

April 5, 2026 (Lesson 5)

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Do Not Be a Faultfinder** (Matthew 7:1-6)
2. **Persist in Prayer** (Matthew 7:7-11)
3. **Love Others as Yourself** (Matthew 7:12; 22:34-40)

Central Truth: Followers of Christ are called to live like Christ.

Focus: Consider how a Christian is to relate to others and behave consistently with this.

Evangelism Emphasis: Living according to Christ's teachings on relationships can encourage unbelievers to accept Him.

Golden Text: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

After elaborating on how His disciples should view material possessions, Jesus taught on how they should treat and relate to one another. This continued His teaching on what life in God's kingdom should look like for His followers.

Jesus criticized the religious leaders for being hypocrites, pretending to be righteous just to impress others (6:1–18). Now He warned that even His disciples can fall into the trap of hypocrisy (7:1–5). Jesus then warned about the opposite danger—lacking discernment (v. 6). Balancing between these two extremes is impossible by human effort alone, so He talked more about prayer, showing His disciples how to seek God's help to live wisely in this and all other challenges (vv. 7–12). Living by Christ's principles will help us not to be too quick to judge and will help us to love others as we love ourselves, while also making us cautious of those who could cause real harm.

1. DO NOT BE A FAULTFINDER

A. The Danger of Condemning Others (Matthew 7:1-2)

¹ Judge not, that ye be not judged. ² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Jesus began this section with a warning against judging others. The Greek word for *judge* can refer to official legal decisions, but it broadly means "to make judgments or form opinions about people and situations." It can suggest not only assessing or evaluating but also condemning or

seeking revenge. The verb itself is not always negative, but the example that follows highlights a focus on criticizing other people's shortcomings. The warning "or you too will be judged" (v. 1 NIV) makes it clear this kind of judgment is something to avoid. *Judging* is "the tendency to always point out what is wrong with what others say and do." It is a harmful attitude. A critic often thinks they are better than others, which gives them a false sense of entitlement to judge others' mistakes.

The reason for the warning is explained using examples from the marketplace, where measurements were used to determine amounts (v. 2). A "measure" could be a scale, a container, or a stick for measuring weight or distance. Here, it is used figuratively to represent God's fair and equal judgment. It strongly emphasizes that the same standard we use to judge others will be applied to us. This warning against judgment does not mean we should ignore sin. It cautions us against being overly harsh or critical in our judgments.

Moreover, this warning about judging others contrasts with the positive promise Jesus mentioned in the fifth beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (5:7). We who have experienced God's mercy must show mercy to others instead of judging them. Since we have been forgiven, we will forgive others. After God has shown us such mercy despite our many shortcomings, how can we possibly treat others in a harsh and unkind way? In other words, if we make a habit of judging others, it shows we are not citizens of God's kingdom.

Dropped Stones

In John 8:1-11, the story of the woman caught in adultery illustrates how Christians should relate to others. When religious leaders bring her to Jesus to condemn her, He responds with grace, saying that the one without sin should cast the first stone. After they leave, Jesus tells the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (v. 11). This illustrates the importance of treating others with kindness and understanding, reflecting the love we wish to receive.

B. Self-Judgment (Matthew 7:3-6)

³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. ⁶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Jesus illustrated the absurdity of being judgmental by using an exaggerated example: the speck and the plank. This shows how wrong it is to point out someone else's flaw when our own is much bigger. It also emphasizes that we cannot sincerely offer to help others until we have addressed our own larger issue. It is not wrong to notice or try to help someone with their shortcomings (see Matt. 18:15–17). However, if we are unaware of our own bigger flaws, we are not in the right position to offer help. This kind of behavior is another form of hypocrisy, especially when we judge fellow believers whose sins God has already forgiven. Once we have faced our own shortcomings, we can then approach others with gentleness and love, aiming to help restore them, not tear them down. The goal is to lift them up, just as we have been lifted by God's grace.

The idea of giving sacred things to dogs and valuable pearls to pigs emphasizes the importance of being wise and discerning in our choices (7:6). The dogs described here are wild scavengers. The pigs best represent unclean animals for Jews. Both are natural opposites to what is holy or, like pearls, of great value. This verse can be quite confusing, but the phrase “what is sacred” (NIV) likely refers to the message of the Gospel. It suggests this good news should not be shared with people who are unwilling to listen to or follow Jesus. The references to “dogs” and “swine” represent those who are openly hostile to the Gospel. Something so important should not be offered to those who have shown they do not value it. When we face resistance or hostility, we are not to persist but, as

emphasized in Matthew 10:13-14, should move on to reach others with the message. The focus here is on a lack of receptivity, not on the worthiness of any individual or group.

§ *Why can it be easy to criticize the small imperfections of others while ignoring our own major character flaws?*

How can we overcome this?

2. PERSIST IN PRAYER

A. Ask, Seek, Knock (Matthew 7:7-8)

⁷ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: ⁸ For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

This section of the Sermon on the Mount might seem out of place compared to what came before. However, if Jesus just told His disciples they should not judge but to be discerning, they would need to “ask . . . seek . . . [and] knock” to receive strength to obey His teachings. This section also connects to Jesus’ message to His disciples to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (6:33 NKJV). His instructions include three commands—ask, seek, and knock—along with three promises that follow. The commands are in the present tense, showing they represent ongoing actions. In other words, we should continue to ask, continue to seek, and continue to knock until we receive, find, and have doors opened for us.

