

"Go!!!"
A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew
Chapter 7

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The Rules of the Kingdom
Matthew Chapter 7

When I taught this chapter in a class, we divided up this chapter into sections, then divided our group up into teams, and had each team take a section of the chapter and do the following:

1. Give your section a title
2. Answer one question about your section
3. Come up with one question for group discussion.

We re-assembled after groups have had time to do this – and discussed what we found. The first part of today's chapter is the worksheet we began with as we did this exercise. If you are studying this on your own, do this exercise yourself for each section.

The second part of today's chapter is a record of some of the things we discussed.

Here's our worksheet:

:1-6

- ✓ Title for your section: _____
- ✓ Answer this question: **Why does God want things done this way?**
- ✓ Your Question: _____

:7-12

- ✓ Title for your section: _____
- ✓ Answer this question: **Why does God want things done this way?**
- ✓ Your Question: _____

"Go!!!"
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Chapter 7

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:13-14

- ✓ Title for your section: _____
- ✓ Answer this Question: **Why do so many people choose the wrong way?**
- ✓ Your Question: _____

:15-23

- ✓ Title for your Section: _____
- ✓ Answer This Question: **Have you ever realized you were listening to a False Prophet?**
- ✓ Your Question: _____

:24-29

- ✓ Title for Your Section: _____
- ✓ Answer This Question: **What is the difference between a wise person and a foolish person?**
- ✓ Your Question: _____

"Go!!!"
A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew
Chapter 7

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**This Section Describes Some of the
Thoughts We had on Each Passage:**

:1-6 Judge Not

:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged."

This is talking about hypocritical judging, not "judging" in general. Hypocritical judging points a finger and walks away feeling righteous. Hypocritical judging condemns the one being judged, and rejoices in the suffering of the one being judged. Don't do this.

But not all "judging" is wrong, as evidenced by several verses right in this same chapter:

- Verse 6 says some people are "dogs" and you shouldn't even give your gems of truth to them.
- Verse 13 describes people who are following the "broad" way, and are not even Christians
- Verse 15 speaks of false prophets

And many other places in scripture tell of people who rightly "judge" people for who they are and what they are doing. Jesus Himself: in Matthew 23:13-10, he describes the Pharisees as hypocrites, blind guides, fools and blind men, serpents, and a brood of vipers!

In hypocritical judging, the "judge" doesn't apply the same standard to himself that he is lowering on the one being judged. Romans 2:1 warns against this, and so does James 5:9. In fact, in James 5:9, James even warns against grumbling or complaining about someone else's life – it's the same as hypocritical judging.

But in good "judging" we are told to distinguish between good and evil:

- Sexual immorality I Cor. 5:9
- Angels of Light II Cor 11:13-15
- Dogs Philippians 3:2
- False Prophets I Jn. 4:1

"Go!!!"
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Chapter 7

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Who knows

These passages just barely scratch the surface of all the places in scripture we are told to examine people and actions and determine whether there is good or evil present. Good "judging" is good, and we are commanded to do it!

:2-4 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Of how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye' and look, a plank is in your own eye?"

This is just common sense. If you determine that someone is doing a lousy job of raising their children, how did you determine that? Did you compare them to your own job of raising your children and decide they didn't do as good a job as you did? That's a faulty measuring stick. Because you surely made mistakes. Instead, you should compare the job they are doing to what the scripture says a parent should do, and that will give you a better idea of how they're doing in the parenting department....but it also opens you up for the same scrutiny. And you probably didn't do so great, either, when you use God's perfection for your measure.

So what have you got now? Two sets of parents who failed at parenting. You and the ones you are being critical of. Hmmmm. Changes things, doesn't it?

:5 *"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

Psalms 139:23 & 24 says: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Before you let yourself complain about someone else's parenting, ask the "light" of the world to shine on your parenting, and see how many wicked things show up.

It seems like the only real help you can be to this parent you are critical of is to come alongside and offer to help, admitting that you don't have all the answers, but you know Who does. Explore solutions together. Pray together. Be patient and humble...not a false humility...but a humility based

"Go!!!"
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Chapter 7

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on the truth – you messed up as a parent!...they are messing up as a parent...God knows how to fix it!

So....where does that leave us as far as "judging" is concerned? We are told in scripture to "examine" everything. To be smart, and wise, and honest about everything we see in others, and everything we see in ourselves. Once we do, here are some of our options:

1. Sometimes we realize that the situation we are examining is not wrong, it's just different. It's not sin, it's just someone being who they are...and who they are is not what is comfortable to us. In this case, we graciously allow others the freedom to be who they are, even if it would not be our choice for ourselves. Romans 14:1-6 describes this type of situation. But we still do have to think it through...examine it...maybe ask for more experienced advice – to determine whether our brother fits into this category. This isn't hypocritical judging.
2. And sometimes we "examine" honestly, and there is no doubt about it – we see sin. Clearly, sin. Then we first seek the Lord's will, to know whether it is time for us to step in now and help. The key word here is "help", for our goal is never to condemn, but to come alongside and lovingly, humbly help.

If we do think it's time for us to help, then first we "remove the log from our own eye". We ask God to scrutinize our life first, and honestly confess and get right those things He shows us.

Paul gives this wonderful advice to the church in Galatia "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." And Jesus gave us a sweet example of this in John 13, when He washes His disciples' feet: John 13:12-15 "So when He had washed their feet, taken his garments and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"

"Go!!!"
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Chapter 7

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Then we humbly approach our friend and ask for the privilege to criticize first...and then come alongside to walk through the process of figuring it out, getting things right, growing and changing.

