

## **Lesson #8- Matthew Chapter 7 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):**

Jesus continues in chapter 7 with His sermon on the mount, teaching things that turned their theological world upside down. This chapter concludes this message, ending with the people being in amazement, because He taught with authority, not like the scribes they were accustomed to hearing.

1. “Don’t judge me” is an often-heard phrase today. Many Christians have decided that they aren’t to “judge” anything, they will just defer to make a decision about what is right and wrong so that they don’t come off as “judgmental”. What did Jesus teach here in the first five verses of this chapter? How does it relate to other Scripture?

### **Help for Teachers:**

- Certainly, we are to be able to recognize right and wrong, good from evil. God has given us everything from a conscience (Rom 2:13) to a written law (Rom 3:20) so that there is no excuse for not being able to judge the difference (Rom 1:20). As a matter of fact, the church at Corinth was scolded for failing to judge its own members (1 Cor 6:1-5). From the context of Jesus’ teaching here we begin to understand that He is not talking about a refusal to decide right from wrong in ourselves or in others, He is talking about judging ourselves to be superior to someone else who has committed some sin and thinking them deserving of a much worse penalty than what our sin would deserve (James 1:10). Jesus is talking about pretending that we don’t have sin (1 John 1:8), while demanding that someone else pay the penalty for their equal or lesser sin. Or pretending that we can fix someone else when we are equally broken.
2. Verse 6 is the origination of a cliché we have often heard, “don’t cast your pearls before swine”. What is Jesus teaching us in this verse?

### **Help for Teachers:**

- Having just warned that we are not to be hypocrites, acting as though we are without sin, it would be fitting that we remember that we stand justified by His blood; Jesus and His gospel are our great treasure (Gen 15:1). Pearls are considered an exquisite treasure by this world and stand as a metaphor of our treasure in Christ. As it would be unthinkable to give something of great worth to dogs or to throw out priceless pearls to the pigs, so it is if we cast our great treasure before those that show contempt for our Savior. Rich people of this world are not likely to share their treasure with others, especially those they don’t know. We, on the other hand, are

sent out by Jesus to do just that, share our great treasure with everyone we can. What then is Jesus saying? The parable of the Sower that Jesus taught tells that we are to broadcast seed (the Word) indiscriminately. The seed falls on all kinds of ground, but only yields fruit when it falls on fertile soil (Matt 13:3-23). Obviously, Jesus isn't teaching to withhold the gospel from some, judging them unworthy to receive the Word. A couple of Scriptures come to mind that may shed light on this teaching, both involve other places where Jesus gives instruction to His disciples. First, in Matthew 15, we read that after hearing the teachings of Jesus, the disciples report that the Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said. Jesus replies to His disciples, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Jesus clearly tells His disciples to "let them alone", no more effort given to reaching them. The second Scripture that comes to mind is found in Matthew 10, where Jesus, on sending His disciples out with the gospel message, told them "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." It seems Jesus is telling us that some people will judge themselves unworthy of the gospel. Paul says this in Acts 13:46, "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The Holy Spirit calls, convicts, and draws men unto Christ. Our portion is to broadcast the seed and leave the saving up to Him. To think that we can argue someone into believing is to put the focus on our capability to be convincing. We are convincing when we share the gospel with accuracy and sincerity, not with powerful oratory skill. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God are powerful.

3. Verses 7 through 12 are about the privilege we have of coming to our Heavenly Father with our requests. What do you think are some things that stand out from this teaching of Jesus?

#### **Help for Teachers:**

- Scholars debate if there is an intended connection with the preceding verses, or if this is a stand-alone teaching. Some think that this is in view of the difficulty of Jesus' teaching in this sermon to this point and Jesus is now encouraging His disciples to seek help that can only come from God to understand and be able to grasp and apply these kingdom teachings.
- What is for sure is that Jesus is encouraging believers that when we come to the Father in prayer, we can have assurance that it is the Father's desire to grant our

partitions for *good* gifts. *Good* gifts, just like in the case of earthly parents, are gifts that are good for the children. Good gifts are things that make us spiritually healthy, that count for eternity. Good gifts are things that help us in our calling according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). When we have this right, we see the relationship between our asking and God's response: ask and receive, seek and find, knock and open. Also like the case of earthly parents, when we ask for that which is unwise and not for our best interest, our Heavenly Father will deny that request.

