

## Matthew 7:7-12 (NKJV)

**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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?**

**10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

**11 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!**

**12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

I pledged last week to preach on a text that is easy to understand but we will find difficulty all our lives in applying it.

And I did not lie.

**whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

Let's just take a minute to set the context.

We are speaking about the bigger context of **judging**. And we looked at the kind of judging **we should do** and the kind of judging **we should not do**. We looked at **avoiding God's discipline** by seeing through the lens of the gospel. After we have made sure of that, **then** we are ready to do some helpful **splinter removing**.

But in this process, as well as overcoming worry and all the other things Jesus spoke of, we are going to experience our **overwhelming need**. We are not good people. Everything Jesus is asking us **seems impossible**. When we are squeezed, this is not the stuff that naturally comes out of us. We need **supernatural changes** that we cannot accomplish by mere human effort or will power.

So what should we do? We ask, seek and knock like our lives depend upon it. Because **they do**. We ask, seek and knock long and hard. And we do not stop until we get what we need. And while God will provide lots of resources during **our journey**, it is not until we reach **our destination** that we will finally be able to stop asking and seeking and knocking. We can stop then because we have it all.

But in the meantime we must discipline our minds to believe that **this amazingly benevolent God desires to give us His good things**. Sometimes

those good things come in wrappings we find hard to understand. But this loving God intends **only good** toward us.

Now we reach verse 12.

**“Therefore”.**

Now a kids Sunday school question.

When you find a therefore what do look for?

Yeah, you look at what it is there for.

What is it referring back to.

In this case I do not know for sure. But I think it looks back at least to verse 1 in Chapter 7. It may actually go all the way back to the beginning of the sermon on the mount. I think **that** guess is more likely because from here forward Christ’s focus seems to change. His topic changes to **the danger of falseness.**

Another kid’s Sunday school question.

What is the **greatest command** in the Bible?

Love God with all your heart soul mind and strength.

What is the **second** greatest command?

Love your neighbor as yourself.

So you see here, Jesus is taking **what He said before** and aptly telling us **how to do it.** He is telling us where it fits. He is telling us that refusing to judge wrongly and choosing to judge through the eyes of the gospel means **loving that other person like we want to be loved.** It is that **simple** to understand.

And it is that **hard** to do.

I learned an interesting fact in this study.

It was contained in John MacArthur’s commentary.

**Every other form of this basic principle had been given in purely negative terms, and is found in the literature of almost every major religion and philosophical system. The Jewish rabbi Hillel said, “What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else.” The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha teaches, “What thou thyself hatest, to no man do.” The Jewish scholars in Alexandria who translated the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) advised in a certain piece of correspondence, “As you wish that no evil befall you, but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle toward your subjects and offenders.” Confucius taught, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” An ancient Greek king named Nicocles wrote, “Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of other people.” The Greek philosopher Epictetus said, “What**

**you avoid suffering yourself, do not afflict on others.” The Stoics promoted the principle, “What you do not want to be done to you, do not do to anyone else.” In every case the emphasis is negative. The principle is an important part of right human relations, but it falls short—far short—of God’s perfect standard.<sup>1</sup>**

Do you see the difference. Human philosophy says don’t harm anyone else. Do no harm to them. Why? Well it will enable us to all get along and not kill each other on planet earth. It is ultimately self serving to do no harm to others. But that is not what Jesus is commanding. He is telling us that we should initiate action toward others that we long for others to initiate toward us.

**whatever you want men to do to you, you do, you initiate, you think it through and decide to do also to them.**

No wonder we need to ask and seek and knock.

I think our problem reduces to this-

When Lilly gets hungry, how much does she **concern herself with the convenience of Monica**? How much does she think about **how distracting to others** it might be if she were begin to cry loudly? Naturally she is too little to consider those things, but it displays the heart of the problem and we were born with it.

Nearly everything we experience every moment of our lives is considered first for its effect on **one person**, the most important person **to me**. And it is **me**. A picture is not a good picture if I do not look good in it, or presentable at least. A schedule for a meeting is not good if it creates a major sacrifice **for me**. When people are doling out credit for a good job, it is not as it could be if **my name** is not mentioned.

