

Deeper Relationships (Matthew 7:1-12)

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Preacher: Sam Cutforth

[0 : 00] If you'd like to take your Bibles or just turn them on and let's go to Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7.

And we obviously have been going along the Sermon on the Mount and here we are in the next section. So let me read here from verse 1 and we'll read through to verse 12. This is the word of the Lord.

Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

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? How can you say to your brother or sister, let me take the speck out of your eye when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your own eye. And then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother or sister's eye.

[1 : 05] Don't give dogs what is sacred. Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet and then turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives.

He who seeks finds. And to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for a bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

If you then, though you're 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?

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets.

[1 : 59] This is God's word. Sam, come on up. Well, thanks everybody for having me and listening.

That's the wrong one. That was like easier. Thank you. It's such a privilege to be able to come and bring the word of God to you.

I'd really encourage you to keep your Bibles or your apps open to that passage as we head through it. Just to check that what I'm saying is really, really there. We're going to look at really two things, two attitudes that Jesus calls his disciples to.

So one is to do with how we treat one another and one is how we respond to God. Before we get into that, let me just pray for us as we come to God's word.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are good and generous to us and that you love to give us good gifts. And so as we come to your word now, we do pray that you would give us a good gift and insight into our own character and insight into how we should respond and draw near to you.

[3 : 14] Lord God, even though we may be confronted by a judgmental attitude in us, or we may be just gently nudged into our need for more prayerfulness, Lord God.

We pray that we'd be able to hear from your word and respond in repentance and faith and obedience. So please do be at work in us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

We love to judge. I think lots of TV shows, reality TV shows show us this. So I want you to think of American Idol, Britain's Got Talent, The Voice, MasterChef.

They all have judges. So back in my day, I used to watch American Idol from the very first season. And I always loved those early episodes.

You know, the ones where the terrible singers come on and then they just get judged and like insulted by Simon Cowell. And these people are oblivious to how terrible they are at singing.

[4 : 15] And I get to sit back and just see the floor be white with them. I also, I'm fairly musical. I play drums, but I do appreciate music. And so in the later episodes, it would be good to sit back and

listen.

How well did they sing? What was the overall performance? How did they arrange the song? Was it good? Was it bad? Did I agree with the judges? It's really nice to sit back and judge and assess how people are doing, whether they fail or succeed.

I've never really got MasterChef. I'm MasterChef. I don't know if we have any MasterChef fans. But, you know, the judges, they get this food. They smell it. They taste it.

They just wait. And the flavours in there, they say, oh, that was beautiful. The smell, the texture, the aftertaste. I'm sitting there just with like a bag of chips going, I want to eat that food.

I want to judge that food. And so instead, I just have to take their word for it. But nonetheless, we have these TV shows that show we really like to judge. We really like to assess.

[5 : 16] It can just make us feel good about ourselves. It can actually make us feel superior. And kind of that's what most TV does. But in this way, it really shows us a little bit of our pride and a little bit of our desire to judge.

And so it's really into this culture that Jesus speaks his first command. And so it might be a bit of a wake-up call. He gives us a command. Then he gives us some reasons why we should really follow this command.

And then we just have one misconception that I'd like to address. So first the command, then the reasons, then a misconception. So Jesus, he first addresses this attitude we should have to one another.

And the command is there for you in verse 1 if you want to look there. Do not judge. Do not judge one another. So young people, don't judge the old people for how they like to do things.

Old people, don't judge the young people. Mature Christian, be very careful judging the immature Christian. They have a long way to go. Mature Christian, don't judge the older Christian.

[6 : 27] The younger Christian, don't judge the mature Christian. But be aware that they might know something you don't. Perhaps afternoon service, don't judge the morning service.

Morning service, don't judge the afternoon service. As you can imagine, it's quite a hard command to not judge. It's important to clarify what Jesus means by do not judge.

Throughout the Bible, we are called to use, I guess, our minds and wisdom to judge and make calls between what's the best way to go, who are the best people to hang out with.

