

## “Lord, Save Me From Your Followers!” (Matthew 7:1–12)

This past Thursday evening, I was reading a discipleship book to my children. At the end of each chapter there are discussion questions. One question was: “What negative characteristic turns people off about Christians?” As I posed this question to my children my boys responded by saying, “When Christians judge other people.” WOW! Honestly, I was taken aback by this response because my boys are eleven and nine. I wondered, “How could they know this so early in their Christian maturity?” I concluded that it is an intuitive. Even young Christians can sniff out inappropriate judgment.

It goes without saying that unbelievers pounce all over Christian hypocrisy and judgment. A Hindu professor once found out that a man in his class was a Christian. The professor said to this student, “If you Christians were like Jesus Christ, India would be at your feet tomorrow.” A learned Muslim who recently became a Christian said, “If Christians were truly Christians—like Christ—there would be no Islam.”<sup>1</sup> A *USA Today* poll shows 72% of unchurched Americans agree that a God exists, but the same percentage says “the church is full of hypocrites.” 44% say Christians get on their nerves.<sup>2</sup> People flat-out don’t like Christians. Yet, when is the last time you heard someone say, “Man, Jews, Muslims, or Buddhists get on my nerves!” It doesn’t happen, does it? People show respect and honor to these religions. Now it’s easy to object, “This just isn’t fair. The media has turned Christians into cultural punching bags.” Yet, we must ask, “Have we brought some of this pain upon ourselves?” If we’re honest and humble, we would probably have to say, “Yes, guilty as charged.” Just stop and think for a moment. Are you notorious for criticizing the media? Politicians? Your teachers? Your pastors? Your boss? Your coworkers? Your neighbors? Your friends? Seriously, can you even watch a football game without being critical of the quarterback, the coach, or the referee? Most Christians are critical. Some are even bold enough to boast that their spiritual gift is criticism. Yet Jesus says, “*Be slow to judge others and quick to judge yourself.*” In Matthew 7:1–12, Jesus gives two exhortations dealing with judicious judgment.

**1. Judge with humility not superiority (7:1–5).**<sup>3</sup> In this first section, Jesus clarifies *how* you should relate to other believers in the matter of judgment.<sup>4</sup> In 7:1, Jesus tells you what you shouldn’t do: “**Do not judge.**”<sup>5</sup> No sentence in the Bible is more familiar, more misunderstood, and more misapplied than Matt 7:1. Therefore, we must first determine what this verse doesn’t mean. “Do not judge” doesn’t mean you can’t say anything critical or pointed to another person. In this context, Jesus Himself alludes to certain people as dogs and pigs (7:6). He also warns His disciples, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (7:15). In both of these examples, Jesus makes a judgment about various individuals. Later in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus requires His disciples to confront believers who are in sin (18:15–17). Furthermore, the New Testament is clear that Christians are to judge both error and sin.<sup>6</sup> So despite what many people believe, the ideal Christian is not an undiscerning, all-accepting jellyfish who lives out the misinterpretation of “judge not.”<sup>7</sup> Christians can and should judge.

So what does this verse mean? *First, you are not to pass final judgment on any person.*<sup>8</sup> Final judgment belongs to the Lord. You are not in the condemning business. If anyone needs to be condemned, God Himself can take care of that. You should have no part in it. This is why curses like “God damn you” or “Go to hell” are so wicked! The one who utters these curses is attempting to play God! *Second, you are not to judge the motives of others.* The Bible says, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). Often we are quick to come to negative conclusions about others based on why we think they did something. But try as we might, we see only the outside. God alone sees the heart. What Christ means when He says “Do not judge” is that we are to refrain from hypercritical, condemning judgment. There is a universe of difference between being *discerningly* critical and hypercritical. A discerning spirit is *constructive*; a hypercritical spirit is *destructive.*<sup>9</sup> All of this means you can judge what people do; you cannot judge why they do it. You can judge what people say; you cannot judge why they say it.

