

1) Ok, moving on ...

Matthew 7:7–11 (ESV)

Ask, and It Will Be Given

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If 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!

2) Jesus is giving us a super shot of confidence in what he says here.

- a) Confidence in the fact that “God WILL” answer our prayers.
- b) God will never give us bad things that would hurt or cause us pain. (Like a cruel joke)
- c) The one thing we can be equally sure of, this is not saying He is a Santa Clause.
- d) Along those same lines, it is not a Prosperity Gospel statement Jesus is making.
 - i) We can’t ask for a million dollars with the idea of being satisfied with 100,000.
 - ii) Anytime we ask, seek, and knock it must be a legitimate need and must never be frivolous.

3) This passage actually has two major points.

- a) First, it is a statement of the goodness of God and his caring for us as a Father.
- b) Second, it is a lesson in faith for us His children.

4) Regarding the faith aspect, I would like to begin by taking us back to something else we discussed some time ago.

- a) We talked about faith in relationship to our belief as we pray – it is not that we should believe that God can but the step beyond, that God will!
- b) If we pay attention to Jesus here in verses 7 and 8, it is abundantly clear that is exactly what he is saying as well.
- c) However, Jesus is right in that God will not give us a snake when we ask for a fish BUT, He may not give us a fish either.
 - i) In fact, it could be a hamburger if that is what He thinks we need.
- d) He won’t give us a stone in place of a loaf of bread but we may only get a slice rather than the whole loaf.
- e) In other words, God’s will is always going to take precedence over our own desires and requests and rightly so – He is sovereign!

5) His sovereignty means He always knows best.

- a) Also, and very important to remember, we may not like it but, He is ALWAYS RIGHT!!

6) I would also draw our minds back to the discussion we had regards praying for God’s will to be “done on earth as it is in heaven.”

- a) When we pray and ask or knock, we must be open to being part of God’s will (plan) here on earth.

Matthew – Sermon on the Mount

- b) This means we may **not** get the exact answer we desired but whatever the answer is, (even no answer at all) is really leading us to being part of God’s wonderful plan!
- c) As these verses say,

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.

- d) Our part is surrender our will to God’s will in all things.

1) This next passage is short and sweet but oh so important! ...

Matthew 7:12 (ESV)

The Golden Rule

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

- 1) The first thing we need to establish is that the “So or Therefore” is referring to the verses we just discussed.
 - a) What that means is that as we consider our treatment of others, we must consider it in the same manner in which God considers us – with love and good will.
- 2) The second thing we need to establish is how does “treating people the same way you want them to treat you” equate to the Law and the Prophets?
 - a) The phrase Law and the Prophets to those in Jesus’ audience encompassed ALL of the scrolls which made up the Hebrew Bible.
 - i) Specifically, in this context, the Law was the Torah and the Prophets were all the other writings.
 - b) It doesn’t take much thought to realize that in truth, the principle of verse 12 is really included in all of these writings in one form or another.
 - i) It may be as plain as “treat your neighbor as yourself” or unequivocal as “you shall not kill.”
 - c) It becomes even clearer when we realize also that Love is the basis of all the Law and Prophets:

Matthew 22:36–40 (ESV)

³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- d) Additionally, all the detailed commands concerning honesty, generosity, justice, mercy, and fairness can be summarized in this one principle of verse 12.
- e) Much of prophesy as well is regarding how God’s people are abandoning the Law and what it stands for.
- f) Three quick examples:

Matthew – Sermon on the Mount

- i) Isaiah 10:1–2 condemns lawmakers who “deprive the poor of justice and withhold rights from the oppressed.”
 - ii) Amos 2:6–7; 5:11–24 portrayed Israel as selling “the righteous for silver,” trampling the poor, and using religion hypocritically while ignoring justice and righteousness.
 - iii) Micah 3:1–3; 6:6–8 rebuked leaders who “tear the skin from my people” and reminded them that God requires justice, mercy, and humility.
- 3) Jesus states the command in the positive.
- a) He does not supply a detailed list of rules for every scenario.
 - b) Instead, He summarizes how to approach all interpersonal and ethical decisions:
 - i) If a situation is unclear, one must ask, “**How would I wish to be treated here?**” and then act accordingly.
 - ii) This standard makes the principles of justice, mercy, and love accessible and applicable in everyday life.
- 4) As with much of the rest of the sermon, this is a restatement of the way the Jewish people had been taught and were thinking about things at this time.
- a) We introduced the school of rabbi Hillel earlier when we talked about his opinions on divorce.
 - b) According to one source, this famous and influential rabbi was asked to summarize the Law “while standing on one foot.” His reply was:
“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”

What is the difference in the what he says and what Jesus is teaching?

