

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Part 6 – relationships that encourage (matthew chapter 7: 1-12)

Based on john stott: 12 studies for individuals and groups

RELATIONSHIPS THAT ENCOURAGE

- The Christian community ought to be a supportive family where members are helping each other rise to higher degrees of righteousness, where relationships with God are being renewed and where unbelievers are being drawn to Christ. Unfortunately, it can also be a place where people feel condemned, manipulated and uncared for.
- GROUP – has your church helped you grow closer to God?
- Matthew 7 may at first appear to be a series of self-contained paragraphs, but there is a connecting thread – **relationships**. The Christian counterculture is not an individualistic, but a community affair, and relations both within the community and between the community and others are of paramount importance.

Matthew 7: 1-12

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment, you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 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!

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



1. What commands does Jesus make in these verses?

Jesus moves from personal temptations to interpersonal temptations.

He warns against inappropriate judging (verses 1-5) and commends appropriate evaluation (verse 6).

He then looks at God's guidance as the source of the believer's stability in relationship to others (verses 7-12).

2. Why does Jesus tell us not to judge others?

- The simple but vital point is that we are not God.
- No human being is qualified to be judge of others for we cannot read each other's hearts or assess each other's motives.
- Not only are we not the judge, but we are among the judged, and will be judged with greater strictness if we dare to judge others.

BIBLE NOTES (ESV):

“Judge not” forbids pronouncing another person guilty before God – undue harshness and a judgemental attitude towards others will result in being treated in much the same way by God.

3. According to Jesus, why are we often unfit to be judges?

- The picture of somebody struggling with the delicate operation of removing a speck of dirt from a friend's eye whilst a vast plank in his own eye obscures his vision is ludicrous.
- Yet when the caricature is transferred to ourselves and our ridiculous fault finding, we do not always appreciate the joke.
- We have a fatal tendency to exaggerate the faults of others and minimize the gravity of our own.

BIBLE NOTES (ESV)

Jesus may have been drawing on his background as a carpenter here for his metaphor was of course a hyperbole (intentional overstatement)



4. Some have suggested that Jesus was forbidding all judgement even in the law courts. How would you respond to this suggestion?

- The context does not refer to judges in a court of law but rather the responsibility of individuals to one another.
- The injunction to “judge not” is NOT to turn a blind eye to other people’s faults (pretending not to notice them), nor to avoid all criticism and to refuse to discern between truth and error or between goodness and evil.
- **It is not a requirement to be blind but a plea to be generous.**
- Jesus does not tell us to cease to be human but to renounce the presumptuous ambition to be God by setting ourselves up as judges.

BIBLE NOTES (ESV):

Jesus does not forbid all evaluation or even judgement of others – what Jesus does rule out is the pride that views oneself as better than others!



5. What steps must we take to truly help a brother or a sister?

- Again, it is evident that Jesus is not condemning criticism as such, but rather the criticism of others when we exercise no comparable self criticism nor correction.
- We should not be concerned with the correction of others before we have corrected ourselves (or unless we are willing to correct OR be corrected ourselves)
- We must be an example towards others of exemplary behavior and not hypocrites

6. What kinds of people do you think he refers to as “dogs” and “pigs”?

- Jesus is indicating here that they are more animal than human!
- The dogs that he had in mind were the wild pariah dogs, vagabonds and mongrels, which scavenged in the city’s rubbish heaps.
- Pigs were also unclean animals to Jews.
- They are not representative of all unbelievers, but those who have had ample opportunity to hear and receive the good news but have decisively – even defiantly – rejected it!
- WE DISCUSSED THIS AT LENGTH AND AGREED THAT IT CAN TAKE YEARS FOR SOME PEOPLE TO ACCEPT JESUS INTO THEIR LIVES AND SO ITS NOT FOR US TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT SOMEONE IS A LOST CAUSE
- We cheapen God’s gospel by letting them trample it underfoot.
- At the same time, to give up on people is also a very serious step to take!



7. Why is it futile, even dangerous, to talk with such people about the bible?

- Believers are to be merciful, forgiving and slow to judge.
- BUT they must wisely discern the true character of people and not indefinitely continue proclaiming the gospel to those who adamantly reject it.
- Then they can move on and proclaim the gospel to others who will respond positively to the good news.
- GROUP: AND LEAVE IT IN GOD'S HANDS, CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THOSE THAT HAVE CHOSEN TO REJECT HIM THAT THEY MAY YET COME TO SEE JESUS FOR WHO HE REALLY IS – IT'S NOT DOWN TO US TO DECIDE.



8. What encouragement does Jesus give to those who ask, seek and knock? How can we be assured of these promises?

- All three verbs are present imperatives.
- They indicate the persistence with which we should make our requests known to God.
- The force of the parable (verses 9-11) lies in a contrast rather than a comparison between God and humanity.
- It is another “how much more?” argument.
- If a human parent (although inherently evil) know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will our heavenly father (who is not evil but wholly good) give good gifts to those who ask, seek and knock.

