

September 29, 2024

Matthew 7:7-12 ESV

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

Scriptures for further study:

1 John 4:10, 19

Romans 3:20

Romans 5:8

Galatians 3:3

John 15:1-11

Psalms 1

In explaining the cultural version of the Golden Rule, James Montgomery Boice wrote, "They say, 'Do not do anything to anyone that you would not want them to do unto you'."

In teaching about the Biblical version of the Golden Rule, Sinclair Ferguson wrote, "But what Jesus says is limitless in its demands and scope. His teaching is both positive and all-embracing in our lives."



Following Jesus: From Self-Love to the Love of Others Matthew 7:7-12

BIG IDEA: Because followers of Jesus are a new creation, then we may live for God and love others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

OUTLINE

1. Cultural Version of the Golden Rule
2. Actual Golden Rule
3. Living Out the Golden Rule

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What is the difference between the cultural version and the Biblical version of the Golden Rule? With which version are you more familiar?
2. Why is the Golden Rule inadequate as the sole part of the Christian life?
3. How is the Golden Rule bad news for us?
4. How are we to live out the Golden Rule?
5. Give some examples of ways that you could follow the Golden Rule this week.

“The reason we need the cross is that we turn the Golden Rule into rust. The reason we need redemption is that we have not treated our neighbor as we would have our neighbor treat us. We need salvation because we have violated each other and because we have violated God.”

-R.C. Sproul

“The Lord will give us his mercy, the forgiveness of our sins. The same Jesus who laid down all these laws also gave his life for those who would break them. He will give us his Spirit, so that we might see our neighbor with more of the eyes of Jesus, the eyes of love, and might serve that neighbor and serve our Lord.”

- Dan Doriani

“...when God enters your life at the moment of your conversion a new life is created by which the new you – fed and nourished by the Spirit of God – is made capable of attaining increasingly to all that God requires.”

- James Montgomery Boice

The Christian life “is knowing the grace of God working so powerfully in your heart that you are freed from the mastery of sin and self over your life.”

- Sinclair Ferguson

Praise to Jesus. Praise God this week for His love, which He showed by sending Jesus to be the Savior of sinners like us. Let us worship Him for the sending of His Spirit to indwell us and to empower us to follow Him.

Repentance through Jesus. Ask God to give you a vision of the sinfulness of your sin and the deceitfulness of your heart without Christ. Take time this week to confess your sin for the times when you thought more about yourself and missed the needs of those around you.

Consecration for Jesus. Let us ask God to remind us each day of our new identity in Him, our union with Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Meditate on God’s sovereignty and His unlimited strength, especially as it relates to how those attributes give us the power to love God and love others. Then, let us meet with a Christian friend to discuss how you can live out the Golden Rule this week.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Known as "the Golden Rule," this verse summarizes the teaching of "the Law and the Prophets." 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, soul, and mind and who love their neighbor as themselves. - ESV Study Bible

A proper understanding of the Golden Rule begins with its context. Matthew 7: 1–11 lists various obligations of a disciple. With our brothers, we should offer help, not judgment. With God, we pray with confidence, knowing he will care for us. But the same verses also sum up Jesus' teaching. After hearing all his exposition of the life of discipleship, Jesus says, apply it to yourself, not others. Take the log out of your own eye, instead of poking around in other people's eyes (7: 1–6). Further, when we hear all the commands and feel overwhelmed, we must ask God for help (7: 7–11). If we should forget our duties to our neighbors, we can remember this summary: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (7:12).

- Dan Doriani

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. Outside of church worship, Sunday school, and Wednesday night, have you heard about the Golden Rule? If so, where or who has told you about the Golden Rule?
2. What does the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) teach us? (It teaches us to love others as we would like to be loved.)
3. Discuss some examples of how to follow the Golden Rule.
4. Why is the Golden Rule so difficult or even impossible to follow? (Talk with your children about our sinful hearts. Children understand what sin is, such as lying or stealing. But most children struggle to understand the Biblical concept of our sinful heart and how we are incapable of loving others, as Jesus taught in our passage. We want to make sure our children understand that the only way to truly follow the Golden Rule is to repent of our sin and to follow Christ as our Lord and Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit.)
5. How does the Golden Rule lead us to the confession of our sin and point us to Jesus? (The Golden Rule, like all the commands in the Bible, confronts us with our sin and exposes our sin to us. Then the Holy Spirit leads us to remember Christ's death on the cross for our sins, Christ's resurrection from the dead to defeat sin and death, and of Christ's ascension to heaven where He rules over all things.)
6. How can we truly follow the Golden Rule this week? (We can do this by daily repenting of our sin and asking the Spirit to empower us to follow Jesus. Remind your children that part of God's plan with us as His Church is to support and encourage each other to follow Christ every day.)

