**Week 35**

**Matthew 7:7-12**

**RECAP**

Last week, we learned that we should be cautious when judging people critically or with hypocrisy. We believe Jesus was reminding us that we can all be prone to self-righteousness, especially given our sinfulness. It is easy for us to point out others’ wrongdoings while being gentle with ourselves. We learned the plank in our eyes is enormous, but the speck, which is more like a twig, is also an issue that blinds people. Holding each other accountable, iron sharpening iron, and perfecting one another in Christ is not being judgmental, but rather it is love. However, when we do not deal with our hearts first, we will often come with the wrong heart and attitude. Jesus reminds us that even if we examine our hearts, humble ourselves, and are equipped with the truth, some will not receive the truth we have to offer. We risk losing friends, family, and even being attacked. However, let this not be a reason for us not to provide truth in love. Now we are going to see what Jesus says to us about how to handle these tough situations when dealing with others.

**Ask, Seek, and Knock**

**READ: Matthew 7:7-8 “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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”**

Discerning is not easy. How do we know when it is time to confront an erring brother or sister? How can we discern when dealing with a false teacher or prophet versus a brother or sister in error? How do we know when we have done the work on our own plank before coming after the speck (twig) in another's life? As Amy always says, from Kenny Rogers, “know when to hold them, know when to fold them, and know when to walk away”!

This takes wisdom, wisdom that only comes from above. Here, as children of God, we have access to the most incredible wisdom for navigating everyday life and making decisions.

God has left us His word, His Spirit, and full access to Him. The Word does not necessarily provide exact answers for every issue we encounter. Therefore, there is an expectation that we should be utterly dependent on God for wisdom and believe He will illuminate for us how to handle every unique situation. When we ask God for wisdom, He responds through His Word as we study, through the Holy Spirit who teaches and guides us, and often through wise counsel from fellow believers who help us discern His will for a given situation.

**Here we see a progression of intensity.**

**Ask:** Greek **(*aiteite*)** – to request or petition; implies humble dependence and trust in the giver.

**Seek:** Greek **(*zēteite*)** – to search, pursue, or strive after; suggests a deeper, active desire to find what is not immediately visible.

**Knock:** Greek **(*krouete*)** – to rap on a closed door; indicates persistence and boldness, especially when the way seems blocked.

Matthew 7:7 is often misunderstood and pulled out of context to support the idea that we can ask God for anything, money, success, material blessings, and expect to receive it like a one-time transaction. But when we look closely at the Greek, the verbs "ask," "seek," and "knock" are in the present active tense, meaning this is not a one-and-done request; it’s a **continual, persistent** posture of prayer. In the flow of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching us to depend daily on God for **wisdom and discernment**, especially in how we relate to others (as He just taught in verses 1–6). This echoes His earlier instruction in the Lord’s Prayer, or what we call the Disciples' Prayer (Week 29 & 30), where we are taught to pray continually for God's will, provision, and guidance.

Yes, we are invited to bring all our needs to the Father, but in this passage, Jesus is emphasizing the kind of **spiritual asking** that seeks His heart and mind, not a formula for getting what we want. The promise of the open door is not tied to entitlement, but to those who persistently seek God’s wisdom, will, and ways. It's an invitation to walk in daily dependence, trusting that our good Father will always give us what is best according to His purpose.

Confronting sin, correcting false teachings and teachers, helping a straying brother or sister or preaching the gospel to the lost is not easy! We need the wisdom of our Father. We need courage, boldness, and, above all, humility with love. Only humble people can truly agape love. All of which comes only from the above.

**READ:** James 1:5-6 **(When we lack wisdom, “ask” with faith and it will be given)**

**READ:** 1 Kings 3:9 **(Give us understanding to discern good from evil)**

**READ:** Psalm 32:8 **(God will give instruction and counsel in any situation we find ourselves in)**

As adopted sons and daughters, we have a promise from our Father that when we actively, persistently seek His wisdom in any situation, He will answer the door and pour it out upon us. It may take some time, effort, and persistence, but He does answer His children. He has not left us orphans!

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

**Our Good Father**

**READ: Matthew 7:9-11 “Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If 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!”**

Jesus is now making it more personal. Even a loving father who has a sinful nature would not purposely try to harm his child or deceive him in such a way that would cause him to lose trust or faith in him as a father. He certainly wouldn’t exchange good, healthy food for a deadly serpent that could cause significant pain or even death. This is a general rule that, as image bearers, we can all do good. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule where parents can deeply harm children. Jesus is speaking in generalities here.

Most parents will sacrifice for their children and desire to give them good gifts, especially the ones they ask for. Think of Christmas and birthdays. We all hope to meet their requests on their lists. We know how to give good gifts; we desire to provide for their needs.

So, how much more does our heavenly Father desire to pour out His wisdom upon us? When we have needs to fulfill, when we ask, seek, and knock for His help, He, as a good Father, wants to lavish it over us, as we just read in James.

Remember “Our Father who is in Heaven”? We learned that He is our Father and wants to pour out all of Heaven’s resources for us to achieve the tasks we have here on this earth to accomplish. Again, he did not leave us as orphans. It pleases the Father to provide for His children.

A reminder: This is not a prayer or a list of demands that God, as our Father, is now obligated to answer with a yes and amen. He is our wise Father, who is promising wisdom and discernment. He promises to give us what we need for daily living and the calling on our lives. This does not include private jets, mansions, large bank accounts, and designer clothing. This is wisdom, power, boldness, holiness, discernment, and humble love as Christ followers.