BIBLE NOTES (ESV)

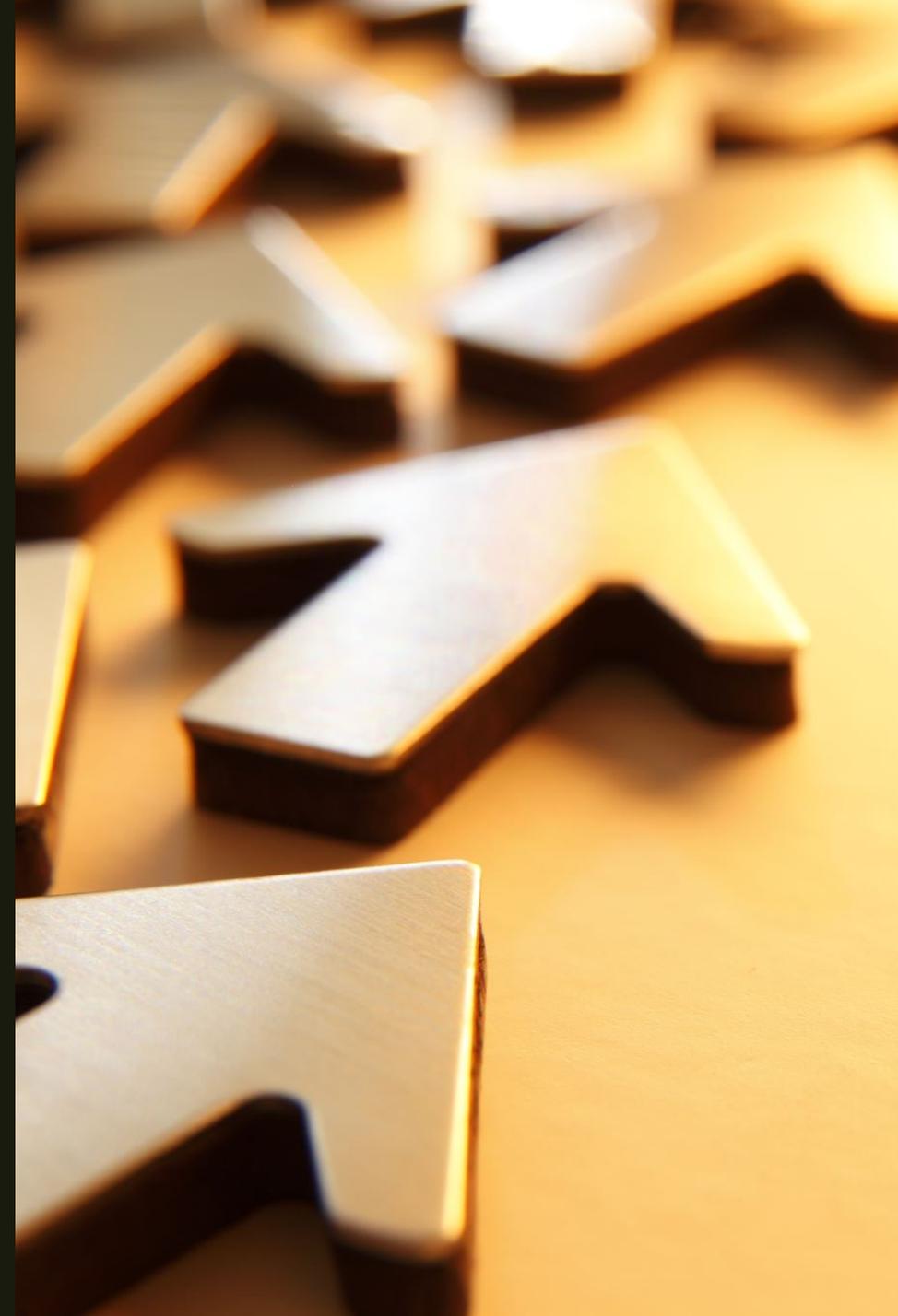
Ask – come in humility, conscious of need. **Seek** – connects prayer with responsible action in pursuing the will of God. **Knock** – suggests perseverance and patience to wait on Him.

