



## HG210: The Sermon On The Mount **Decisions To Make**

Matthew 7:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

22 November 2020 - Revd Christine Williams



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and other  
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)

*Ice Breaker*

Should Christians pray for a carpark space?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)

*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Matthew 7:1-11

Home Group Sermon

22 November 2020 - Revd Christine Williams

Today we are thinking further about the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is about how we should live our life day by day. It's a message for our time and every time. We all need to be totally immersed in the teachings of Jesus so we grow more like him in integrity and love.

### **Judging others**

V1. There are 2 kinds of judgements that we might make. For example, sometimes we need to evaluate a situation and make a judgement of which is the best course of action or we might be judging who would be best to represent us in parliament. We might even be judging someone because we are a magistrate or on a jury. In some way we are doing this kind of judging all the time in a small way when we make choices about what we might do today or who we will spend time with. We look at the evidence and make a valid assessment.

But what Jesus was referring to in these verses is judging people where perhaps we are stereotyping them or where we are continually putting them down. If we criticise someone we will tend to make them look as bad as possible to show ourselves in an inflated moral light. Jesus obviously had a particular group of hypocrites in mind as he talked about being judgmental like that. The Pharisees were fond of criticising those with lower standards than themselves. They were proud of their own righteousness and religious ritual. Jesus deliberately exaggerated the other versus self with the speck and plank parable. We become hypocrites if we want to correct other people's un-Christlike behaviour when we have similar wrongs of our own. Jesus' response to the tax collectors and sinners is a really positive example to follow. He knew all their failings but he loved them into the Kingdom. He mixed with them and showed them God's mercy. They responded to the call of God.

Jesus says we should not judge because we will be judged by the same criteria that we ourselves are using. When we are tempted to make judgements about someone think:

- No-one is perfect, yet. We are not perfect but we are often blind to our own imperfections while the faults of other people are glaringly obvious.
- Criticism and gossip damage the victim. It puts people down. We should instead think about God's ultimate aim for them. Do we want to see that person change to become more like Christ? How might that happen? We are all on the same road to being changed into Christ-likeness.
- Continued criticism damages ourselves. We become hypocrites and we have already heard in Matthew 6:1-18 what Jesus thought about hypocrites.

However, Jesus said, there were judgements that should be made. Do not, 'throw pearls before swine'. Dogs and pigs were ways that Jews spoke about Gentiles. This ties in with his command when he was sending out the twelve. Matt 10: 5 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans; go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. Before the resurrection, the message of Jesus was to the lost sheep of Israel. It seems that, in God's plan, the Jews needed to respond to their Messiah before anyone else. After the resurrection, however, the disciples were to go into all the world and make disciples of everyone.

Our guiding principle in all our behaviour with others should be 'treat them as I would like them to treat me.' 7:12 When I was small I had a children's copy of Kingsley's, 'The water babies.' There were 2 women that the boy Tom met on his journeys, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby and Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid. Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby was really nice and kind but Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid was horrible. Mrs Do..... was demonstrating the so-called golden rule and being kind and thoughtful to someone even where they are not particularly nice. Our behaviour towards everyone should be to treat them just as you would like to be treated by them. Do-as-you-would-be-done-by.

### **Ask Seek Knock**

V7. 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.' That's simple enough. Just do it! All we have to do is ask! Right? 'Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz'.

Why don't we pray more? I'll start with the small things that we feel may be too small to pray about. Do you pray for a parking space, good weather for a BBQ or a supermarket delivery slot? If not why not? Is anything too small? God knows what we need even before we ask him, as we have heard in Matthew 6:8, and he is a good father who wants us to have good gifts 7:11. Why don't we keep talking to our good father? Are we not good children? God knows what we need but he wants us to talk to him about it. Our conversation with him is important to him. Are we talking to him about the trivia? We can.

That's what Jesus did. If we pray for the little things that we need every day then we will see lots of little answers to prayers which in turn will raise our thankfulness and praise.

What about the big things. Is there anything that is too enormous for us to pray about. Are we praying for an end to Covid? Are we praying for healing for cancer? Sometimes things feel too big and we cannot see how God could do change the situation. It may feel as though we are just saying the words and we don't really think that it will make any difference. Maybe we should in faith break our prayer down into smaller asks. Maybe we can honestly pray for a Covid vaccine to come out quickly or perhaps for healing from some of the side effects of cancer.