In 7:1b–2, Jesus tells you what God will do. He says the reason that you shouldn't judge is **“so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged;<sup>10</sup> and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”<sup>11</sup>** When Jesus says “Do not judge so that you will not be judged,” He uses a future passive verb. He is referring to being judged at the judgment seat of Christ.<sup>12</sup> In other words, God will use the same basic standard you use to evaluate others when He evaluates you!<sup>13</sup> In Matt 5:7 Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.” If you are gracious in your dealings with other people's failures and shortcomings now, you will receive mercy in the future when the Lord evaluates your life. As the old saying goes, “People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.”<sup>14</sup> The longer I am in pastoral ministry, the greater my empathy for the struggles of my pastoral colleagues. The longer I walk with Christ, the more I empathize with my fellow believers. The longer I am married and strive to raise a family, the more I can empathize with other couples and parents. It is hard to be who you want to be, isn't it? I want to grant grace and extend mercy to others. I want to believe the best and be kind. But when necessary I want to love brothers and sisters enough to call them on sin.

In 7:3–5, Jesus tells you what you should do. He uses an illustration that comes from His background as a carpenter's son (13:55).<sup>15</sup> He puts it like this: **“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”<sup>16</sup>** Undoubtedly, Jesus didn't say this with a straight face. He must have been smiling and giggling as He said this. Visualize a man with a plank in his eye walking through the lobby of the church trying to find a person with a speck of sawdust in his eye that he might remove it! But the very image of such a man looking into a mirror but unable to see the plank in his eye because he is blinded by the plank is funny indeed. Again, Jesus did not say that Christians are not to judge under any circumstances. His warning was against hypocritical judgment—someone with a “log” in his eye passing judgment on someone with a “speck” in his eye (7:3). He was warning disciples not to make the mistake of the Pharisees! Jesus' concern was making sure that we are qualified to judge. This is why He said, “First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye” (7:5). Thus, believers are to judge error and sin, but in a gracious and non-judgmental fashion.

We naturally tend to exaggerate. We often inflate the faults of others while at the same time underestimating our own.<sup>17</sup> You could say we are perfectionists when it comes to other people, but extremely tolerant when it comes to ourselves.<sup>18</sup> We find it so easy to turn a microscope on another person's sin while we look at ours through the wrong end of a telescope!<sup>19</sup> Yet, when we let Jesus convict us of our sin, we will be able to judge others with humility, sensitivity, and compassion.

Have you ever had someone attempt to help you remove something from your eye? If so, you can readily understand the amount of gentleness and tenderness that's required. The eye is very sensitive. It takes a compassionate hand and a delicate touch to do surgery in the eye. When you have eye trouble, you need a doctor who knows what he is doing because even the slightest mistake can have catastrophic consequences. In the same way, when we minister to one another in the Christian community, we must do so only after careful introspection to make sure our own motives are pure. Then we can proceed with appropriate care and humility.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes in our haste to help others, we can cause more damage than the original speck of dirt caused. This doesn't mean you must be perfect before you can correct another Christian. However, Jesus' words do require you to have dealt as decisively as possible with any obvious areas of disobedience in your own life before you attempt to correct someone else. Otherwise, it is as if you are attempting to perform surgery blindfolded. In that situation, neither the patient nor the doctor feels confident!<sup>21</sup> Moreover, if you are committing the same sin, the judgment you pass on someone else boomerangs on you. And you definitely don't want that! Remember, *be slow to judge others and quick to judge yourself.*

There are a number of ways you can lovingly confront a person.<sup>22</sup>

1. Make sure your own heart is right with God before you confront someone.
2. Pray for the person that needs to be confronted.
3. Set up a time with the person to talk, in private without interruption, but don't put it off.
4. When the occasion calls for it, confront immediately.
5. Don't take out your own anger on someone.
6. Begin with a word of encouragement.
7. Ask the person, "If I could share something with you that would help you, would you want me to?"
8. State the issue as you see it. Give your perspective on the issue. Say, "This is the way I see it, please help me to understand." Admit that maybe you misunderstood or got the wrong perspective.
9. Ask how you can help the person.
10. Be confidential.
11. Pray for the person.