- c) This is obviously correct but it is stated in a way that says we should not do harm.
 - i) Hillel is saying “Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.”
 - (1) This requires nothing – it is passive. i.e. just don’t do bad things!
 - ii) Jesus is saying “**Actively do for others what you would want done for you.**”
 - (1) **This** requires thinking **of** others **in a** different way **and** acting accordingly.
 - iii) **Obviously, a difference in mindset between Jesus and the way the normal Jew looked at things.**
- 5) That is a lot said about this verse but, here’s the real question for us.

Looking at Jesus’ take on this, what are ways that we can implement this in our lives every day?

- a) RULE 1 – When we are presented with the opportunity – actively be kind and considerate.
 - i) If there is any way we can go the extra mile toward being kind and considerate to others, especially those who really are grating on us, we should do it.
- b) RULE 2 – Engage brain before putting mouth in gear! In other words, be slow to speak.
 - i) If we think about what we are going to say for just a second sometimes we will keep from hurting someone’s feelings.

Matthew – Sermon on the Mount

- c) RULE 3 – Whenever we are thinking of something negative to say about someone, apply RULE 1!
 - i) Simply, if it is not necessary – **don't say it!**

- 1) We are entering the last section of this sermon.
- 2) One commentator notes that it is perhaps the most amazing part of all.
 - a) It concerns the place of Jesus in the life of the disciples (us included).
- 3) As we have discussed, the sermon is the comprehensive look at how we must live under the fulfilled Law.
- 4) That fulfillment comes from the Son of God Himself.
- 5) The one who fulfilled it has the absolute authority to show us what it means,
 - a) This must be obvious to us and likely was obvious to His listeners.
 - b) After all, who but the true Son of God could:
 - i) Call God His Father.
 - ii) Could know with certainty what will stand in the day of judgment.
 - iii) He can declare our lives good or bad because He is the ultimate judge of what is right and wrong.
 - iv) And as we are about to see, He is able to define the paths that will lead us to eternal life.
- 6) These are just a few things to keep in mind as we enter this last section.
- 7) So, let's look at verses 13-14...

Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV)

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

- 8) One cannot help but see this as a warning.
 - a) At first read, we may think it is a warning to those who are not saved.
 - b) However, if we look carefully and think about what He is saying we will see it very much applies to His disciples – then and now.
- 9) There are several things we can say about these two gates and paths.
 - a) Narrow indicates a small opening and path and wide indicates a large opening and path.
 - b) They definitely lead to different places.
 - c) But it seems that the people who are finding them are really not aware of where they lead.
 - i) In other words, at least the path to destruction seems to be obscure.
 - ii) No one would intentionally take even an easy path to what they knew was leading them to destruction!
 - iii) The narrow gate and way may also not be obvious.

Matthew – Sermon on the Mount

- iv) If it were, one would think that many more folks would be lined up at the narrow gate if they knew the narrow gate led to eternal life.
 - d) The narrow path and gate are constricted or restricted.
 - i) When one travels a narrow road or path, there are intrinsic dangers involved.
 - (1) Passing other traffic, getting blocked by obstacles, no place to go in case of trouble, etc.
 - e) The wide gate and wide path are well traveled – lots of folks going on that path and through that gate.
 - i) Definitely there are not as many possibilities for danger as on the narrow road.
 - f) Hans Dieter Betz said of the narrow way in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount: The chances of failure are greater than the chances of success, a sobering message.¹⁸
- 10) Having said all that, in case the word “few” in Jesus’ statement bothers you, here are some numbers from one source anyway.
- a) About 62% of Americans identify as Christian.
 - b) But a much smaller subset claim a personal commitment to Jesus: roughly 25%–40% of U.S. adults.
 - c) Now, if we take into consideration what Betz says, of that 25-40% how many will fail?
 - d) Food for thought at any rate.
- 11) One thing that I think we can imagine in this passage is that the two paths are very close to each other.
- a) This makes it easy to get off of the narrow path and on the wide path.
 - b) In fact, I would say that it is so easy we might not even realize we have changed paths and destinations until something gives us a clue.
 - i) Then, it may be hard to find our way back to the narrow path quickly.
 - ii) Once on the wide path, it is easy to get lost in the vastness of path and the crowds.
- 12) Ok let’s get a few questions on the table.

First, do you agree with Betz that one’s chances of failure are greater than chances of success on the narrow path?

If yes, why OR if not, why not?

If we are correct, it is easy to wander from the narrow to the wide way what are signs we might look for in our lives that help us realize that we are on the wrong path?

13) Same sort of question but in a different perspective.

What are things we can do to make sure we stay on the narrow path and avoid failure?

¹⁸ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 457.