

Matthew 7:1-12

Relating & Requesting

Whilst the content of this passage seems to cover various ideas, and be a little disconnected to what's come just before in chapter 6, Jesus is still clearly teaching us what real righteousness looks like in our relationships and what it means to be children of our Father in heaven.

Verses 1-5

What reasons does Jesus give for not 'judging others' in...

- V1-2?
- V3-5?

What do you think Jesus means by 'judging others' in this context?

Consider:

- How does it relate to the call to be discerning and even critical of others (i.e. v6 and v15-16)?
- What are the attitudes and assumptions that are associated with problematic 'judging'?

Reflect

→ Why do you think we are so capable of noticing a 'splinter' in someone else's eye, whilst overlooking the 'big log' in our own?

→ What situations or relationships are you most likely to judge or criticise others whilst overlooking your own sin?

→ Often people tend to either be too quick to criticise and point out another's sin, or we feel it is inappropriate to ever say anything. How does Jesus challenge both these approaches in verse 5?

What do you tend towards? What might it look like to apply verse 5 in your own context?

Verse 6

In verses 1-5, Jesus warns of too quickly criticising people and presuming to play the role of God, judging their character. However, as we saw in verse 5, he still expects us to lovingly help a brother or sister deal with sin or problems that are present in their life - just not in a hypocritical way. Verse 6 could be read as a stand alone 'proverb', with a broad application; however, it is a relevant warning for us as we seek to lovingly challenge people with truth.

*How does this proverb complement the warning to watch out for hypocrisy in **ourselves** when critically challenging others?*

Verses 7-11

Jesus shifts from discussing our relationships with other people to our relationship with God.
What are some common reasons we might give up in prayer or not bother in the first place?

How do Jesus' words in this passage address these basic concerns?

Consider:

→ *What does Jesus want us to understand about God in verses 9-11?*

→ *How does that reinforce the claim of verses 7-8?*

Reflect

There are two extremes that would make prayer either useless or terrifying. On the one hand, if we had no reason to think our prayers to God would make any difference at all, we would see no purpose in prayer; or on the other hand, if prayer functioned like a magic spell and God was bound to do or give whatever we ask for without question, we would soon be too scared to ask for anything, because we lack the wisdom and knowledge to know what is truly good.

→ *What is the reality of prayer according to these verses? (Consider also 6:5-8)*

→ *How is that a comfort and encouragement to you in prayer?*

Verse 12

Verse 12 appears to form a conclusion to most of the sermon on the mount so far, with the verses to come all relating to our personal response to Jesus and his teaching. Jesus claims that the principle of 'doing for others what you wish them to do for you' sums up the 'law and the prophets', and so it is a fitting summary of his own teaching which helps us to grasp the fulfilment of the Law (5:17).

What connections do you see between the principle of verse 12 and what Jesus has taught in chapters 5-7?

On this verse, John Stott writes: "All we have to do is use our imagination, put ourselves in the other person's shoes, and ask, 'How would I like to be treated in that situation?'"

Think of a situation over the past week (whether at work, or home, school, at the shops...etc) where you had a significant interaction with someone else. How could it have looked different if you followed this advice?

Pray together *about how you relate to God and to others.*