[How can you judge judiciously? By judging with humility not superiority. The second exhortation that Jesus gives is...]

**2. Judge with wisdom not independence (7:6–12).**<sup>23</sup> In this section, Jesus indicates that the only way to proceed with confidence in judging is by first requesting wisdom in prayer. Admittedly, not every Bible student agrees with this understanding. Some hold that 7:6, 7–11, and 12 are all independent sayings of Jesus that have no connection to 7:1–5. Yet, this is unlikely for four reasons. First, there is a *structural* connection. In both sections (7:1–5 and 6–12), there is a similar structure made up of three elements: what you shouldn't do, what God will do, and what you should do.<sup>24</sup> Second, there is a *grammatical* connection. The word "therefore" in 7:12 implies that the final verse in this section ties back to the previous eleven verses. Third, there is a *personal* connection. Jesus is challenging us to redirect our destructive energies to that of productive prayer. More than this, nothing neutralizes a critical spirit more than prayer. You cannot long be angry at those for whom you are praying, seeking their salvation and best interest (cf. 5:44). Lastly, there is a *practical* connection. We have just been taught by the Lord that we are not to be critical of others, standing over them as their judge. How can I distinguish between destructive criticism and discernment? It is a difficult, even impossible, assignment. I must have divine enablement.<sup>25</sup>

In 7:6, Jesus tells you what you shouldn't do, with a most unusual statement: **"Do not give what is holy to dogs,<sup>26</sup> and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."** Today dogs are loved as pets and pigs are loved as breakfast. But in Jesus' day, dogs and pigs were despised because they were unclean animals. When you read the term "dogs" you likely think of well-groomed household pets that are called "man's best friend." But in Jesus' day dogs lived in filth, running the streets and scavenging for food (Ps 59:14–15). These dogs Jesus is referring to are not poodles; they are Dobermans who have not been fed for a week. In fact, the bizarre behavior of dogs produced fear, because their often intense hunger could cause them to attack and eat humans (cf. Ps 22:16–17). Can you imagine giving holy food from the temple to an unclean dog scavenger? Of course not!

The pig in the ancient world is far different than modern cartoon characters like "Porky Pig." Although pork was a highly prized food among many people in the ancient Mediterranean world, it was rejected by Jews, probably because pigs, like dogs, were scavenging animals. Their omnivorous habits occasionally led pigs to feed on decaying flesh, a practice deplorable to Jews. Pigs were often dangerous because they ravaged fields (Ps 80:13), and while running wild in city streets were often responsible for the death of little children. Pearls were extremely precious. To throw them into the pig pen would be to not only lose them in the slime, but also to anger the pig, who might come after you for throwing him inedible food.

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to recognize that these terms "dogs" and "swine" are figures of speech for people. They are not complimentary terms, either.<sup>27</sup> But exactly who are these dogs and hogs? Jesus is talking about people who openly reject the gospel of Christ.<sup>28</sup> He is not talking about unbelievers, but enemies of the gospel. Jesus is saying don't cram the truth down close-minded people's throats. Don't waste your words on those who will not listen. Rather, go to those who are receptive and hungry for hope. The descriptions "what is holy" and "pearls" most likely refers to the message of the gospel (13:45–46), indicating that this holy message must not be defiled by those who are unreceptive to, or have rejected, Jesus' invitation. Something so valuable should not be given to those who have no appreciation for such precious truths; their nature is demonstrated by their rejection of that message. It is a warning against mistaken zeal in proclaiming the gospel to those whose only intent is mockery or ridicule, or worse.<sup>29</sup>

This verse should be understood as a warning against gullibility, the opposite of judgmentalism.<sup>30</sup> You will have to be very careful in how you apply this verse. It is easy to say, "Well, I'm not going to throw my pearls before swine anymore." My spouse, my sibling, or my parent has not been responsive to the gospel. They have even mentally or emotionally persecuted me. That may be the case, but you still bear the responsibility to love your family member and share Christ with him or her. It is unlikely that he or she is a dog or pig, regardless of what you may think. The key here is pray for wisdom and discernment. Pray that the Lord would show you how to go about persevering in difficult relationships with unbelievers who are hostile in their rejection of Christ and His gospel. Pray the Lord would make it clear when it is time to move on to more fertile fields (John 4:35–36; cf. Matt 9:36).