So you'll notice just in a few verses, Jesus is going to ask us to make a judgment call. So in verse 15, Jesus says, watch out for false prophets. So that's quite a strong judgment.

Be really aware of what someone's teaching you. And if it is not true, then make sure you don't listen and distance yourself. So we do need to make judgments.

[7 : 32] But I guess I want us each to assume that most of the time in our life, we need to hear Jesus say, don't judge. So most of the time, we probably aren't judging correctly.

And I don't want any small caveat that sometimes, yes, you do need to assess things. I don't want that to allow us to wriggle out of Jesus' teaching here. So really do examine your life as we go through this passage and say, am I judging people?

I think what Jesus particularly is getting at with this command is an inclination to judge with condemnation or to judge often and be fault-finding and a bit nitpicky.

So by condemnation, I mean you judge someone and that's it. You think they'll never change.

You're never going to give them a chance to change. You shut them out.

You put them out of your mind. You just completely walk away. You're done and dusted. You refuse to see anything good or positive in them. So you kind of condemn them.

[8 : 40] And so here at church, I'm sure there are some clicks and some brokenness within relationships because people have judged and then condemned and then aren't really willing to go back and bring reconciliation.

They've written someone off. So don't judge. Don't condemn one another. And what I mean by fault-finding is that person who always has a complaint to make, the person who can't overlook anything but constantly points out what went wrong.

Even when you come to worship, here you can find fault in the music, in the sermon, in the way people dress. We're supposed to be worshipping God, but we can find fault often.

I find this particularly hard. Being someone who writes sermons and who may have even preached on a passage I've heard preached before, it's really easy for me to go, I wouldn't have said that. I would have done like this.

Why did they do that intro there? Why did they break that passage up there? Why are they, and all of a sudden I'm just finding fault and I'm not sitting under God's word. So Anna and I just had this conversation driving back one day that we don't want Hazel to hear us always coming back from church saying, I wish we'd done this better.

[9 : 57] And this thing's, I'm a pastor, I need to make sure things are done better. But we don't actually want Hazel to grow up hearing us always pointing out things that maybe could have done better. We don't want to be judging all the time.

So judge not. Don't have a judgmental attitude which always finds fault. If I could kind of state the opposite of this attitude, the positive, it might be something like be generous towards one another. So be quick to forgive each other, even when wronged. Be willing to overlook small flaws, things people have done wrong. Be ready to give a second chance, even though you've been hurt. Be less concerned about getting your own way. Judge not. That's the command, to not judge. And then Jesus gives reasons, some motivation for not judging.

And they're pretty good reasons because they're really quite a strong warning. This is in verse 1 and 2 if you want to look down at that. Do not judge or, here it comes, you too will be judged.

[11 : 08] For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Judgment comes back to bite, Jesus says.

It's like a boomerang. I'm not sure if you guys have ever thrown a boomerang. My wife is Australian and so I spent three years in Australia, so I threw a boomerang once. So it's like a bit of a triangle or like square shaped thing.

You throw it and it's supposed to go... And come back. The truth is I did not want that thing coming back. Because if I had a ball and I threw it at you and said, Oh, would you rather me throw this ball at you or would you rather me spin a drumstick at you?

Like you're picking the ball, right? Because that drumstick's going to fling off your hand and hit you in the face. So I did not want this boomerang coming back to hit me. And Jesus says that is what judgment is like.

You want to stop and think, Do I really want to throw that judgment out at that person? And then, oh, oh no, it's come back. And shown me, oh, I really am not even living up to my own judgments.

[12 : 19] Jesus says, With the measure that you measure out, It'll be shown to you. So if you're always finding fault over and over again, What will happen is your measurement goes up and up and up and up.

Can you always live without fault? Do you never make little mistakes? Because as you judge, That same judgment is brought to you and you find, Oh, I do make mistakes more than other people as far as I can see.

So Jesus says, Don't judge, it'll boomerang. Don't judge, it'll be measured out. And I've mentioned the really second reason why it's not a good idea. Because the judgment, when it comes back, When it's measured out to us, We don't really live up to our own judgments.