To “ask” clearly relates to prayer, but “seek” and “knock” also serve as metaphors for prayer. These commands highlight the active and persistent nature of prayer. Jesus’ disciples are called to continually ask the Father as a way of life, to consistently pursue God’s will, and to maintain a strong determination to expect answers from God.

Seeking God’s Face

There comes a moment when just asking isn’t enough. What have you lost? What has the enemy stolen? Seeking God’s face with all that is within us brings with it the promise that we will find; God

will bring back what we thought was lost. The reason I say “thought” is that, in seeking Him with all of our hearts and getting into proper alignment with His goals and priorities, sometimes we find that what we thought we lost or needed is no longer important. We find that in seeking Him, we discover all we truly need.—Ron Phillips

B. The Father’s Goodness (Matthew 7:9-11)

⁹ Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

To emphasize the significance of persistent and expectant prayer, Jesus used three rhetorical questions (vv. 9-11). In the context of a Jewish daily diet, bread and fish were staples. The questions paint a picture of a parent’s unimaginable response to a child’s request. Instead of simply denying the food they genuinely seek, they offer something that might resemble bread and fish but is actually worthless or harmful. Even the best human parents, compared to the heavenly Father, are imperfect. If earthly fathers, with their imperfections, naturally know how to care for their children, how much more will our heavenly Father, who is perfectly holy and good, give His children what they need when they ask Him? This contrast emphasizes the truly “good” nature of the gifts the heavenly Father provides for His children.

In Matthew’s account, the promise of “good things” is general and unspecified, while Luke specifically mentions the Holy Spirit as the Father’s “good” gift (Luke 11:13). Although the examples are food items (Matt. 7:9-10), the wording of the promise is wide enough to contain any “good” thing for disciples, including the gift of the Spirit.

§ *How does James 1:17 describe the gifts the heavenly Father gives to His children? What are some of those gifts?*

3. LOVE OTHERS AS YOURSELF

A. Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

¹²Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Considering God's generosity toward us, we should willingly treat others as we would like to be treated (7:12), a principle known as the Golden Rule. Treating others well is a central focus throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus emphasized this rule summarizes "the law and the prophets," highlighting its importance. A reference to "the law" and "the prophets" appears both at the beginning (5:17) and end of this sermon (7:12), creating a framing effect. This indicates Jesus' teaching fulfilled and summarized the teachings of the Old Testament.

The Golden Rule reflects what God desires from His children. It is a great principle for living well, both for yourself and in your relationships with others. Whenever you are unsure about what to do, consider how you would like to be treated, and treat others that way.

Positive Words

The so-called Golden Rule is somewhat similar to that of several other religions and philosophies with this general distinction: The golden rules of non-Christian religions are negative in form, but the words of Jesus are positive. The rule is the practical expression of Christian love, and is, therefore, an obligation for all who love Jesus Christ. This obligation raises some questions. What are my personal desires as a Christian? What are my responsibilities to others? How can I fulfill them? Am I the kind of person that I think others ought to be? If everybody were like me in spirit, would this be the kind of world God could smile upon and all people would enjoy?

B. The Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The Pharisees challenged Jesus to summarize the Law by pointing out its “great commandment” (v. 36). In this context, “the law” refers to the whole Old Testament. “The great” commandment means the most important one. Jesus answered the challenge by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Matt. 22:37 NKJV). This verse from Deuteronomy, known as the Shema, was familiar to the Jewish community because it was recited twice daily and written on their doorposts, as God instructed (Deut. 6:8-9). As a result, the Shema was a central part of Jewish life. Without question, loving God wholeheartedly is the greatest commandment. However, Jesus did not stop there. He quoted further from the Old Testament, saying, “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:39 NKJV; Lev. 19:18). This second commandment goes hand in hand with the first. While love for God is the greatest commandment, it is incomplete without also loving our neighbors as ourselves.

In this light, these two commandments are like the Golden Rule, for they capture the essence of “all the law and the prophets” by emphasizing inside-out righteousness (Matt. 22:40). Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed this was God’s intention all along. Moses highlighted this when he instructed that the commandments should be written on the hearts of the people (Deut. 6:6) rather than just followed on the outside, for they are all about loving God and other people. These commandments are the most important because they show how God wants us to live in His kingdom: by loving God and others. Therefore, following the Golden Rule is a central part of being a disciple of Jesus.

§ *How did Jesus Christ fully obey the two greatest commandments?*

A HIGHER STANDARD

Life in God's kingdom requires us to have a higher standard in our relationships with others. Jesus teaches us not to judge harshly but to respond with love and compassion. The Golden Rule—treating others as we want to be treated—serves as a guide for how we should behave. By loving our neighbors and recognizing our own flaws, we build a community that reflects the values of Christ's kingdom. As Christians, our behavior should consistently match these teachings, creating relationships built on grace, understanding, and kindness. Living this way not only honors God but also helps us grow closer to one another as we seek to demonstrate Kingdom principles in our everyday lives.

Daily Devotions

- M. Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (Leviticus 19:9-18)
- T. Example of Faultfinding (2 Samuel 6:15-23)
- W. Example of Persistent Prayer (Psalm 55:16-19)
- T. Parable About Loving One's Neighbor (Luke 10:25-37)
- F. Be Persistent in Prayer (Luke 11:5-13)
- S. Wrong and Right Judgments (John 9:1-7, 24, 31-34)