

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How to Improve Your Personal Relationships

Matthew 7:1-12

1 Normally when you think of relationships you think of the horizontal relationships with your spouse, your neighbors and friends, the family cat, etc. Spiritually, however, you have a vertical relationship with God. Matthew, chapter 7, verses 1 through 12 show you how to enhance your relationship with both! 2

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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? 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? 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. 1

3

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under

¹ v1-5.

their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ² ₄

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. ³ ₅

Verses 1 through 6 and verse 12 tell us . . .

² v6-8.

³ v9-12.

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

How to have a right relationship with others. ⁶

The first 6 verses tell us it's by having the right attitude. ⁷

The word “judge”, ⁴ in the first verse, means to come to a conclusion, to rule or govern. This is where we get our English word “criticism” and “hypocrite”. ⁸ So when you criticize you make yourself another person's judge. ⁹

In verses 3 through 5 the Lord tells the story of the sliver and the board. 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? 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? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own

⁴ κρίνω.

eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ¹⁰

Notice that the same substance was in each eye; wood! ¹¹ The same fault was larger in the critic's eye. ¹² Removing a sliver from an eye is a serious operation requiring good vision. But the surgeon was blind! ¹³

The lesson here is 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! ¹⁴

There are some judgments the Lord wants you to make. ¹⁵

Romans, chapter 16, verse 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! ¹⁶

In First John, chapter 4, verses 1 through 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. You are to decide if teachings are true or false!** ¹⁷

Then, in First Corinthians, chapter 5: verse 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!**

So you must pass judgment. Just use the right attitude when you do. ¹⁸

The second way to have an better relationship with others is by having the right conduct. Practice the

Golden Rule! Verse 12 says, *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* ¹⁹

The Golden Rule can be expressed three ways. ²⁰

It can be expressed **positively**. Decide to do for others what you would want them to do for you. In other words; love them! ²¹

It can be expressed **negatively**. Decide not to treat others the way you would not want to be treated yourself! ²²

But most importantly, it should be also expressed **responsively**. Decide to do for others what you would want them to do for you even when they are treating you badly! ²³ Quoting Proverbs, chapter 25, verse 21 and 22, the Apostle Paul said, *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.*

5

⁵ Romans 12:20.

Some pious members of a church visited another member to reprimand him for one of his faults. Knowing some of the glaring faults they had he patiently waited for them to finish their criticism. After humbly acknowledging his sin he told them this story. The other night he had a dream where all the church members got together to plan how to clean up the worship center at their church. No conclusion was reached. Finally one of the members said, “I think if we’d each take a broom and begin sweeping around our own seat, the place would be cleaned up very quickly.” They got the point!

This passage of scripture tells us the way to have a right relationship with others is to have the right attitude and the right conduct towards them. ²⁴

Verse 7 through 11 tell us . . .

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

How to have a right relationship with God.

Let's focus on verse 7, Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ²⁵

The first way is to ask in prayer. ²⁶ **Verses 9 through 11⁶ tell us that your Heavenly Father wants to supply your needs at least as much as an earthly father would want to give to his child!** ²⁷

A limestone rock in Israel looks a lot like a loaf of bread. But don't try to bite into it! ²⁸

A snake looks a lot like a harmless water eel, but it will bite you with venomous poison if you pick it up! ²⁹

God wants to answer your prayer; but there are conditions for having effective prayers. ³⁰

⁶ Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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!

John, chapter 14, verse 14, says, You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. ³¹

Matthew, chapter 21, verse 22, If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. ³²

First John, chapter 5, verses 14 and 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. ³³

Jeremiah, chapter 33, verse 3, Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. ³⁴

You must continue to ask with perseverance! Don't give up. ³⁵

In Genesis, chapter 18, Abraham asked the heavenly beings six times for Sodom's deliverance. ³⁶

In Genesis, chapter 32, verses 22 through 30, Jacob wrestled with the heavenly being until he got his blessing. ³⁷

In First Kings, chapter 18, verses 41 through 45, Elijah prayed until he saw the little cloud on the horizon of the Mediterranean Sea.

So asking in prayer helps your relationship with God.

38

The second way, in verse 7, is by **seeking God in Bible study.** 39

Prayer saturated by Bible study helps you pray within God's will. 40 Bible study saturated with prayer helps you understand better what you read. 41

The third way, in verse 7, is by the **knocking of Christian service.** 42

Knocking is an activity where you expect the door to open! 43 God opens doors to those who are really serious about Christian service. 44 When the doors of service open, you receive joy, meaning and purpose in your life!

This is how you can enhance your relationships, both horizontally and vertically; with God and your fellow man. ⁴⁵

When they are, you can experience what the Lord meant when He said, “I have come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly!”

7

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>

⁷ John 10:10.