

# *The Sermon on the Mount* – Matthew 5–7

## ***A Christian's Relationships – 7:1-20*** (Part 1)

Having carefully described a Christian's *character*<sup>5:1-12</sup>, *influence*<sup>5:13-16</sup>, *moral righteousness*<sup>5:17-48</sup>, *religious righteousness*<sup>6:1-18</sup> and *ambition*<sup>6:19-34</sup>, Jesus taught about a Christian's *relationships*<sup>7:1-20</sup>. These verses present brief statements about relations between Christians and many people groups: their brothers, "dogs" and "pigs", their heavenly Father, all people, fellow pilgrims and false prophets. This study<sup>v.1-12</sup> will examine the first four of Jesus' instructions to Christians on relationships.

### **ATTITUDE TOWARD A BROTHER (7:1-5)**

#### **CHRISTIANS ARE NOT TO JUDGE AS JESUS CHRIST JUDGES**

7:1 The phrase: "**Do not judge...**" (*krinō*: to divide or separate) is a commonly misinterpreted statement. First, it does not refer to law courts, but is intended to address personal relationships. Next, the command refers to the ultimate judgement of eternity (grace or condemnation), and is not a directive to suspend critical thinking. Jesus often exhorted Christians to judge (discern) between right/wrong, goodness/evil<sup>Job 28:28, Psalm 97:10-11, Romans 12:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22</sup> in order to be salt and light in the world<sup>Matthew 5:13-16</sup>, as well as to be able to tell the difference between brothers/sisters<sup>1 John 4:20-21</sup> and enemies<sup>Luke 6:27</sup>, genuine teachers and false teachers<sup>2 Peter 2:1</sup>, righteous behavior and unrighteous behavior<sup>1 John 3:7-8</sup> (in order to take the plank out of their own eye or the sliver out of their brother's eye), etc. Of course, all this must be done within the criteria of Biblical principles. In fact, Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are based on the assumption that Christians will use their critical thinking skills provided by God to make correct value-judgements.

Jesus has been chosen by God the Father<sup>John 5:22, Acts 10:42</sup> to make the ultimate (eternal) judgements of all people, because He not only knows every act (work) of each person<sup>2 Corinthians 5:10</sup>, but also every mind-set/motivation of everyone during every behavioral act<sup>Ecclesiastes 12:14, Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 4:5</sup>.

7:2 The responsibility of a Christian is to assess people's behavior critically, not to judge them harshly. Jesus did not tell Christians to cease being human, creations made in the image of God, but He did/does require His followers to renounce any presumptuous ambition to be God.

Convicting thought: Should Christians want their true Judge, Jesus, to have their heart perspective when judging their sins/mistakes or should they leave it to His viewpoint of perfect grace and mercy?

#### **CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE BROTHERS, NOT HYPOCRITES**

7:3-4 It is human nature for man to exaggerate the sins of others and to minimize their own iniquities. Even worse, many tend to think this way with a self-righteous, morally-superior outlook<sup>Luke 18:9-12</sup>.

7:5 Jesus detests hypocrites (*hypokritēs*: an actor using a mask to impersonate someone)<sup>Matthew 23:13-33</sup>. He encouraged Christians to hold each other accountable for their sins (**specks**) in life<sup>Matthew 18:15</sup>; however, they are called to first apply at least as critical of a Biblical standard to themselves to deal with their own sins (**planks**). Jesus illustrated the primary importance of self-evaluation in recognizing and overcoming sin by using the images of the larger plank and smaller sliver.

## Sermon on the Mount 9 – Christian’s Relationships

The hypocrites Jesus despised were the Jewish leaders who studied the Scriptures and claimed they loved/served God, but they interpreted the Word the way they wanted and loved/served themselves.

### ATTITUDE TOWARD “DOGS” AND “PIGS” (7:6)

While Christians are not to judge in a self-righteous, condemning or hypocritical way, they are not called to be blind to the evil and hateful behavior of the enemies of God <sup>James 4:4</sup>.

7:6 Jesus reminds His followers there are people who act like animals <sup>2 Peter 2:1-22</sup>, and they are to be treated accordingly (Pharisees <sup>Matthew 23:33</sup>; Herod <sup>Luke 13:31-33</sup>). The “**sacred**” refers to sacrificed ‘holy’ food that would never be given to “**dogs**”, nor would precious gems (“**pearls**”) be thrown to “**pigs**”.

Biblically, “dogs” were described as vile animals <sup>Proverbs 26:11</sup> who prowl about the cities <sup>Psalms 59:6</sup>.

Furthermore, the Bible often refers to evil, immoral people as “dogs” <sup>Philippians 3:2, Revelation 22:15</sup>.

Culturally, “pigs” were the lowest of animals <sup>Luke 15:11-16</sup> and Moses called them unclean <sup>Deuteronomy 14:8</sup>.

### ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (7:7-11)

7:7-8 More literally, the word translated “ask” should be “keep asking” <sup>Luke 18:1</sup>. In addition to the command to “ask”, Jesus instructed Christians to “seek” and “knock” if they want to receive from Him.

While it is true Jesus commands are applicable to Christian’s petitions for themselves and others, the context here indicates that His main emphasis was to teach them how to receive wisdom and discernment in their relationships with others (both “brothers” and “dogs”).

In order to fully understand how God commands His followers to “ask and receive”, it is best to study all of the appropriate Scripture passages. The Bible tells Christians to ‘ask, seek and knock’ <sup>v.7-8</sup>, ‘believe and not doubt’ <sup>Mark 11:22-24</sup>, ‘ask in Jesus’ name’ <sup>John 14:12-14</sup>, ‘ask with right motives’ <sup>James 4:2-3</sup>, and ask only for things that are in ‘accordance with God’s will’ <sup>1 John 5:14-15</sup>. When a prayer that meets all of these guidelines is offered, God will **always** answer the prayers with a positive response.

7:9-11 Jesus asked two absurd questions to illustrate that loving Fathers (both earthly and heavenly) want only what is “good” (*agathōs*: profitable, useful) for their children. If it is within his power, a Father will never deny his child’s request for something the child truly needs and wants. This is true of both an inherently “evil” (fallen) earthly father (who may or may not be able to supply what is needed) and the perfectly holy heavenly Father (who is the creator and owner of everything) <sup>Romans 8:32, James 1:17</sup>.

Most people quickly understand the lesson of the irrationality of a loving father giving a stone or a snake to their child when asked for bread or a fish. However, there is an even more important lesson: a Christian should be confident that every time they pray to (and trust in) Almighty God with humility and sincerity, they will receive the perfect answer from their omniscient, generous Heavenly Father.

### ATTITUDE TOWARD ALL MANKIND (7:12)

7:12 Jesus proclaimed the “Golden Rule” as a positive statement summarizing the principles taught in the Old Testament (“**the Law and the Prophets**”) concerning God’s desire for “**everything**” having to do with the relationships between His followers and the rest of mankind <sup>Leviticus 19:18, Galatians 5:14</sup>.

If I put myself sensitively into the place of others and wish for them what I wish for myself, then I will never be stingy, always generous; never harsh, always understanding; never cruel, always kind...

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price (pricegang@integrity.com, 505-294-4743).