way of saying, you never knew Me.

It is evident from this passage that many are self-deceived. St. Paul says that, though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove mountains, and had no charity or love, all would be of no avail, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Build on the Rock (7:24 -29)

Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to His words.

The man who hears and does Christ's words is building upon the rock (Mt 16:16). Christ has laid the strong foundation, and everything besides Him is sand.

"Whoever hears and does": Hearing is certainly easier than acting, but it is still important for us to remember to be good listeners. It is possible to sit and listen to a sermon/lesson and not really hear what is being said because you are thinking about other things. People also don't really hear when they are thinking of arguments against what they are hearing from their opponent. For example, sometimes when two people argue they don't actually listen to each other but instead spend time while the other is talking to prepare their next argument. How can you be a better listener?

A true disciple is not only a good listener but also obedient. A true disciple will heed Jesus' words and do His best to respond to them. Throughout the Bible emphasis is placed on obedience, not on knowledge.

A wise person, who is obedient to the Lord, and builds his house on the rocks is ready for challenges like rain and flood. He is ready for any disaster in his life because he is safe in his relationship with the Lord. His confidence and security are placed in Christ not in himself.

Jesus astonished the people with His heavenly wisdom and truth. He was like no other teacher there had ever been. He still is the greatest teacher ever. Rather than being a law reader and interpreter like the scribes, Jesus spoke as a lawgiver and had the power to prove His authority.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

A. From the wise and foolish builder section: We must read the Sermon on the Mount with its final application in mind. These words of Jesus set before us two choices described in Matthew 7:24-27.

The “wise and foolish builders” share two traits in common: Each were builders, and each had “heard” Jesus’ instructions. What matters, Jesus declared, is not familiarity with His teaching but **putting it into practice**. One builder set his house on rocks while the other set it on sand. Which is your greater reason for studying what Jesus taught: 1- to increase your knowledge or 2- to improve your obedience?

B. From “Do Not Judge” section 7:1-6:

Jesus is not telling others not to judge us; He’s telling us not to judge others. What others do is not our primary concern; what we do is our primary concern. Let us focus on a few points:

1. Be Quick to Believe Innocence: be slow to pronounce guilt when evidence is scant or hearsay or ambiguous.
2. Aim for Restoration- Our goal is not punitive, but redemptive. We must vigilantly remain “kind to one another, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave [us]”
3. Keep Quiet If Possible- **Try not to know more about others so you do not judge them**. We must remember how faulty our perceptions are and how biases distort our judgment. We often think we understand what’s going on, when we do not. From a distance, love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).