

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY TWENTY-TWO

Pearls, Pigs, Prayers, and People

Matthew 7:6–12

Universally loved and quoted, the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” forms the capstone of the Sermon on the Mount.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ONE well-crafted wise saying can contain more value for those who live by it than all of King Solomon's treasures. How beautiful and precious are wise words! As Solomon himself once said:

*Timely advice is lovely,
like golden apples in a silver basket. (Proverbs 25:11)*

As we've seen, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount contains many such golden apples of timely advice. In fact, it's advice for all time . . . and for all people in all places. No matter the subject He addresses, Jesus' statements prove enlightening and useful.

Even in the short span of the seven verses in Matthew 7:6–12, Jesus, using carefully fashioned expressions, reveals three timeless truths:

- *How should we respond to people who don't want to hear spiritual truth?*
- *What do we do when God seems oblivious to our needs?*
- *Can one simple saying truly guide, and even improve, all our relationships?*

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll mine the depths of Jesus' memorable words to answer these vital questions.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Pearls, Pigs, Prayers, and People

Matthew 7:6–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prepare your heart to receive the words of Jesus, whose wisdom is more valuable than gold.

Father, as I open the Scriptures, may the truth of the message ring with relevance in my life. Unleash once more the power of the written Word to change my heart and transform my world. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read [Matthew 7:6–12](#), these three subjects might appear disconnected at first, but when seen in light of Jesus' whole sermon, you'll notice they fit together like puzzle pieces, helping complete the picture of kingdom-living. With these pieces in place, we can draw three key principles about discernment, prayer, and living like Christ in a lost world.



Observation: Pearls, Pigs, Prayers, and People

In the observation phase of Bible study, we examine the particulars of each verse as well as their logical connection within the context of the section and book.¹ In the following sections, write down what you observe as you answer the questions about the verses.

Speaking and Restraining—Matthew 7:6

In Jesus' day, dogs and pigs (which were more like wild boar) were unclean animals to Jews. They were untamable, filthy, and dangerous. Read [Matthew 7:6](#) and note the intensity of the verbs: *waste*, *throw*, *trample*, and *attack* (or *tear to pieces*, NASB). What extreme contrasts did Jesus make?

In the interpretation section, we'll examine the meaning of these metaphors. For now, let's move on to the next subject of prayer.



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Praying and Receiving—Matthew 7:7–11

In *Matthew 7:7–8*, do you see a progression of urgency in our asking, seeking, and knocking? How do these actions express our motives for praying? What promises did Jesus make?

What contrasts do you find in *7:9–11*? How did Jesus teach the trustworthy character of our heavenly Father?

Set these verses within the context of Jesus' earlier instructions. What is the difference between the prayers of the hypocrites and Gentiles in *6:5, 7–8* as compared to God's children praying in *7:7–11*.



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Others and Us—Matthew 7:12

Now look closely at [Matthew 7:12](#). What do you observe? Read the same verse in *The Message* and try restating this verse in your own words.

The next time we see someone struggling or going through a tough time or who is difficult to deal with, remember this verse. What can we do for this person that we would want him or her to do for us if we were in the same straits? The beauty of the Golden Rule is that Jesus leaves its application up to us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Discernment, Persistence, and Modeling

In the interpretation phase, we seek to understand Jesus' teaching as His original audience would have understood it. We craft universal, timeless principles that we can apply in our lives based on the timeless truth we learn about God and life.

First, let's look at what Jesus meant by His warning about dogs and pigs.

The Wisdom of Discernment

“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6 NASB). What was Jesus telling us not to give and to whom? On page 128 of his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains these metaphors. For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netBible.org](#). Write down what you discover.



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If people's hearts are cold toward God, we should avoid overly sharing Jesus' message with them. Otherwise, they may angrily attack us and drag Jesus' sacred name through the mud. Perceiving people's hostile nature is not the same as judging them—for God alone is their Judge (Matthew 7:1). Jesus frees us to walk away until their hearts are more receptive (10:14).

Write down a principle about discernment based on Jesus' teaching in 7:6.

The Value of Persistence

Unlike Gentiles who “babble on and on” in prayer to their stone idols (Matthew 6:7), Jesus' followers have a genuine relationship with God in which He invites us to “*Keep on asking. . . . Keep on seeking. . . . Keep on knocking*” (7:7, emphasis added). What characteristics of our relationship with God did Jesus highlight in 7:7–11?

Did Jesus imply that God will answer every prayer as we wish? How does Pastor Chuck explain the answer on page 129 of *Insights on Matthew 1–15*.



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Sum up Jesus' teaching with a principle about persistence in prayer.

The Honor of Modeling

A negative form of the Golden Rule predated Jesus, and we can find it in the apocryphal book of Tobit: “Don't do to others what you would hate to have them do to you.”² This well-known *rule of restraint* taught the principle of “do no harm,” to which Rabbi Hillel—who lived a few years before Jesus—famously added, “This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary.”³

Well, the rabbi was wrong! He overlooked the *heart* of the law—the core principle of love that Jesus' entire sermon reveals and His Golden Rule encapsulates. Jesus' innovative, positive spin on the old rule captures the true spirit of the law, or as Jesus rightly added, “the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

What is the difference between the rabbi's negative rule, “Don't do to others . . .” and Jesus' Golden Rule, “Do to others . . .” (7:12)?

Think of Jesus' Golden Rule as more than a rule for living . . . it is truly a *rule for loving*. But who can obey such a high calling? Only those whose hearts are full of the love of the King Himself and have been made new by the power of the Spirit.

Living the Golden Rule has everything to do with living the life of Christ. If we base our actions on this rule, we will have little difficulty sharing the Savior with the person we help.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Biblical Wisdom on Prayer

Jesus taught us to be persistent in prayer and to trust our Father's goodness. What complementary principles do these verses teach?

Psalm 55:22

James 5:16

1 John 5:14–15

We know that our heavenly Father is good; He doesn't have a bit of evil in Him. When He decides to give His answers and pour forth His blessing, oh, He will amaze us all!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: The Greatest Message We Communicate

Use the following questions as aids in applying Jesus' wise words on discernment, prayer, and living His Golden Rule.

Have you been wasting time trying to force-feed someone who doesn't want to hear the message of Jesus? If so, what do you think the Lord is guiding you to do?

Have you weakened in prayer because the answer has not come as you hoped? How do Jesus' words on prayer encourage you?

Finally, do you wonder how best to respond to those around you who may be hurting? What wisdom do you find by following the Golden Rule?



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To live by the Golden Rule is to walk in communion with Christ everywhere—at home, at the workplace, in our neighborhood, on our travels, at the gym, in our play. Close this study in prayer, asking the Lord for His life and wisdom to flow through you in every avenue of daily life.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me in this journey from earth to heaven to see life through the eyes of Your Son, Jesus. May I seek to understand as I wish to be understood. Forgive as I would like to be forgiven. Show mercy as I would hope others would show mercy to me. In all these ways, may the love of Christ guide my steps and lead my way, in His name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Tobit 4:12, as quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 130.
3. Talmud, Shabbath 31a, as quoted by John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 190.