This is way hard, I know. It would be so easy to mess it up. Or maybe we might lose a friend. But if the Lord is giving you the go-ahead, then...go!

3. And there are times when it is not up to us to do anything:

- When we are already overloaded with helping people – you only have so much energy, and you can't really help someone with a sin they are struggling with if you are spread too thin. Your commitment is huge on this project, so sometimes you can't help everyone.
- Or when there definitely is sin in someone else's life, and you definitely see it, and you know you could help, but they simply won't listen. No matter how humbly we try, the "sinner" just isn't open to help. If this is the case, keep your peace. Wait. Pray.

:6 "Do not give that which is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearly before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

The Apostle and Pastor, John, addresses this heartbreaking problem in I John 5:16&17. He goes so far as to let us know that there may be times when the Lord will cause the death of this errant believer who will not accept the help he/she needs to begin walking with God again. He isn't saying this believer would lose their salvation, but that they would lose any further chance to serve Christ in this world. He/she is called Home. John reminds us that we shouldn't pray for such an extreme measure on God's part...but we should know it could happen. Acts 5:1-11 is a true story – another example of this.

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Chapter 7**

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:7-12 Answered Prayer

:7-11 " 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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there of you who, if his son asks for bread, he will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being 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!"

What is the secret to answered prayer? Three words: Keep it up.

I couldn't begin to list all the verses in the Bible which urge us to make praying the central part of our lives, but here are a few:

- John 14:13&14
- John 15:7&8
- John 16:23&24
- I John 5:14&15
- Isaiah 65:24
- Daniel 10:12

And over and over again we see in scriptures that praying is not always answered right away. Why? Because, as we saw in Matthew 6, praying is not us telling God what we want and getting it from Him, prayer is us finding out what God wants, and asking that He will do it. Sometimes God wants to wait to answer the prayer, but always He wants us to pray. And then if he waits, we wait.

:12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

Seems like a funny place for this "therefore" verse. "Therefore" always links the words to follow with the words that went before. So, let's say it this way: "Because you will always get what you ask for from the Lord, make sure you give others what they ask for from you." !!! How could we do less?

"Go!!!"
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Chapter 7

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What are the two things we have learned from :7-12 about answered prayer?

1. Keep at it and it will be answered
2. Turn around and do the same for someone else.

:13-14 Do Hard Things

:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

When I start a diet to lose weight, one of the first things I have to do is admit to myself that I'm going to be hungry. I know I am going to have times when I want to eat and must not. I am going to suffer a little. If I will face this fact squarely, it helps me approach what I'm about to do with confidence. But if I lie to myself and say it won't be hard, or kid myself thinking I've chosen a diet method which will work and not involve some sort of difficulty, I'm doomed to fail.

Why is this? Because there's nothing like truth to get you ready for a challenge. And there's nothing like a lie to sweep your feet out from under you.

So let's just be honest. The Christian life is going to stink sometimes. It's going to be hard. You are going to suffer. You are going to be hated. You are going to make mistakes. You're going to have to apologize sometimes ...and you're going to have to overlook hurts sometimes. Your life isn't going to go smoothly. You do have spiritual enemies in high places.

Make the hard choices. Do the hard things. Take the narrow gate and the difficult path. It's the only way to be successful in the Christian life.

"For to you it has been granted, on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake..." Philippians 1:29

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Chapter 7**

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:15-23 False Prophets

:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

False teachers, preachers and prophets usually don't appear with horns on their heads and scarlet-colored capes. They look like loving, gentle, wise, intelligent, ordinary people at first.

:16-20 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them."

If you watch them for awhile, you'll figure out who they are and who they are serving. It really won't be that hard. The longer you've been reading your Bible and walking with the Lord, the easier it will be. You'll just notice things – fruit – which is either bad or good.

But if you're new at this, here are some basics to look for:

- Do they say one thing and do another?
- Do they teach the Bible is true, and then promote doctrine which disagrees with the Bible?
- Do they promise happiness as you follow their teachings, but live unhappy and sinful lives themselves? Those who would teach you are not going to be perfect. But they are not going to be satisfied with living consistently, notoriously in sin.

:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and one many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness' "

Keep your eyes open. Beware. The ones who would draw you away from Jesus are out there. And they are not interested in your welfare. They will

"Go!!!"
A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew
Chapter 7

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eat you, chew you up, and spit you out. Their only desire is to discredit the Savior of the world – Jesus Christ.

Peter, in his second letter, said this about such false teachers: "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasant to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray...these are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." II Peter 2:12-17

Wow. Stay away from false teachers!

If they teach:

- That Jesus was not the One and Only, True God
- That Jesus was not really a man
- That you can be saved by being good enough
- That you can earn your way to heaven
- That Jesus did not really die on the cross and raise Himself from the dead...

Stay away from them!

:24-29 - The Rock

What is the difference between a wise person and a foolish person?

:24-27 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house;

"Go!!!"
A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew
Chapter 7

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Who? Where?

and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

The answer is obvious. If you listen to Jesus and act on what He says, that means you believe He is Who He says He is. And you're wise. If you don't listen to Jesus and act on what He says, that means you don't really believe He is Who He says He is. And you're foolish.

Jesus is the Rock. In Matthew 7 He wasn't just suggesting a good path to happiness. He was telling them how to do what He always had in mind for them to do when He created them. He's God Himself. He created the world. Everything in life rests on Him. The very ground we walk on is steady because of Him. The technology we use was thought of by Him. The fact that green beans are green is because He made them that way.

He's the Rock. He says:

- No hypocritical judging
- Pray and keep praying
- Choose the narrow way to do things
- Keep your eyes peeled for false teachers

Are you building your house on the Rock?

:28-29 "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."