We have actually our own sin to deal with. So the second reason we shouldn't judge is because Jesus says we're actually quite blind to our own sin. So we're not good people to make judgments. Jesus goes as far as to call us hypocrites. Look at verses 3 to 5. 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?

[13 : 30] How can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, When all the time there's a plank in your own? You hypocrite, first take out the plank of your own eye, And then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

So the picture Jesus uses here of judgment is one of us reaching in to remove a speck of sawdust from someone's eye. Comically, we're doing it while we have a huge log in our own eye.

Now, no organ is more sensitive than our eye. So we have eyelids that are there to rapidly blink In case anything flicks up into our eye.

It protects it. You don't want to be touching your eye. I don't know if anyone wears contacts. It's not fun and it's quite hard to get a contact in. Jesus is saying that judgment is a really sensitive thing. So you can't just go around making judgments willy-nilly. It's like putting your finger, it's like putting a contact in someone else's eye. As William mentioned before, I was a pastor.

[14 : 38] I was a builder. And so I have quite a lot of experience getting sawdust in my eye. It's not a pleasant experience. And one afternoon, it had to be a Friday afternoon, I got some sawdust in my eye that I really couldn't get out.

It had gone like quite deep under my eyelid. So I did everything you're supposed to, like washed it out with water. I went to the pharmacy and you get these containers that have a little like eye cap on that fits over your socket and it's got proper stuff to wash it out.

I did that. It didn't work. So then I had to go to the emergency room on a Friday afternoon. And there, when they get there, they numb your eye so you can't feel too much.

They put this bright dye in it so they can show, so they can see where the speck is. They have a magnifying glass to look through to get a better look. And then there's actually one person there who's kind of there trying to keep your eye open while the other person dabs like a cotton bud to try to get it out.

So it's quite the procedure to get a speck out of your eye. Now imagine if the doctor who got the speck out walked in and he had this huge long plank sticking out of his eye.

[15:46] He walks in the door, I'm here to get the speck out of your eye. How ridiculous. Like he'd sooner knock me out with that plank than get it out. Now obviously he needs to remove the plank and then he can get the speck.

Jesus says to us, you need to examine yourself, not judge people, but deal with your own sin before you have any shot of picking out any little sin from someone else's life.

Deal with your sin. And remember that Jesus, as he goes through, you could think that Jesus is just giving us a whole lot of rules to follow. But here we see that really he, it's not about the rule, it's about our hearts.

Do we have hearts that are aware of our sin, willing to get rid of it, do everything you can to chuck it out, not make judgments of other people, but really aware?

If you have things going on in your own life, it's kind of hard to judge others. But if you're not aware of how you're falling short, then it's so easy to nitpick at others. And that's what it is to be a hypocrite, as Jesus says.

[16:56] So we need to really be aware of our own sin. A friend once told me, I'm not sure if this is a saying that everyone knows, but it was really a wise thing he said to me, that we tend to judge others by their actions and we judge ourselves by our intentions.

And so this is the attitude that Jesus is trying to strike out and get rid of. So we judge others by their actions, we judge ourselves by our intentions, even if our actions don't live up to our intentions.

And it's really easy to have good intentions, right? I'm meant to be kinder, even though I was just a bit mean again there. I do really want to stop being materialistic, but it was a Black Friday sale.

I wish I was less anxious, but I just have so much going on. So we have these really good intentions. And so we look at ourselves and think, oh, we're not too bad. We do really want the best. And then we look at other people and it's really easy to judge their actions. Oh, that person was mean again. We don't know. Maybe they are trying not to be mean. That person wears all designer clothing, but you forgot that there was a sale on.

[18:06] That person just needs to find peace in God by trusting him, the same way we all do. You see, it's easy to judge others and to ignore our own sin and shortcomings.

Jesus said to his followers, there's no room for you guys to judge. Judge not because it boomerangs back. Judge not because you have your own sin to deal with.