Try to think of anything that does not first hit that sieve of thinking. We start by thinking of ourselves. That is not to say that we do not go further. But that is where we naturally start.

Our continual struggle is a spiritual struggle. **We**, by our old nature, want to take **God’s place** in our life. It is built in. It is our default. We are tempted at each step to **elevate self**. In each circumstance we think about how something could **benefit us** or **harm us**. We see that without ever having to try. We love ourselves. It is just how we are.

Now when we look at our brothers and are trying to discern things about them, our flesh is likely to kick in. We are tempted to find some way where we

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 447.

**gain some benefit by their failure.** We want to see others as being different than ourselves. We want to use a **different standard** so that they do not have a right to be treated the way they **want** to be treated. No. They are **inferior** in some way. They are **unimportant** in some way.

Now Jesus already told us that we need to be judge others the way we want to be judged. We should want to see them through the same standard as we see ourselves through. We should want the same grace extended to them as we want extended to ourselves.

Now He extends that principle. He says that this does not just apply to **not doing wrong evil judging** of another person. He gives us this principle to apply to **all** of our interactions with human beings.

How in the world can we get there from here?

Do you know what I mean?

When we look at our inner thoughts carefully we are left with a huge obstacle to overcome. And it is selfishness. Self worship. What do we do?

Well the truth is, if we start with ourselves, it is impossible for us to overcome that obstacle. And fortunately for us the Bible does not start with us.

We mentioned this early.

Look at **Matthew 22:34-40 (NKJV)**

**34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.**

**35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying,**

**36 "Teacher, which *is the great commandment in the law?*"**

**37 Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*"**

**38 This is *the first and great commandment.***

**39 And *the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'***

**40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

This is so much like our discussion about judging. Everything starts with God and what God does. Our **judging** starts with that and our **loving** starts with that.

When we start with God, all of us are schooled enough in theology to know what happens to our view of self? When the Holiness of God, the Justice of God, the Omniscience of God, the Grace of God, when we look at all those things He gets **so much more glorious** and there is something in us where we find ourselves wanting to find a place to hide. Our unloveliness and ugliness suddenly becomes more pronounced. The presence of God and reality of God

humbles us. And we know if we are to have any chance at all we must throw ourselves completely upon God's mercy. His holiness is glorious and His **grace** draws us to a **greater appreciation** of God. He who sins much loves much. So we **start with God**. We start with God when we **judge properly**. We start with God when we **love properly**.

As that process is happening, we are prepared for another process. And I use the word "process" deliberately. Just as we ask and seek and knock **continually**, so we grow in **love for God** and **love for people continually**. So as we come to grips with who we are before God and we love Him for not giving us what we **do** deserve, and then giving us that which we could never **possibly deserve**, we become ready to extend that grace to others. And we know we are doing it from a position that **we did not provide for ourselves**. It was **given to us** by the sheer grace of God.

Now we are ready to see people just like we see ourselves. And we are seeing them accurately for the first time. We are seeing them with a good eye, full of the revelation of God.

We **love others** the way we **love ourselves**.

Now let's stop here a second.

Scripture gives us lots of commands in the New Testament, does it not, for ways that we should treat each other?

For instance, we are not supposed to murder each other, or lie to each other, or defraud each other, or slander each other, or gossip about each other. We also know when we see a need we should meet it. If someone needs money we should give it. If they need help, we should provide it.

So maybe we run our actions across all the scripture we know. And we ask, am I **commanded** to do this thing. Am I **forbidden** to do this thing? And we determine that we are not violating a **known command**. We are not **disobeying** a principle we have learned.

That is good as far as it goes. It is much better than not **caring about** or **obeying** what God says. And all those commandments fit under the category of loving our brother as ourself. Those commands are firmly under that category.

But think about what Jesus is saying here.

Think about **you** for a moment as I think about **me**.

Do you like unkind things said about you that do not need to be said. Even if they are absolutely true?

Do you want your failures broadcast in a way that is not necessary and is not accomplishing any good?

Do you want people not to **bring stuff to your attention** that you **need to hear** just because you have been **resistant sometimes** to what you need to hear?

Do you want people to give up on you because you have responded unfairly at times?