**READ:** James 1:16-17 **(Do not be deceived every good gift comes from above)**

**READ:** Romans 8:32 **(He will graciously give us all things)**

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

**The Golden Rule**

**READ: Matthew 7:12 “Therefore however you want people to treat you so treat them for this is the Law and the Prophets”**

Matthew 7:12, often called the “Golden Rule,” beautifully summarizes the heart of the entire Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” This isn’t a call to kindness based on mutual treatment. It’s a radical call to selfless love, regardless of how others behave.

Only those who are born again, filled with the Spirit, and made new by God's grace can love this way. Unbelievers may strive to live morally, but only God’s children have the supernatural capacity to love enemies, bless those who persecute them, judge with humility, and forgive without expecting anything in return. This kind of love flows from a heart transformed by the gospel.

Jesus wasn’t introducing a new concept; He was restoring the original intent of God’s Word. The Pharisees had distorted Scripture with man-made traditions, using it to control others rather than reflect God’s heart. But Jesus brings us back to the root of it all: love God and love others. When we live out the Golden Rule, we fulfill the very essence of the Law and the Prophets, God’s revealed will for His children!

**READ:** Leviticus 19:18 **(You shall love your neighbor as yourself)**

**READ:** Matthew 22:37-40 **(Loving God and your neighbor is the greatest commandment)**

**READ:** Galatians 5:14 **(For the whole law is fulfilled you shall love your neighbor as yourself)**

**READ:** Romans 13:8-10 **(Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law)**

**SUMMARY**

Jesus gives us a mirror, not to judge others, but to examine our hearts. He warns us to stop wielding judgment as a weapon and instead look inward, dealing with the “logs” in our own eyes before addressing anyone else’s faults. He calls us to humility, discernment, and dependence not on our ability to love well or lead rightly, but on the Father who generously gives wisdom to those who ask. Every verse is a call away from self-righteousness and toward Spirit-empowered living. At the climax, Jesus gives us the Golden Rule not as a suggestion for polite society, but as the very heartbeat of the kingdom: treat others as you long to be treated. Not with conditions. Not with expectations. But with the love that only God can pour out in a transformed heart.

And that’s the key **transformation**. This teaching isn’t just about behavior modification; it’s about gospel transformation! We can’t love our enemies, judge with grace, or give without strings attached unless Christ lives in us. Only those who have been born again, filled with the Spirit, can live this way. Jesus isn’t raising the bar to crush us; He’s revealing the standard, so we’ll run to Him. The Sermon on the Mount isn’t about trying harder; it’s about surrendering deeper. Let this passage stir you to self-reflection: Do I judge more than I pray? Do I love as I want to be loved? Am I relying on God or just reacting out of instinct? The gospel changes everything, not just our eternity, but how we treat every soul we encounter today. Let that change begin with all of us.

**HOMEWORK:**

1. Take time this week to prayerfully read Matthew 7:1-5, identify and write down a few personal “logs” (attitudes or behaviors that need correcting), and confess them to the Lord, asking Him to give you humility and clarity in your relationships.
2. Choose one person in your life to love or serve this week intentionally, especially someone who may be difficult to love, and do something kind for them without expecting anything in return, practicing the heart of Matthew 7:12.

**Upcoming Events:**

**July 20th, Stephen in Preaching on 1 Corinthians 13; The Lord has put a special message on his heart. Please plan to attend and invite a friend who needs to hear the gospel or someone who needs to be encouraged in Christ.**

**Saturday, July 19th:** Noon – 2 pm Portage Lakes outreach. We will prepare hot dogs and serve chips, among other snacks, to the swimmers, sharing the love of Jesus that day. Bring family, they can swim, play games ect **(if it rains, we will reschedule)**

**We will likely have another homeless outreach in July. We will keep you posted.**

**July 31st – August 3rd** Hall of Fame Outreach events. Football Game, Parade, Fun Festival, and Concert. Please let us know if you would like to join. We distribute tracts and have open-air preachers as well.

**August 10th** Akron Pickle Fest, 10 am-5 pm, downtown Akron, we will have a booth set up. Come after church to help.

**August 13th – 16th Lion Festival:** Cornerstone will have a booth set up; come and distribute information about the church in the evenings, including during the parade on Saturday. The booth will also be open on Saturday evening. See Katie for more details.

**August 16th Pagan Pride Festival in Cleveland:** 6 pm-9 pm, distributing tracts and engaging with attendees. See Stephen if interested. CCC comes first before this outreach!

**Akron University:** Stephen will return to campus on Monday, August 15, and will be on campus passing out snacks and tracts talking with students Mondays through Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and on Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Check with Stephen as the weather and days vary each week.

**Cleveland State University:** See Stephen for dates and times! This is usually on different days, Monday-Friday, Noon – 2 pm.

**We need donations for our homeless outreaches: Sterno, Hygiene products, blankets, thick tube socks, gloves, beanie hats (most of these items can be purchased at Dollar Tree, or you can donate to BTC and we will buy everything, or you can donate to CCC and mark the envelope Homeless supplies. Everything helps keep our homeless friends warm and fed throughout the year.**

**If you need gospel tracts to pass out throughout the week, see Stephen tonight.**