Jesus himself has shown this attitude on many occasions of not judging, but one particular dinner party with some religious leaders really showed Jesus' attitude.

So these religious leaders were perhaps like, I guess, someone who's grown up in the church and thinks they're doing really well, but hasn't seen their own sin very much.

So while they were at this dinner with some religious leaders, a sinful woman, a prostitute, came in and this lady began to wash Jesus' feet with her own tears and with expensive perfume.

[19:08] The religious leaders who were around the table looked at this woman and said, if Jesus really knew how sinful she was, he wouldn't even let her touch him.

Judgmental, condemning of this woman's actions, religious hypocrites through and through. Jesus said to this woman, you are forgiven.

He didn't judge her for her life. He saw her willingness to fall at his feet and he forgave. Now that's Jesus. That's what Jesus' disciples are called to be like, just like him.

Here are some questions for reflection. You'll be asking them in your small groups as well, but just to try catch, hey, do I have a judgmental attitude? So one, if you tend to condemn, here's a few questions.

Are you prepared to listen and see if there is an explanation for someone's sin for something that went wrong? Are you prepared to listen and see if there's an explanation? Another one, are you prepared to forgive at a moment's notice?

[20 : 18] Someone might have wronged you. Are you ready to forgive them? As soon as they ask. If the answer is no, you might have a tendency to condemn someone and write them off.

Perhaps that's not you. Perhaps you're more of the fault finder. Here's a couple of questions just for reflection. Do you enjoy making judgments about people who you don't really have anything to do with?

Do you like talking with your friends about how bad such and such is or their problems? Do you do that often? Do you judge or complain without intending to fix the problem yourself at all or do anything to bring about change?

If you do that, you're probably just sitting back and judging people rather than saying, this really needs to change and I'm willing to get in there because I want this to be better. So the command, judge not, are the reasons because it boomerangs back, because we have our own sin to deal with. And finally, just one misconception that I mentioned, I'll just speak briefly about it. I mentioned it in passing before. Does this mean that we can never judge? I think today we probably, in our culture, and probably the younger you are, the more you tend to never, ever, ever want to judge or say anything's wrong or something's not true.

[21 : 42] But Jesus actually doesn't say that. He does allow us to make judgments of what is true and good and right. And I think this is what he's getting at in verse three. He says, 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. So he's given us kind of the two opposites.

Don't judge. And sometimes you really do need to make a call and step back. So the holy things, I think, and sacred thing that he talks about, that will probably be understood as God's gifts and good things.

So I think Jesus is saying, don't keep putting God's good gifts out there to be abused and mocked over and over again. There comes a time when each of us must say, enough is enough.

I've done what I've can. I've served. I've used what God's given me. And it's just being abused. It's not being appreciated. I'm going to take a step back. As he says later, watch out for false prophets.

[22 : 47] It might be a good thing for you to confront someone and even to say, hey, we ask that you leave the church because you are spreading something that's not true.

So it is important that sometimes with grace and love and kindness, we do make judgments.

There'll probably be some here in the room that need to hear that because they're just forever giving themselves to people who just don't give back at all or change.

And they may just need to take a little step back. And then there'll be some of us who will really need to hear, stop condemning. Like the moment anyone does anything wrong, you judge them and want to walk away.

And so I've just been praying and asking God to help me and you guys know which you need to hear. Do you need to hear, judge not? Or do you need to hear, stop giving God's good gifts to those who really aren't appreciating them or just trampling on them?

And I hope that God and his Holy Spirit works in you to help understand that. Next in verses seven to 14, Jesus addresses our attitude to God.

[23 : 56] So we've had this one another, don't judge one another. And now our attitude to God. So once again, we're gonna have another command. We're gonna have reasons that we should follow this command. And then I'm gonna address another misconception.

So first the command there in verse seven, if you wanna glance down, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.

Ask, seek, knock. Three commands, but I think they really refer to one thing, one command, be persistent in prayer. Be persistent in asking your good heavenly father for things.