The problem with life is that there is not a book big enough to cover every eventuality of life. There are circumstances that are not specifically addressed in scripture. And there are lots of them. What do we do? How can we handle them? Are we limited to simply a **strict application** of those things that are written but can get off the hook if the situation we are in is not **specifically addressed**. That is how the Pharisees judged it. But that is not what Jesus said.

What Jesus is saying here is, you do not **have a rule** for everything because you do not **need a rule** for everything. This love principle is the blanket principle that all the others fit under (regarding our treatment of each other.) To some degree **you know you**. And you are surely sensitive to what **you like** and what **you do not like**. You know what treatment you are **pleased to receive** and what treatment you **do not like receiving**.

If you are unsure what to do, do this.

Take yourself. Put yourself in the other person's position. Then do that thing you would want someone to do to you. Naturally this has to all be in submission to all of known scripture.

Now this does not in any way guaranty we will get **everything right**. But it sure is a lot better than **separating love and truth**. So that as long as something **is true** it should be said and it does not matter **who** it is said to or **when** it is said.

And we cannot make accommodations toward others based on our sinful desires. For instance I cannot say I would like people to overlook **my sin** so I will **overlook their sin**. Do you see what I mean?

Have you ever been dealt with in a way that was **far kinder** or **more gracious** than you would have dealt with someone else for the same thing? And you really appreciated that even though the person had the right to take you to the woodshed, and everything they would have said would be true, **they didn't**. They were satisfied knowing you were aware of your error, you viewed it as your sin, and would not repeat it. I have had that happen to me. And it is convicting. Because it shows me that **my love** does not go far enough. That kind of grace is how **I like to be treated**.

Have you ever gone to a person confessing your sin, and the person hearing your confession was more concerned about **their** sinful attitude or selfish attitude than the sin **you confessed to**? Is that not how **we** like to be treated. Do you see the point I am making? We must do more than just go by the New Testament commandments for how to treat each other. We cannot do less. But we must go further. Everything also has to be run through the "What would I want?" consideration.

When I say all this I know where it can go. We can start ignore truth and start calling that love. We can start suppressing things and allowing them to grow and grow until they blow up, thinking we are being loving. I am not trying to say this is the **simplest** consideration in the world. But I am saying that Jesus gave the command with the expectation that it was **able to be applied** and that **His people would apply it**.

So how does it work in the day to day?

In the real day to day.

Carla does something that I do not want her to do.

Does that ever happen between spouses in your home?

Now I ask the question- If **I** had done something that **she** did not want me to do, how would I **like her** to deal with **me**?

Think about it. Make sure it fits with Biblical principles. Then do it.

Do you see what happens?

First it distracts you from all the other sinful alternatives **King self** wants to use. Like, if you loved me you would not do this to me. Or I am going to take my ball and go home. Or sulking. We all have our favorites. Or taking the offense **so personally**. It distracts you to a **different** line of thinking. And it causes you to approach the problem in the **most constructive way** that you could approach it. You are submitting this circumstance and this interaction to the rule of Jesus Christ.

Now you are no longer reacting but you are acting. There may **still** be heat. The interaction may **still** not go well. And you might **still** have room to learn how to love better. But if we are really practicing this, we will find that it takes work and time. Just that fact would probably do a lot of good in relationships. Our default reactions and responses are usually not the things that get us **out of** relational problems. They are the things that get us **into** those problems.

Would we like a long lecture if we had done something wrong? If not, don't give one. Would we like to be told everything else we have ever done wrong that was similar? If not, don't mention it. Would we want a chance to make our wrong right? If so, provide it? Would we want our failure to be held as

proof that we are an utter failure of some kind? If not, don't use it that way. Would we want it used as proof that we are a certain kind of person? If not, don't say it. It is so simple. But it is so hard to do. Because it requires so much self control.

This is really really hard to do. Because I **want** to say those things. She has encroached upon the kingdom of **King Jon** and I want her to know what a **big deal** that is. But King Jesus has other plans, other strategies. And He knows when I stand for **my kingdom** I will drive people **away** from myself and Him. If in any way you don't see that this has implications for changes needed in every relationship you are in, you are either a much more spiritual person than I am, or I am not communicating effectively.

