

Housegroup Study – February 14th 2018

Leaders Notes

Matthew 7:1-14

Theme: What should be the attitude of Christians to other believers, unbelievers, God and all people.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes radical demands on his disciples:

- Righteousness greater than the religious elite of the time, the Scribes and Pharisees
- Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect
- Don't even LOOK at someone with lustful thoughts
- Love your enemies
- Don't be anxious about ANYTHING

Today's study continues this theme.

Matthew 5:3–12 the Beatitudes: the character of the people of the Kingdom of Heaven – its "blessing" or "happiness".

Matthew 5:13–16 salt and light.

The longest discourse in the Sermon is **Matthew 5:17–48**, Jesus fulfils and reinterprets the Old Covenant and in particular its Ten Commandments, contrasting with what "you have heard" from others.

In **Matthew 6** Jesus condemns doing what would normally be "good works" simply for recognition and not from the heart, such as those of alms (6:1–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18). The discourse goes on to condemn the superficiality of materialism and call the disciples not to worry about material needs, but to "seek" God's kingdom first.

Matthew 7:1–6 deals with judging. Jesus condemns those who judge others before first judging themselves.

Matthew 7:7–29 Jesus concludes the sermon by warning against false prophets and emphasizing that we are unable to do right ("bear fruit") apart from God.

This term continues the study of Matthew's gospel started in Spring 2017.

January 3 rd	Matthew 5: 38-48
January 17 th	Matthew 6: 1-4, 19-34
January 31 st	Matthew 6: 15-18
February 14th	Matthew 7: 1-14
February 21 st	Matthew 7: 15-29
March 7 th	Matthew 8: 1-22
March 21 st	Matthew 8: 23-34, 9: 1-17
April 4 th	Matthew 9: 18-34

Today's study divides into four sections. In each section we must

1. Understand the historical and cultural context
2. Understand what Jesus is saying to us
3. Consider what that means to us, today.

Matthew 7: 1-5 – Our Attitude to other believers

1. "Judge not, that you be not judged.
2. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
3. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
4. Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?
5. You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Q1: In what sense is Jesus using the word judge in verse 1?

Pronouncing another person guilty before God.

Q2: Can you explain the meaning of verse 2?

Undue harshness and a judgemental attitude towards others will result in being treated the same way by God

Q3: The example in verses 3 to 5 is clearly an exaggeration. What does it really mean?

The speck in the eye refers to sin.

The log or plank in our own eye refers to our own sin.

We are warned that we should not behave as if we are better or more righteous than others.

Removing the plank from our own eye relates to confessing our own sins and being repentant. Then Jesus says that we in turn can help others to change their ways.

Q4: If you saw a group member drifting off course, what would you do? Have you ever had experience of this?

There are many answers to this.

Sometimes, a gentle word is sufficient.

Sometimes, it is appropriate to involve others, including the leaders of the church.

Read Galatians 6: 1-4

1. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
2. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
3. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
4. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour

Matthew 7: 6 – Our Attitude to Unbelievers

6. "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Q5: What would the disciples understand the meaning of "dogs", "pigs" and "pearls" in this verse.

In the ancient world, dogs were not house pets and scavenged the streets for food. The Jews considered them to be unclean. Pigs were also rejected by the Jews as unclean.

Pearls are a symbol of value and refers to the message of the kingdom of heaven.

Q6: Who were the dogs and pigs that Jesus is referring to?

This needs to be read alongside the message of verses 1-5. Jesus urges us to be forgiving and slow to judge others. The dogs and pigs here probably symbolises people who are not receptive to the message. Jesus urges us not to continue indefinitely proclaiming the gospel to those who adamantly reject it. That does of course means that we do need to be able to discern the true nature of people (i.e. "judge" them).

Q7: Do we ever encounter "dogs" and "pigs" today? When might you, even for a limited time, give up bringing up your own Christian worldview in discussion with other?

This is another question with many answers.

Sometimes it is necessary to avoid talking about Jesus in a work situation where it would affect an important working relationship.

Sometimes it is necessary to avoid talking about Jesus to avoid destroying a personal relationship.

We can pray that there will be a time in the future when it will be right to talk about our Faith and that God will show us when the time is right.

Matthew 7: 7-11 – Our Attitude to God

7. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
8. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
9. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
10. Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?
11. If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Q8: "Ask and if will be given ...". How do we explain that sometimes God does not seem to respond to prayer?

Clearly God does not grant us everything we WANT, but he does supply us with what we NEED.

There are three instructions in verse 7, not just 1.

- Seek: That means that we need to search for the will of God
- Ask: What we ask for should be connected to the pursuit of the will of God
- Knock: We need to be prepared to be persistent in asking

Q9: What is the incentive to pray? Is prayer optional? Is prayer only for the especially holy?

Prayer is our way of talking to God. Prayer can comfort us and other people.

Is prayer optional? NO!

Is prayer only for the especially holy? NO!

St. Mary's encourages everyone to participate in prayer.

Q10: What does the parable in verses 9-11 mean?

Like the plank in the eye, this is also overstatement.

We have an inbuilt impulse to do what is right for our children. We are all God's children.

Q11: If God knows our needs, why do we need to pray?

Prayer isn't for God's benefit, He doesn't need us to inform him of our needs and wishes.

God calls us to pray for OUR own benefit. If we don't pray, we miss out on a huge part of our Christian life. Prayer is part of our relationship with God. Talking, asking and responding are how we can build that relationship. Prayer is not just about asking for things.