- James 4:3 answers the question of why we often don't obtain that for which we ask or seek or try to get through the door of, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
- Jesus assures us that our heavenly Father loves us beyond what any human father could love a child. If a flawed and sinful human dad naturally wants to give good and helpful things to his children, how much more does our perfect Father in heaven want to give good gifts to His children, and how much wiser are His decisions.
- Verse 12 begins with "Therefore", which usually alerts us that what is to follow is a result of what proceeded. All these kingdom principles that Christ has explained violate everything we know to be true about human nature. Jesus has just announced that in His kingdom, who the world considers cursed is blessed, that we are to bring glory to the One that is worthy, and that we are not the worthy one, that if we don't do this we should be thrown out and counted as useless, that our goodness is pathetic, that the attitude of our hearts that no one can see condemns us as much as our actions that are visible to everyone, to stop with all our boasting because we are in control of nothing, to do good and love people that are mean to us and count us as enemies, to stop showing off and expecting something in return when we do good to someone less fortunate, to end all our religious hypocrisy and come humbly before God, depending on Him and not ourselves, to forsake the things of this world and run to things we can't see, that we can't even ride the fence on these issues, to stop thinking we are better than others, and that when we adopt these kingdom principles, we have a Father in heaven that is eager to help us with It all. "Therefore", Jesus says that however you would have people treat you, that is exactly the way you should treat them, because that is precisely what the law and the prophets teach (the O.T.). Jesus summarized the teachings of the law and the prophets later in Matthew 22:37-40.

4. Looking at verses 13-14, how open minded are we to be when it comes to what God has revealed through His Word, particularly concerning eternal life?

#### Help for Teachers:

- I saw two “Christian” church leaders from Orlando this morning on TV talking about COVID and the anticipated Christmas time increase in new cases. Both made the statement that it doesn’t matter what faith you ascribe to, it only matters that you have faith. Jesus did not share their opinion. He begins verse 13 with a very blunt statement, “Enter ye in at the straight gate”. Lest anyone have a misunderstanding, He immediately follows that there is a wide gate that leads to destruction and a lot of people are going through that gate, but the way into the kingdom that leads to eternal life is through the straight (narrow) gate. It’s important to note that the gate is not plural, there is only one. Jesus says only a few will find it. So, what is the gate? We read Jesus’ words in John 14:6, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Using another analogy of the door to the sheepfold, Jesus said that anyone that attempts entry by another way is a thief and a robber (John 10:1). He further says later in the same passage that “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (verse 9). No matter what other teaching or idea or religion may be out there, Jesus is narrowminded on the subject and plainly declares that He is the only way. Proverbs 16:25 says, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
5. Jesus gives warning about false prophets that sneak in disguised as one of us. But we are to recognize them (judgmental?). They will defy evolution and do what all of nature truly does, they will produce fruit that is just like they are, corrupt. Then Jesus makes a shocking statement. He says that some people that call Him “Lord, Lord”, and have worked really hard and done wonderful works will be turned out of the kingdom, that after all they have done, He will not even acknowledge that He ever knew them. But doesn’t the Bible say that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved? But they are working for the kingdom; aren’t we supposed to lay up treasure in heaven? How would you explain this to someone with these questions?

#### Help for Teachers:

- Verse 21 and 22, talking about “that day”, the day of the Lord’s judgement (Rev 20:11-12), when He judges the dead, there will be those that object and will remind

Him that they have called Him “Lord, Lord” and done “many wonderful works”. Notice that Jesus says that it’s not those that have *called* Him Lord that will enter the kingdom (Luke 6:46), but those that have done the will of the Father. There is a difference between calling Him Lord and calling *on* the name of the Lord (Rom 10:8-13). When we call on the name of the Lord, that can only happen when we have come to the end of ourselves and our abilities to earn God’s favor and abandoning any prideful hope of being good enough (Isaiah 64:6), call on Him for grace and mercy. We call on the name of the Lord when in response to His call (Acts 2:39, Rom 8:30, Rom 9:26, 1 Cor 1: 1, 2, 9, 24, 26, Gal 1:6 Eph 4:1, 4, Col 3:15, 1 Thes. 2:12, 2 Thes. 2:14, Heb 9:15, 1 Pet 1:15, 1 Pet 2:9, 21, Jude 1:1, this is not a comprehensive list) to repentance, we come to Him in Faith and fellowship; now in truth we can call Him Lord. But didn’t Jesus say that only those that “do” the will of the Father will enter the kingdom, and didn’t these people Jesus denies as His own “do” many wonderful works? Jesus calls their works “iniquity” (disgusting, evil). So, what is the will of the Father (2 Peter 3:9)? The will of the Father, that these workers of iniquity clearly did not do, is that we turn to His only begotten Son, Jesus, in helplessness and repentance and faith. If we *work for* the kingdom of heaven, in the sense that we are trying to enter heaven because we earned it and deserve it, we will find ourselves in the position of these workers of iniquity, having never known Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16). If we *work for* the kingdom, not to earn God’s favor, but because we have been given God’s favor through the blood of Jesus Christ, now we have entrance into the kingdom. Our treasure is there because our heart is there, and our works are out of gratitude, based on faith, and not in any way based on bringing God into our debt (James 2:17-26).

6. Discuss the lesson on construction practices that Jesus ends this sermon with.

#### **Help for Teachers:**

- The sermon on the mount closes with Jesus using an illustration to impress on us the importance of hearing and heeding Jesus’ words. Jesus is the foundation on which we can build with confidence. He is the Solid Rock that will never erode or break down. He likens anyone that hears and does His words to a wise man that has built on this firm foundation and can expect that when bad weather comes, his building will not be destroyed. Jesus declared that if we build on anyone or anything else, it is like having no foundation, you can know that when the storm comes your building will fall. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”