



Growth Group Questions
November 12, 2023
“The Better Way”

Context

In our passage this week Jesus addresses three issues as he begins to wrap up the Sermon on the Mount. The first one is about prayer. When it comes to prayer we are to ask, seek and knock. Jesus implies that we are to keep prayer simple. He gave a model for prayer in the Lord’s Prayer, but here he reminds his followers they need to put prayer into action and not just talk about praying. Jesus implies that if you are going to live out what the Sermon on the Mount says, you are going to need to be a person of prayer.

The parable that Jesus tells contrasts God and humankind. Jesus uses a sort of “how much more line” of reasoning. Jesus lifts up the sinfulness of humanity, and yet in spite of our sinfulness, we still give good gifts to our children. If humankind, who is evil, still gives good gifts, how much more will God do for his followers. God is our “heavenly father” who is ultimately good and kind.

The second issue Jesus addresses is in verse 12 where he talks about what we commonly call the “golden rule.” This teaching is found in many other religions, as well as philosophical teaching, but always in a negative form. Confucius said, “Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.” Jesus reverses this and makes it positive by saying treat others how you would like to be treated. This “golden rule” fulfills the law and prophets when it comes to loving our neighbor, but there is still more for a believer to do which is now where Jesus turns in his sermon.

The third issue Jesus addresses is about choice. There are only two choices that people can make when it comes to responding to the kingdom of God. There is the narrow gate and the narrow path, or there is the wide gate and the wide path. There is not a third option. In the ensuing verses he will also talk about two kinds of prophets and disciples, as well as two different places where you can build your house.

Jesus does not allow for a third way, nor does he say you can just go with the flow or the crowd. The narrow gate leads to the abundant life and fulfillment. Yet, because the gate is narrow it is implied that some things must be left behind. Jesus wants to be first in our lives. When we make him first he leads us on a path that brings life and satisfaction.



Scripture:

Matthew 7:7-14

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

James 4:2-3

²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Isaiah 65:1

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;
I was found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation that did not call on my name,
I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’

John 10:7-10

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Psalms 1

¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
⁴Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.



Questions:

1. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Some people might interpret this verse to mean that God will give us whatever we ask for. How would you respond to this interpretation?
2. Note the progression in the three actions Jesus tells us to use in Matthew 7:7-8 (ask, seek, knock). How does each action build on the idea of how we are told to request things from God?
3. What can we learn about how God wants us to pray from James 4:2-3?
4. Make a list of the ways you like to be treated by others and the ways you do not like to be treated. What insights can you gain from these two lists about what it means for you to “do to others what you would have them do to you”?
5. In Matthew 7:13, Jesus invites us to “enter through the narrow gate” that leads to life. If God loves us so much, why is the gate to life small and narrow?
6. Jesus tells us that we have only two choices – the wide gate or the narrow gate. Make a list of the things that you believe characterize the wide gate. As you review this list, what stands out to you?
7. Now, make a similar list of the things you believe characterize the narrow gate. As you review this list, what stands out to you?
8. What does the Bible tell us about the benefits we will receive if we choose to enter the narrow gate and follow the narrow path?
9. Pastor Paul said that Matthew 7:7-14 addresses the question “Does God really care?”. As you review this Scripture, how do you think it answers this all important question?
10. If you were asked by a friend if God really cares, what other Scripture verses might you use to help answer this question?