6 years ago, after John had been receiving cancer treatment he developed peripheral neuropathy in his hands and feet. It was painful and annoying because in other ways he was doing very well. At New Wine that summer there was a lot of walking and John was not totally fit yet. His hands were very painful. One evening the speaker invited people to the front to be prayed for and John went forward. He asked for prayer for his neuropathy and his hands were instantly healed. It was a miracle. Curiously his feet were not healed immediately but we praised God for what we were given. The cancer is still there and he is still recovering from the recent chemo which has damaged his hearing, but we keep praying for more healing.

The bible insists on miracles. Jesus says we must ask for them. The very simplest prayer is simply asking God for help. When we are neediest we pray big prayers. There are no atheists in a sinking ship. The simplest of prayers is the simple word, 'help!' Help me God. I'm in trouble.

Ask, seek, knock. Apparently, the Greek her suggests that we keep on asking, seeking and knocking. It is not just a one-off prayer. Don't just ask once and think that is it. Keep on asking. What are we asking for? In the Lord's prayer which is a daily prayer, there are several different areas that Jesus reminds us to ask for: we ask for God's Kingdom to come and his will to be done. We ask for our daily bread. We ask for forgiveness and we ask for protection against evil and we keep on asking for these things.

God our loving father gives good gifts to his children and his plan for our lives is the very best plan. He wants the very best life for us and the very best life is a life walking close to him. We would certainly get lots of answers to prayer if we start asking for things that God wants to give us anyway. James wrote in chapter 4:2 'you do not have because you do not ask. When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives.' Paul encouraged believers to ask for Spiritual gifts. 1 Cor14:1

There is always something more that God wants to give us. We find fulfilment as we seek God more and more and get in tune with his desires for us.

My guess is that almost everyone will say, ‘yes but I prayed and I didn’t get the answer I hoped for. God let me down’. Life is hard. People get sick and die. Nevertheless, we still need to keep asking for things. We need to stay in conversation with our father even when things look bad. Especially when things are bad. David knew all about that and many of his prayers are in the Psalms which can be a great resource for difficult times. They are achingly honest. Many of the psalms start ‘Why Lord?’

It may help to realise that Jesus had a prayer that was unanswered. He encouraged us to pray, your kingdom come, your will be done. But when he was in Gethsemane he prayed ‘take this cup from me’. He knew what he had to do but he did not want the pain and agony that it would cause him. His father did not answer that particular prayer of Jesus. Sometimes there is no relief from the pain and agony of life. But to say as Jesus said, ‘Nevertheless, not my will but yours’ is very powerful and courageous especially when we are facing really tough challenging times.

We may think, as many do, that prayer is about us trying to change God’s mind but maybe it’s more about God trying to change our minds. Let us remember to ask, seek, and knock and keep on asking, seeking and knocking but also keep listening to hear his answer.

### **Prayer:**

*Lord, I do not know what to ask of you; only you know what I need.  
I simply present myself to you; I open my heart to you;  
I have no other desire than to accomplish your will.  
Teach me to pray. **Amen.***

(Francois Felenon)

*Book suggestion: ‘How to Pray’ Pete Grieg.*

## **Emmanuel Church Text for 2020**

**“The Lord Your God is with you. He is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with  
His love. He will rejoice over you with singing.”**

**Zephaniah 3:17**



## **Looking Upwards** (40 mins)

### *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1.** Have you ever suffered because of someone's (wrong) judgement of you? How did you feel?

**2.** How do you avoid getting involved in gossip?

**3.** Has lockdown improved your prayer life or the opposite? Give your reason for the answer.

4. Do you pray for yourself? If not why not? Do you ever ask other people to pray for your spiritual growth? Read Eph 4:11-16 (1 Cor 12:7-10 and 1Cor 14:1) What spiritual gift might you ask God for?

5. Can you think of a recent answer to prayer? Was this a prayer for yourself or someone else?

6.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## **Looking Inwards** (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## **Looking Outwards** (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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