

A Christian's Relationships

Matthew 7:1-12

When we become Christians, we become “members of God’s family” (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 4:17). God is “our Father” and our fellow Christians are “brothers and sisters” in Christ. At the same time, we must not forget our responsibility to “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 28:14; Zechariah 14:17), that is, to all people. John R.W. Stott makes the helpful suggestion that Matthew 7:1-12 is about the network of relationships into which we are drawn as Christ’s followers: our relationship with our brothers & sisters; our relationship with “dogs” and “pigs”; our relationship with our heavenly Father; and our relationship with all people.

1. What makes family relationships unique & special?
2. **Read Matthew 7:1-5:** Our relationship with “our brothers & sisters. Nathan judged David (2 Samuel 12), John the Baptist judged Herod Antipas (Mark 6:16-29), Paul judged Peter (Galatians 2:11-16), Peter judged Annanias (Acts 5:1-11), and Jesus himself judged the moneychangers in the Temple courts (Mark 11:15-19). So, why does Jesus say, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged (7:1)?
3. Jesus states a principle in Matthew 7:1 – “Do not judge.” Then he provides two amplifications of it in 7:2 and 7:3-5. According to Jesus, why should we refrain from making unwarranted condemnations of others?
4. Some Christians, like the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, believe that Jesus is forbidding ALL judgement, even in the law courts. How would you respond to such a suggestion?
5. Under what circumstances should we offer to help remove a speck from another brother’s eye (7:5)?
6. **Read Matthew 7:6.** Our relationship with “dogs” and “pigs”. Jesus makes a startling statement when he speaks about “pigs” who trample the pearls beneath their feet and the “dogs” that turn and bit the hand that feeds them. What sort of people does Jesus mean by “dogs” and “pigs”?
7. Some Christians have used our text (7:6) as an argument against admitting unbelievers to the Lord’s Supper. For example, a manual to Syrian Christians living around A.D. 100 says, “Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. It was concerning this that the Lord said, ‘Do not give gods what is holy.’” How would you respond to this suggestion?

8. **Read Matthew 7:7-11.** Our relationships with our heavenly Father. The electronic church is winning millions of followers and millions of dollars by pointing to passages like this and telling people that faith need only ask to get. What does Jesus actually promise here (7:7-8)?
9. What is the guiding principle taught by Jesus in 7:9-11?

Can you think of one “good gift” that God the Father has bestowed on you?

10. **Read Matthew 7:12.** Our relationship with all people. Since the 16th century this saying has been called the “golden rule.” It is found in its negative form in several other sources. Confucius taught, “Do not do to anyone what you would not like others to do to you.” Isocrates taught, “Whatever angers you when you suffer it at the hands of others, do not do it to others.” Greek-speaking Judaism taught, “And what you hate, do not do to anyone.” Rabbi Hillel (about 20 B.C.) summarized the Law as follows: “Whatever is not pleasing to you do not do to anyone else.” How does the golden rule (Matthew 7:12) go beyond these commands?
11. How does the golden rule sum up the Law and the prophets (7:12)?
12. Think of a relationship that is currently strained or perhaps even broken. How does this passage help to mend that relationship?

PRAYER: “Lord, I catch myself rejoicing that I am not so stiff-necked or hardhearted as the Pharisees, and I realize that it is a bad sign. If I loved my neighbour as myself, I would sympathize with their human frailty and pray for their salvation. Forgive me for defining my neighbour in such a way as to make my loving easier and grant that my understanding of the Christian faith may rest more solidly on genuine care for others. Through Jesus, whose love for you and his neighbour led him to a cross. Amen.