He loves when you come to ask. He loves when you seek after him. He loves to draw near to you. Keep seeking him. Keep knocking because you know when you come to God, you're coming home and he will open the door wide for you.

Be persistent in coming to God. And he gives reasons for our persistence, that is seeking God through prayer. Because in God's kingdom, prayers are answered.

[25 : 05] In the father's kingdom, askers receive, the seekers find, the knockers are let in. It's a wonderful verse of promise, isn't it?

Ask and it will be given. Why should you ask? Because you'll receive. Seek, what's gonna happen? You are gonna find. Knock and you are gonna be let in.

Why should we keep being persistent in prayer? Because God answers. God listens. And next we might ask, why is it that God answers? Why is it that when we're in God's kingdom, when we're part of God's people, he answers our prayers?

You may think it's because you're persistent. So the more and the harder you ask, the more likely you are to be granted a request. But that's not really what Jesus wants to strike out.

He wants us to be persistent, ask, seek and knock. That's what that idea conveys. Yet instead, he sees that when we pray, our prayers we can be sure will be answered because of our father in heaven.

[26 : 12] Because of how generous he is to us. Jesus uses the example of our own flawed parent and says if your parents can answer and give things when you request them, give you good gifts, how much more do you think your own heavenly father will give you good things?

So look at verses nine to 11. Which of you, if his son asked him for a loaf of bread, would give him a stone? Or if he asked for a fish, would give him a serpent?

If then you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father, your father who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask of him?

You know, you want to know why you should be persistent in praying, why your prayers are going to be answered. It's because your heavenly father has a heart that is generous and loves to give you good gifts.

So Christmas is coming up. I don't know if you guys have started a Christmas shopping yet, but you know, you really want to find the right gift for your present, for your friend, the right present for your friend. You'll scour the shops, you'll think about it, you're willing to just pay a little bit more if you can get it.

[27 : 28] Hopefully if you're organized, you're not going to wait till Christmas Eve when it's busy. But you know, we do desire to give good gifts to our friends, to people who are close with us. How much more do you think our heavenly father who is generous and good wants to give us good things?

He has good things in store ready when we ask. Now, prayer isn't easy. I'm sure most of you don't find prayer that easy. It can be a battle to get to our knees and to seek God.

And perhaps the reason for this is because we don't really believe in our heart of hearts that God is generous to us. We think maybe he's a bit stingy.

We think maybe that if we have sinned this week, or haven't been that consistent or good that he's going to withhold his blessing from us, we think that maybe God's a bit immovable and too big for us to approach.

In life, you might have had to deal with people who aren't that generous. You go to your lecturer or your school teacher and you know that you need to ask for an assignment, get your deadline changed, and you dread it because this person just never gives them out.

[28 : 37] Maybe you're at work and you know you need some extra money for the project, but the budget's tight and so you get ready with your arguments for why you think you should get more.

Well, asking for things isn't easy when you know the person isn't generous and isn't really wanting to give things to you. It's hard to ask. They're stingy. They're difficult. They're hard to budge and move.

If we think our Heavenly Father is like that, stingy, not ready to give, not really that in love with us and kind to us, then we're not going to want to come to Him and ask because we think, oh, He doesn't want to hear from me.

He doesn't have anything ready for me. It'll really feel like a battle. But when we know that our Heavenly Father is a God who's generous and good, who forgives us our sins and welcomes us into His presence as we knock, we will come to Him in prayer.

We will come to Him persistently because He's so generous to us. Now perhaps this week, as you pray, you could start your prayers with our dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you are generous and loving and that you love to give me good things.

[29 : 51] Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you are generous and loving and you enjoy giving me good gifts. In this way, it'll change how you're thinking about God as you pray and during the week and you will be more persistent in coming to Him as Jesus' followers ought to.

So, pray. Be persistent in prayer. Why? Because in God's kingdom, prayers are answered. Why should you be persistent in prayer? Because your Heavenly Father is generous and loves to give you things.

But can I address one misconception? One misunderstanding. Will you always receive? If you ask, will you always receive?

