

Discipleship Questions

Why does Jesus care about how citizens of His kingdom judge others?

Does Jesus forbid all judgments?

How must proper judgments be made?

Who are represented by the “dogs” and “pigs”?

Why is it important to make judgments about these?

Why might some people react with despair when hearing about the righteousness of Jesus’s kingdom (as presented by Jesus in this sermon)?

How does Jesus demonstrate the availability of His kingdom?

How does loving others require you to conduct yourself toward them?



Lesson 11: **Righteousness With Others (Matthew 7:1-12)**

Jesus’s sermon has focused on what righteousness looks like in the kingdom of God. Righteousness in the kingdom of God, though, is not just about one’s personal relationship with God and personal morality. Righteousness is also required in dealing with others. This even extends to those who are outside of Jesus’s kingdom (Matthew 7:1-12).

Avoid Merciless Judgment (7:1-5)

Jesus knew the danger of some misusing this new-found righteousness in merciless ways as they viewed others. This attitude was often demonstrated by the Pharisees and scribes as they practiced their “righteousness” (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 15:1-2; 18:9-14). However, righteousness in Jesus’s kingdom does not mean looking down on others in harshly judgmental, critical, and condemnatory ways (James 4:11). While Jesus does teach citizens of His kingdom to make judgments (Matthew 7:3-5, 6, 15-20; 18:15-17), you must be careful how you judge and what standard is used so that you judge righteously (John 7:24)! Certainly, final judgment must be recognized as belonging to God alone (Romans 2:6-11). Then, the standard you use in judgment will be used to judge you (Luke 6:37-38). Particularly, citizens of God’s kingdom must remember mercy in judgment (James 2:13)! While everyone will be judged by the same standard of God’s word (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12), how you treat others in judgment will be reflected in your judgment (i.e. Matthew 6:14-15). Any judgments made toward others should not be for the purpose of condemning, but only to help people live righteously! Merciless and hypocritical judgment looks critically at all the faults of others, even to the exclusion of recognizing your own faults. This overlooks unrighteousness in self (no matter how prevalent the

problem is; i.e. a beam) and scrutinizes everything unrighteous about others (even lesser degrees of the same kind of fault; i.e. a splinter, Romans 2:17-24). While there is an appropriate and helpful way to correct unrighteousness in others (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), this should only happen after appropriately scrutinizing and correcting yourself.

Discernment Required (7:6)

While citizens of God's kingdom must not look critically at others and try to tear others down, they also must be discerning to recognize that not everyone is interested in trying to live according to God's standards of righteousness. By spending too much time, energy, and effort on these, true opportunities for the kingdom of God will be neglected and harm will be brought on yourself. This picture is of giving what is holy (i.e. Old Testament sacrifices only priests were to eat, Exodus 29:33; Leviticus 2:3) to the dogs to eat (dogs were considered unclean scavenger animals by the Jews) and giving a pearl to a pig (unclean to a Jew; consider both animals used in 2 Peter 2:22). The value and significance of these things is entirely lost on and unappreciated by these animals – and they will even turn on you to harm you! Jesus often recognized those who were not truly seeking the righteousness of the kingdom (Matthew 15:7-9, 12-15; 23:1-36; Luke 13:32). So, kingdom citizens must be discerning about who are spiritually minded and are truly seeking to learn and obey the gospel of the kingdom, moving on from those who are not (Matthew 10:11-15, 16; 11:15; 13:3-9, 18-23)!

A Kingdom That Is Available (7:7-11)

After Jesus addressed any possible inclination His followers might have to become kingdom Pharisees, He moved to encourage anyone who might hear the demands of kingdom citizens and despair due to their sinful state. For, Jesus encourages everyone that His is an available kingdom – not for the deserving, but for those who are willing to ask, seek, and knock! The requests made (in harmony with the context of the passage), then, are not for mere earthly concerns and desires (thereby treating prayer as an “Aladdin’s Lamp”), but for the spiritual blessings of God’s kingdom. Just like an earthly father provides good things physically for his children, the Heavenly Father will provide good things spiritually to those who will ask, seek, and knock (Luke 11:9-13)! Therefore, God gives those who are seeking Him and His kingdom blessings the opportunity to find Him and His kingdom! Not only must we recognize and apply this for ourselves, but also recognize the availability of kingdom blessings to all!

The Golden Rule (7:12)

Righteousness in God's kingdom requires the same as God has always required in treating others (as revealed in the Law and the Prophets). This is to love your neighbor as yourself, which stems from the even deeper love for God (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8). However, this command takes on even greater meaning and emphasis when we recognize the love God has demonstrated for us (John 13:34; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:16-18; 4:7-11, 19-21). Here, Jesus summarizes this same command as treating others according to how you want others to treat you. Thus, the way you treat another person as a citizen of God's kingdom must not be determined by how they have treated you, but how you want them to treat you. In fact, Jesus even teaches to treat others how you would treat Him (Matthew 25:31-46; Colossians 3:22-24)!

Conclusion

Being a citizen of Jesus's kingdom requires a righteousness that far surpasses the kind of righteousness practiced by the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus has repeatedly demonstrated this point throughout the sermon. Now, He has demonstrated a standard for judgment and conduct toward others that will stand out from the ways of this world if it is properly implemented!

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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