Read Matthew 6: 8b-13

8. ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
9. Pray then like this:
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
10. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
11. Give us this day our daily bread,
12. and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

How many lines of the Lord's prayer are asking God to meet our needs? Just one.

Q12: "I tried praying, but it didn't work". How do we respond to this claim?

This goes back to question 9.

God does not give us what we WANT, WHEN we think he should. He gives us what we NEED, WHEN He thinks we need it.

Sometimes what we pray for is not the right thing for us.

If we are ill, maybe extension of this life and extension of suffering is not appropriate. Maybe getting in to our first choice of university is not where God wants us to go.

Q13: How do we discern God's plans?

This is an easy one. We can only discern God's plans by listening to his word. Primarily by reading and studying the bible and getting instruction from good teachers.

Matthew 7:12 – Our attitude to all men

12. "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Q14: This is a very familiar verse. What are the practical implications?

It should influence every aspect of our lives. How we relate to others should be coloured by this verse. For example:

- How do we relate to the rather disreputable looking people on the streets?
- Do we choose to sit next to someone on their own that we don't particularly "like" in services?
- Are we prepared to give up our time to undertake jobs we don't particularly like, such as cleaning the toilets?

Matthew 7: 1-14

	NIV	ESV	ESV Study Bible	AMP	Message
	Judging Others	Judging Others		Judging Others	A Simple Guide for Behaviour
1	"Do not judge, or you too will be judged.	"Judge not, that you be not judged.	Judge not forbids pronouncing another person guilty before God. But see note on vv. 3–5. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged. Undue harshness and a judgmental attitude toward others will result in being treated in much the same way by God.	Do not judge and criticize and condemn [others unfairly with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge], so that you will not be judged [unfairly].	"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbour's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt? It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbour.
2	For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.	For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.		For just as you [hypocritically] judge others [when you are sinful and unrepentant], so will you be judged; and in accordance with your standard of measure [used to pass out judgment], judgment will be measured to you.	
3	"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?"	Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?	Jesus may have drawn on his background as a carpenter (13:55; Mark 6:3) for his metaphor of a log in your own eye, which of course was hyperbole (intentional overstatement; cf. Matt. 5:29–30). then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.	Why do you look at the [insignificant] speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice and acknowledge the [egregious] log that is in your own eye?	
4	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?	Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?	Jesus does not forbid all evaluation or even judgment of others, for ultimately the one who feels grieved and humbled over his own sin can help remove the "speck" from others. What Jesus does rule out is pride that views oneself as better than others (cf. Gal. 6:1).	Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me get the speck out of your eye,' when there is a log in your own eye?	
5	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.	You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.		You hypocrite (play-actor, pretender), first get the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.	
6	"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to	"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls	In the ancient world, dogs lived in squalor and scavenged the streets for food (Ps. 59:14–15). Jews considered	"Do not give that which is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, for they will	

	pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.	before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.	them unclean and used the term to describe those apart from, or enemies of, Israel's covenant community (cf. 1 Sam. 17:43 ; Ps. 22:16 ; Prov. 26:11). Pigs were rejected by Jews, probably because they too were scavenging animals, and they were unclean according to OT law. Pearls symbolize the great value of the message of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 13:45–46). Believers are to be merciful, forgiving, and slow to judge (7:1–5), yet they should wisely discern the true character of people and not indefinitely continue proclaiming the gospel to those who adamantly reject it, so that they can move on and proclaim the gospel to others (cf. 10:14 ; also Acts 13:46 ; 18:6 ; Titus 3:10–11).	trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.	slogans. In trying to be relevant, you're only being cute and inviting sacrilege.
	Ask, Seek, Knock	Ask, and It Will Be Given		Prayer and the Golden Rule	
7	"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.	"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.	Ask. Disciples should come to God in humility and awareness of need. Seek connects one's prayer with responsible action in pursuing the will of God. Knock suggests perseverance. Disciples are to persist in prayer, confident that their Father will provide whatever is best for them, according to his sovereign, gracious will.	Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you.	"Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?
8	For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.	For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.		For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened.	
9	"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?	Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?		Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will [instead] give him a stone?	
10	Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?	Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?		Or if he asks for a fish, will [instead] give him a snake?	

11	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!	If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!	you ... who are evil. Earthly parents have an innate impulse to do what is best for their children, yet they are flawed as a result of sin's corruption of all humanity through the fall of Adam and Eve (cf. Rom. 5:12–14), and the quality of their parenting does not match God's. This is an example of a "how much more" argument frequently used in Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matt. 10:25; 12:12; Luke 11:13; 12:24; cf. Heb. 9:14).	If you then, evil (sinful by nature) as you are, know how to give good and advantageous gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven [perfect as He is] give what is good and advantageous to those who keep on asking Him.	
12	So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.	The Golden Rule "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.	do also to them. Known as "the Golden Rule," this verse summarizes the teaching of the Law and the Prophets (see note on 5:17). The way in which one wants to be treated should determine the way that one treats others. This should come naturally for believers who love God with all their heart and soul and mind, and who love their neighbour as themselves (22:37–40).	"So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you, for this is [the essence of] the Law and the [writings of the] Prophets.	"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behaviour: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get.
	The Narrow and Wide Gates			The Narrow and Wide Gates	Being and Doing
13	"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.	"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.		"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad and easy to travel is the path that leads the way to destruction and eternal loss, and there are many who enter through it.	"Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with sure-fire, easy-going formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.
14	But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.	For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.		But small is the gate and narrow and difficult to travel is the path that leads the way to [everlasting] life, and there are few who find it.	