I'm sure that some of you have asked for things from God and you haven't received them. You may have even prayed for a very long time.

My mum's sickness, I've asked God that He would enable my mum to walk and to play the piano in church like she used to be able to and like me, perhaps you've prayed and prayed and prayed and you're waiting, waiting for money or marriage or healing.

[31 : 08] A couple of things, I think, need to be said about this. One is more kind of a philosophical thing. If we were to come to God and anything and anytime we asked Him for something, He would just grant it at our any request and whim, then essentially we'd be God.

So God would be our servant, He'd be a cosmic genie that we can make as many wishes from as we want. Lord God, please give me this and He gives it.

So I think Jesus has to have something else in mind other than a God who's actually subservient under us that we can just ask Him for anything and He'll give it to us.

I think you guys did the Lord's Prayer a few weeks ago. How does it begin? That God's will would be done. Hallowed be your name. So whenever we're coming to pray, we're actually praying that God's will would be done, not that whatever we happen to want that week would be done.

And so we need to just keep that in mind. When God says ask, He means as you ask, that God's will would be done, He will answer that. And the reason it's like that is because we don't tend to ask for good things and we don't even really know what we should ask for.

[32 : 27] We actually tend to ask for bad things. So I have a lovely 16-month-old daughter there, Hazel, and she absolutely loves fruit. She'll eat fruit any, she hasn't discovered chocolate and lollies really, so like fruits right up there for sugar intake.

She loves it. And for, I reckon, about four months, every single dinner time when she was getting bored of her veggies and meat and potato or whatever, she'd look over at the fruit bowl, put her little hand out and say, Uh, uh, I want fruit.

I want fruit. And she was very persistent, let me say. Every single night, Uh, uh, uh, every single night for three or four months, she's finally stopped now but she still occasionally does it, points to the fruit, but I want fruit.

Now, as her father, as her parents, we had to say no. And we know that Hazel can't just eat fruit 24-7, that she needs a healthy dinner, she needs some veggies, she needs some meat, she needs some bread.

And so we actually, uh, don't, uh, answer, uh, Hazel's request, even though she is very persistent in that. And we, we're God's children.

[33 : 42] He's our father. So sometimes when we come to him persistently saying, Mm, mm, I want that fruit, sometimes God says, No, that is not for you.

That is not a good thing for me to give you. For example, I just want you to think about in the Bible, how many times it says in the Bible that suffering is for our good.

It turns out to be for our good. But I don't know if there's anyone in this room, he said, who said, Lord God, please give me a big plate of suffering. Because I know that can be a good gift from you. That is going to be for the strengthening of my faith. We don't pray that. And we, um, I don't think we really should pray that. But it just recognizes, hey, we don't always know what's good for us, but we know we have a generous and good heavenly father.

And when we ask, he is going to give us good things. And can I just say in closing that if you're not sure if God is good, you may have been asking for something a lot and you think it's a really good thing.

[34 : 44] I would just point you to Jesus on the cross. A heavenly father sent his one and only son to die for you. What a gift for you. What a gift to this whole world.

How generous and kind. You know, if God sent his one and only son, do you think that he is going to withhold something that is good for you?

No, he won't. He gave up his son for you. That is how much the father loves you. So as you pray, sometimes you'll pray and you won't ask for things that are within God's will, but you can know that when you ask for good things, your heavenly father who loves you is generous and he is going to give them.

He is a generous heavenly father who loves to give us good things. Shall we pray? Lord God, we thank you so much for these commands and the wonderful reasons that you give for us to follow them.

Lord, I just pray for the spirit and attitude of each person here at this church. Lord, I pray you would just take out any judgmental attitude we have towards one another.

[35 : 56] I pray that you would replace that with an examination of our own life and sin. I pray that we would heed the warning that is here. I also just pray that we would know that you are generous and good God to us as we see that in Jesus and as we think of ways that you've answered our prayers and good things you've given us throughout our life.

Lord, we do pray that you would help us this week to be persistent knowing that we receive and knowing that you're a good and generous God to us. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.