What Jesus commands here is that we **take up His cross daily**. We are going to **die** on this hill. Self is going to die to follow King Jesus in this way of relating. I can almost guaranty that our relationships with other believers, and maybe unbelievers, would immediately begin to improve if we are not currently obeying Christ in this way and were to begin to obey Christ here. Old destructive and reactive patterns would begin to fade. Obstacles that we have not been able to remove might begin to disappear.

I am surely failing to communicate just how life changing this principle is. Oh it is **powerless** when we hold it as a **mantra**. But when we **do it**, we cannot remain the same. Self has to lose a hold in our lives.

We cannot respond relationally **our way**, which does **not** represent Christ, and **Christ's way**, which **does**, at the same time.

And naturally this covers more than responding to each other's failures. As we pray for each other we can ask, if I were them in their situation, what would I want? And then either **ask God** to **do** that thing or **do it yourself** if you have it in your power.

This results in greater thoughtfulness toward each other because we are working at it. We are taking that extra step to say- **If that were me...**

It kinda seems anti spiritual. But obviously it is not if Christ commanded it. This is a glorious spiritual exercise that all of us are **qualified to do**.

Maybe we should put up a note on the fridge this week that simply says- **If that were me...**

I am going to make one more stab at this.

Suppose we were to take this command by Christ **ultra seriously**. Suppose we were to actually apply it every day? Let me ask you, who would not want to be married to a person that every day in every thing is asking- **if I were him or her, what would I want?** And then they do it.



Who would **run** from that relationship? Who would not find that relationship **satisfying and upbuilding**? Now granted we expect too much of every relationship and find its faults even when there are no serious ones to find. **We can do that.** But who would complain about being married to a person who is always asking, **if I were him or her, what would I want.** And then do it.

Would that not be a small piece of heaven on earth?

But what is the first thing you think when this is proposed? Is it not- no- **I** cannot be like that because **they** will not be like that **to me.** We have a history and I have learned some lessons the hard way. This will not work and it will just make me more vulnerable. That is probably the biggest reason for why we will not apply it as we should.

But this is **exactly** what Christian relationships **should be** if they are obedient to Christ. And what is **not to like** when both people make a fervent attempt at doing this? As I consider this it is exciting. Are you the kind of person who likes a challenge? Well here is huge one. Love the people you come in contact with the way Jesus does.

What would a relationship be like if my primary concern was not **me** but **you**? What would it be like if my primary question was **what do you need?** What do **you want?**

Now granted we must consider in all of this not just what a person desires but what is **best for them.** But even still. How would this change our **marriages**? How would this change our **church relationships**? We normally scan our environments for what is in it **for us.** Can you imagine what it would be like if we scanned our environments for **what others need?** Can you imagine if our first question would be **how can I meet the needs of those in this room?** Nothing of self. Nothing of flesh.

This is what Christ is calling us to. This is the command. See a person. Ask what good can I do to them.

Can you see a difference in how you do things **now?** Can you see what a change that might make for the good in **every relationship?**

No matter what I say, I do not think I can make the proper impact of this truth. Please go home and contemplate it. Do you need help with relationships? Here is the truth. Here is what Christ says that changes everything. This is how we look like Christ in our relationships. Will we do it?

Now let's finish up the verse.

**<sup>12</sup> Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

**For this is the law and the prophets.**

Don't we sometimes see the Bible as a bunch of restrictive rules that keep us from doing that which we would **prefer to do** and make us do stuff **we don't want to do**. There is no sense denying that our flesh has a tendency to respond badly any time we are told **what to do**.

But that is not the heart of the law of God. The heart of the law of God is that it directs us have a **peaceful relationship with God** and to live in the most **God glorifying manner in life**. And that ultimately is the very best thing to happen to any human being. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. That is a brother Piper quote and fits what we are saying this morning.

What do you think when you are around a brother or sister **who truly loves like this?** Do you not feel like you are experiencing a **little bit of heaven?** God's law is to give this life as much heaven on earth as it is ever to get. It is a wonderful thing. It introduces the will of a loving God to a humanity who has lost the ability to even **perceive** what is good and bad. It shows us what is **noble** and **honorable** and what is **deplorable and ugly**. It tells us the truth of God and of life.

Jesus said not a jot or tittle would be removed. He backed it because of its goodness.

And the summary of what all of it is about is found in just two wonderful life transforming commands.

Love God

Love people

Signed God.