

Start Loving

Matthew 7:7-12

The main theme of the Sermon on the Mount is to give the standards for those who live in God's kingdom. The Lord Jesus sums up His teaching in verse 12 in what is known as the Golden Rule: "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" Because this rule is part of the principles and standards in the kingdom of God, only Christians could fulfill the golden rule. It is only the believers who truly love the Father who can truly love their neighbors as well (Matt. 22:39-40; cf. Deut. 6:4; Lev. 19:18). But since loving our neighbors is a difficult thing to do (even among believers, Jesus gave us three motivations to help us in doing just that.

1. *The _____ of the Father*

The terms ask, seek and knock are simple ways to describe prayer. As Christians, we must boldly go to the Lord in prayer because when we pray to Him, He listens. We are to keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking until God answers their prayer (vv. 7-8; cf. Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8).

God answers prayers based upon the following conditions: a) You must be a child of God (1 John 3:10); b) You must be living in obedience to God (1 John 3:22); c) You must ask in the will of God (1 John 5:14-15); d) we must ask unselfishly (James 4:3); e) You must ask in faith (James 1:7-8).

2. *The _____ of the Father*

Jesus uses the illustration of an earthly father (vv. 9-10) showing that even an (evil) earthly father would not purposely deceive his child by giving his hungry child a stone instead of bread; that he would not purposely defile his son by giving him an (unclean) eel (Lev. 11:12) instead of fish; that he would not purposely destroy his son by giving him scorpion rather than an egg (Luke 11:12). If that is true of a (sinful) earthly father, how much more shall the Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him (James 1:17).

God's goodness is shown in the fact that He always meets our basic needs (Phil. 4:19) and giving us only what is good and what is right (Psalm 34:10; 84:11).

3. *The _____ of the Father*

The "Golden Rule" is the whole point of all the Scripture. It is part of the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:40). It is the royal law (James 2:8; cf. Romans 13:8-10). The goal of God is to conform His children into the image of His Son. As believers, we are no more like Jesus than when we love like Him (John 13:34-35). *We should therefore intentionally be concerned for our neighbors' welfare* (1 Cor. 13:4-5; Phil. 2:3-4) and *should deal with our neighbors righteously* (1 John 5:2).

How then are we to respond to the Golden Rule? As Christians, because this is God's command we should respond by loving His commandment (Psalm 119:97) and obeying it (Psalm 1:3, 119:34,44,55; cf. 1 Tim. 1:5). May the Lord give us His grace as we seek to show our love to our neighbors in concrete, practical ways!