

How to Improve Your Personal Relationships

Matthew 7:1-12

Intro:

1. Normally when you think of relationships, you think of horizontal relationships - with your spouse, your neighbors & friends, the family cat, etc.
2. Spiritually, however, you also have a vertical relationship with God.
3. This passage shows you how to enhance your relationship with both!

I. v1-6 & 12 - How to Have a Right Relationship with Others

A. v1-5 - By having the right attitude.

1. **v1 - Judge** (κρίνω) = come to a conclusion, rule, govern. This is where we get our word “criticism” & “hypocrite”.
2. So - to criticize is to make yourself another person’s judge!
3. **v3-5 - ILL: The Sliver & the Board.**
 - a. The same substance was in each eye - wood.
 - b. The same fault was larger in the critic’s eye.
 - c. Removing a sliver from an eye is a serious operation requiring good vision. But - the surgeon was blind!
 - d. **The lesson:** The only one qualified to correct a fault in another person is the one who has been successful at correcting that same fault in themselves!

4. Judgments the Lord wants you to make:

- a. **Rom 16:17** - I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. You are to determine who the false teachers are!
- b. **I Jn 4:1-3** - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You are to decide if teachings are true or false!
- c. **I Cor 5:11** - But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. You must not tolerate gross immorality in other Christians!

B. v12 - By having the right conduct.

1. The “Golden Rule” can be expressed 3 ways:
 - a. **Positively:** Decide to do for others what you would want them to do for you. Love them!
 - b. **Negatively:** Decide not to treat others the way you would not want to be treated yourself!
 - c. **Responsively:** Decide to do for others what you would want them to do for you even when they are treating you badly! **Rom 12:20** - If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. (Prov 25:21-22)
2. **ILL: “Sweeping Instructions”.**

II. v7-11 - How to Have a Right Relationship with God

A. v7 - By asking in prayer.

1. v9-11 - Your Heavenly Father wants to supply your needs as least as much as an earthly father would want to give to his child!
 - a. A limestone rock in Israel looks a lot like a loaf of bread - but don't try to bite into it!
 - b. A snake looks a lot like a harmless water eel - but will bite you with venomous poison if you pick it up!
2. God wants to answer your prayer - but there are conditions for effective prayers!
 - a. Jn 14:14 - **You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**
 - b. Matt 21:22 - **If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.**
 - c. I Jn 5:14-15 - **This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.**
 - d. Jer 33:3 - **Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.**
3. You must ask with perseverance!
 - a. ILL: **Abraham asked 6 times for Sodom's deliverance (Gen 18).**
 - b. ILL: **Jacob wrestled with the heavenly being until he got his blessing (Gen 32:22-30).**
 - c. ILL: **Elijah prayed until he saw the little cloud on the horizon (I Kgs 18:41-45).**

B. v7 - By seeking in Bible Study.

1. Prayer saturated by Bible study helps you pray within God's will.
2. Bible study saturated by prayer helps you understand better what you read.

C. v7 - By the knocking of Christian service.

1. Knocking is an activity where you expect the door to open!
2. God opens doors to those who are really serious about service.
3. When the doors of service open, you receive joy, meaning & purpose in your life.

This is how you can enhance your relationships, both horizontally & vertically - with God & your fellow man. And when they are you can experience what the Lord meant when He said, "I have come that you might have life & that you might have it more abundantly"! - John 10:10