

9. [optional] How do these verses help you to “seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness”?

10. At a practical level, how will verses 9-11 shape your prayer life?

11. [optional] Have you ever noticed that verse 12 (the so called “Golden Rule”) begins with the word, “therefore...”? (this is particularly apparent in the Greek, but is sometimes overlooked in English translations). What connection do you think “doing to others as you would have them do for you” (verse 12) has with “asking and receiving, seeking and finding, knocking and the door being opened” (verses 7-11)?

12. For to whom do you need to do something that you wish they would do for you?

Application

What things will you all particularly pray for between now and your next meeting? At the beginning of your next meeting, take a few minutes to see how God has answered your prayers.

8 The Blessed Life

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7

Living Kingdom Priority and Righteousness

Matthew 7:1-12

Introduction

In the previous unit (Matthew 6:19-35) Jesus reflected on the implications of the first commandment-- ‘you shall have no other gods before me’. We cannot serve both God and money. Instead, wherever our heart is, there our treasure will be also. Further, worry and anxiety betray a lack of trust in the providential goodness of God. And so, at the conclusion of the warnings of that unit, Jesus urged his followers to “seek first God’s Kingdom and his righteousness...”. In this passage Jesus now unpacks that command. The details of this passage show us what Jesus thinks it means to “seek first God’s Kingdom and his righteousness”.

For discussion

What do you think it means to ‘do righteousness’? Can you think of some examples of ‘doing righteousness’ in our everyday lives?

In the Old Testament ‘righteousness is not merely a ‘state’, where a person is legally ‘in the right’. Instead, ‘doing right’ or ‘doing what pleases God’ is directly linked; in the same way that ‘faith without actions is dead’ (James 2:17-26). So examples of ‘doing righteousness’ from the Old Testament can be found in Isaiah 56:1-2; 59:9-16; Hosea 10:12; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Amos 5:15; Zechariah 7:9). Remember that Jesus also talks about almsgiving, prayer and fasting as ‘acts of righteousness’ in Matthew 6:1ff.

Read Matthew 7:1-12

1. From your reading of this passage, broadly, what does Jesus say is involved in “seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness” ?

Discernment in the Kingdom - Matthew 7:1-6

We can all probably think of occasions when we have been the victim of unfair judgements: perhaps people have formed opinions us unfairly and then broadcast them around for all to hear. So, when Jesus urges his followers in Matthew 7:1 not to “judge,” we would naturally like to apply that to our detractors and exhort them not to judge us. In fact, we would like to say, they should never judge anyone or anything!

2. How do you think this command “not to judge” should be understood? *In considering your answer, you may like to compare Matthew 7:1 with 7:6 and 7:16, where Jesus requires us to make judgments of some sort. You might also like to consider Luke 12:57-59 and John 7:24.*

3. In the second part of verse 2, we see Jesus explain the reason we ought not to ‘judge’ by noting that “with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” What do you think ought to be the basis upon which we “judge” other people?

On the matter of making judgments in relation to other Christians, you may like to look at one or two of the following passages: Romans 14:1-8; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:1-6; 10:15; 14:29; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.

4. Verses 3-5 introduce the idea of ‘judging’ ourselves first. Why do you think the world loves to label Christians as “hypocrites”? Do you think that this is justified? (cf Romans 2:1-4)
5. What can we do on a practical level in order to apply verses 3-5 to ourselves?
6. Matthew 7:6 seems to be a very strange expression to our 21st Century ears. What do you think it means?
7. What might verses 1-6 have to do with seeking to do ‘righteousness’?

Dependency in the Kingdom - Matthew 7:7-12

Verses 7-12 are well known to many Christians, even to the point that we immediately think we know all that they mean. The key idea is our absolute dependency on God.

8. Given that Jesus has already taught his disciples about prayer in Matthew 6:5-15, what else does Jesus bring to our understanding of prayer in these verses?