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 22:34-40

Mark 10:45

1 John 4:19

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Galatians 5:14

1. Why do you think Jesus referred to the Golden Rule (7:12) as the “summary of the law and the prophets.” Can you think of any passages in the Old Testament where this idea is presented?
2. Does this teaching of Jesus tell us to wait to do good to other people until they do good to us? What is Jesus really trying to get us to do here?
3. Do you see people in your life (at your schools, on your sports teams, etc.) or in our culture making it a priority to try and live by the “Golden Rule”? Why or why not? Should we expect people who do not know Jesus to live like this?
4. Jesus says later in the Gospel of Matthew (22:37-40) that the two greatest commandments are to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And to love your neighbor as yourself.” Why is it challenging for us at times to follow these two greatest commands?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. The word “so” at the beginning of verse 12 links this verse with the preceding material and in some ways serves as a summary of what Jesus has been preaching throughout the Sermon on the Mount. But it also links to the earlier verses in Matthew 7:1-6 and serves as a final dictum about not judging others.

Question: How do Jesus’ words in 7:12 compare to and even elevate the previous teaching in 7:1-6?

2. Later in Matthew’s Gospel (22:39), Jesus says something almost identical to Matthew 7:12—”Love your neighbor as yourself.” This statement is preceded by the command to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind” (22:37).

Question: Why is Jesus intentional about placing things in this order? Why is it necessary to love God before loving our neighbors?

3. As with all of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, living with this kind of righteousness (and in particular loving others as Jesus describes in 7:12) is a pretty tall order! In fact, it is not possible unless Jesus first changes our own hearts, and then gives us his grace and power to love others as he has loved us.

Question: If you are not yet a believer, do you acknowledge your need for a totally new heart? Would you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, give you a new heart, and make him the driving power and motivation of your life?!

4. Doing to others what we would have them do to us is a brilliant and wise way to think about how we should treat others.

Exercise: Take a few minutes to think about the ways you like to be treated. Reflect on your likes and dislikes. Think of times when someone treated you in a way that was uplifting, gracious, etc. Let that sink in. Then ask God to show you specific ways you can encourage someone today.

5. It is always easy to point out what is wrong “out there” and all the problems in the world.

Question: What if we started with what is wrong “in here”? How does my own heart towards others need to change, and what can I do to love the people near me? What specific actions can I take as a result of this reflection?

Following Jesus: Finding Fulfillment and Faith in the One Who is Greater



*Raphael, School of Athens, 1509-1511, fresco
(Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican)*

About the artwork.

What is the connection between an eighteen-by-twenty-five-foot wall decoration of ancient men in robes and the Gospel of Matthew?

Raphael, the rock star of the Renaissance, organized his painting of fifty-three of the most outstanding scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, poets, and artists of all time thematically into five groups. Each group contains a leader(s) and those following him/them. Matthew tells the good news of Jesus in a way that highlights the theme and invitation from Jesus to “follow me.” In addition, Matthew organizes his Gospel around five sermons: Kingdom Law, Kingdom Mission, Kingdom Nature, Kingdom Authority, and Kingdom Judgement.

Front and center in Raphael’s painting are the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Raphael placed Plato and Aristotle in the center to show that they represent the pinnacle of human philosophy. They were the “prophets” of their day. Plato pointing up and Aristotle pointing down. Matthew shows us that Jesus is the true and greater prophet who unites knowledge of heaven, truths known and experienced only through him, with earthly ephemeral realities that can be experienced and described empirically but understood through him.

Raphael chose a forum from ancient Rome as the setting. The architecture in the painting represents well the Roman arch, which was a symbol of victory. Matthew is known and loved by millions, though his life’s ambition was to follow Jesus. He told the good news that in Jesus Christ, we have victory and kingship because he is the greater son of David, the Messiah.

Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew.

Before he met Jesus, a Jewish man named Levi, who lived in Capernaum, worked in a booth collecting taxes for the Roman Empire. Because of his profession, Levi was the most hated man in town until Jesus walked by and said to him, "Follow me." About thirty years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, Levi, whom Jesus renamed Matthew, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down his version of Jesus's life, the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, King, Prophet, Son of David, and Son of God. Jesus ushers in and establishes the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the rule and reign of God here on earth. Jesus calls his citizens to embrace Him as king through faith, teaches them about this "new world order" as a prophet, and then calls them to follow Him as the redeemer by going out into the world to tell the nations. Because Jesus is King, he has all authority; as Prophet, what he says is true, and as Savior, only he can offer redemption.

Read or listen to Matthew's gospel. Look for King Jesus exerting his authority over the natural world through healing and the supernatural by casting out demons. Pay attention to what the crowds say about him. Listen to Prophet Jesus as he teaches, rebukes, and tells about who he is. See him as Savior life and the way to the coming Kingdom.

Each of the four gospels uniquely depicts the story of Jesus. The story is so vast that it takes four Holy Spirit-inspired men to attempt to capture it. Matthew organized his story around five of Jesus' discourses, teachings, and sermons. The sermon series walks through the discourses.

1st Matthew 5-7 Kingdom Law

2nd Matthew 10 Kingdom Mission

3rd Matthew 13 Kingdom Nature

4th Matthew 18 Kingdom Authority

5th Matthew 23-25 Kingdom Judgement

According to Pastor Bill, the big idea of Matthew's gospel is, "Come to Jesus and learn about the kingdom of God, then go into the world to advance His kingdom by following Him in faith." May you, like Matthew and countless others, come to Jesus, follow Him in faith, experience heart transformation, and advance His Kingdom in your home, work, neighborhood, and the world!