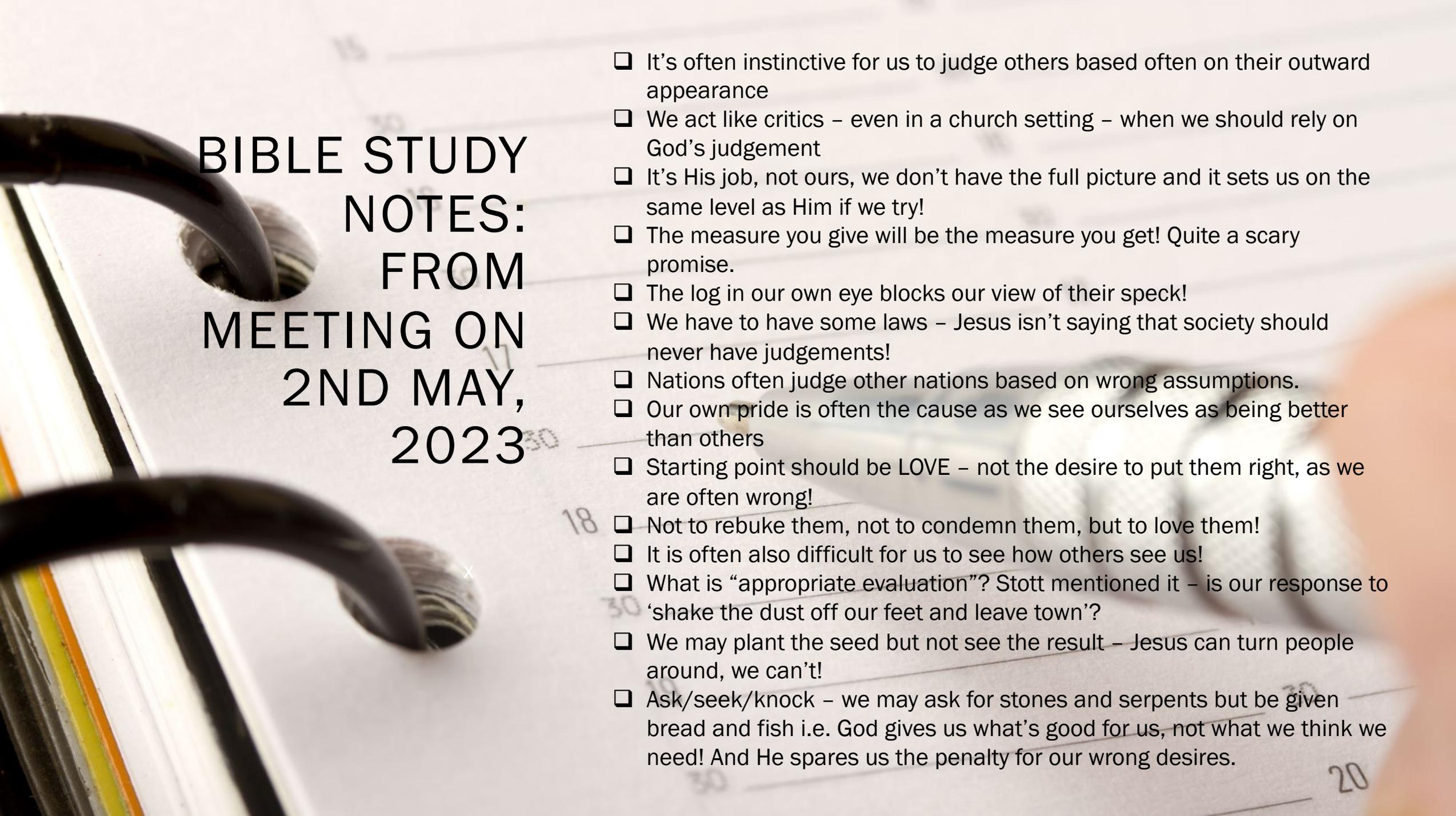
9. The Jewish Talmud states "what is hateful to you do not do to anyone else". Likewise, Confucius told his followers, "do not do to others what you would not wish done to you". How does the GOLDEN RULE in verse 12 go beyond these commands?

- Not doing hateful acts is one thing.
- Positively seeking someone's good is another.
- Self-advantage often guides us in our own affairs.
- Now we must also let it guide us in our behaviours towards others.
- All we must do is use our imagination and put ourselves in their shoes!

BIBLE NOTES (ESV)

"Do also to them" is known as **the Golden Rule** and should come naturally for believers who love God with all their heart and soul and mind and love their neighbours as themselves!





BIBLE STUDY NOTES: FROM MEETING ON 2ND MAY, 2023

- It's often instinctive for us to judge others based often on their outward appearance
- We act like critics – even in a church setting – when we should rely on God's judgement
- It's His job, not ours, we don't have the full picture and it sets us on the same level as Him if we try!
- The measure you give will be the measure you get! Quite a scary promise.
- The log in our own eye blocks our view of their speck!
- We have to have some laws – Jesus isn't saying that society should never have judgements!
- Nations often judge other nations based on wrong assumptions.
- Our own pride is often the cause as we see ourselves as being better than others
- Starting point should be LOVE – not the desire to put them right, as we are often wrong!
- Not to rebuke them, not to condemn them, but to love them!
- It is often also difficult for us to see how others see us!
- What is “appropriate evaluation”? Stott mentioned it – is our response to ‘shake the dust off our feet and leave town’?
- We may plant the seed but not see the result – Jesus can turn people around, we can't!
- Ask/seek/knock – we may ask for stones and serpents but be given bread and fish i.e. God gives us what's good for us, not what we think we need! And He spares us the penalty for our wrong desires.