In 7:7–11, Jesus tells you what God will do as He transitions into a section on prayer.<sup>31</sup> He says, "**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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**" These five great verses on prayer have become the bread-and-butter of the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity movement. It is suggested that these verses support "Name it and claim it" theology. This view sees God as a celestial slot machine. Pull the handle enough times in prayer, be persistent, and you will get what you want!<sup>32</sup> However, these verses are not prayer verses for anything in general, but specifically for wisdom in judgment!<sup>33</sup> In the Old Testament, King Solomon asked for wisdom, and God granted him wisdom (1 Kgs 3–4). In the New Testament, James said, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (Jas 1:5). The expectation is that Christians will faithfully ask God for wisdom in dealing with conflict and judgment. It should be unthinkable that you would approach anyone without first seeking the Lord in prayer. Not just once or twice but continually. These are present tense imperatives: "Keep on asking and it will be given to you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you." Pray for the person's response before you think about approaching him or her. Pray for hard hearts to be softened. Pray for wisdom on how to approach the brother or sister in sin. Pray for repentance and the reconciliation of relationships.

Will God respond to such prayers? Absolutely! Look at the comparisons in 7:9: bread and fish; stone and snake. What's the point? Very simply, bread and fish are good for you; stones and snake are not. The earthly son has requested two good items, the earthly father responds accordingly. The reverse is also true. If an earthly son asks for a stone to eat, any loving father would refuse. (Everyone needs minerals in their diet, but this goes a bit too far!) God knows how to give you what is good for you. This is especially true in matters of conflict. He is not going to let you down. You know how much you want to bless your children, right? Well, God as the perfect Father wants to do right by His children. He wants to bless you and give you what is good.

In 7:12, Jesus tells you what you should do. He concludes this passage and the body of the Sermon on the Mount with the so-called “Golden Rule:” **“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (7:12).**<sup>34</sup> This is one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible.<sup>35</sup> This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God’s plan of salvation. We should no more build our theology on the “Golden Rule” than we should build our astronomy on “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”<sup>36</sup> When taken in isolation though, this verse seems to suggest “you scratch my back I’ll scratch yours;” if you want someone to do something for you, then do the same for them. Yet, “you get what you give” hardly seems to be a fitting climax for the body of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>37</sup> Rather, this is practical outworking of the Old Testament law in Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This verse applies specifically to 7:1–11. We should ask, therefore, “How would I want others to treat me in view of my sinfulness and obvious flaws?” I would not want to be harshly criticized or smugly condemned. I would want to be treated with consideration, with an evident spirit of love, encouragement, and a desire to build me up rather than to tear me down. I would not want my sins to be overlooked or excused, but lovingly to be confronted and corrected. If I were one who had heard the gospel and concluded that I wanted no part of it, I would hope that once I had made my disinterest and rejection known my feelings and decisions would be respected. I would desire that the same points not be raised over and over again, and that I would not have to avoid contact with the Christian or to terminate our friendship in order to avoid arguing the same points over and over again. I would greatly appreciate having my critics spend their efforts in persistent prayer, reporting my faults to God alone, and asking Him to strengthen and sanctify me. Were I an unbeliever I would prefer for the Christian to prevail upon God for my conversion rather than to pester me.<sup>38</sup>

Tom Higgins is one of the humblest men in our church. Although Tom has a wonderful personality by nature, he has been refined through life’s humbling seasons. He is a former alcoholic who has been sober nearly twenty years! Tom is a huge fan of Alcoholics Anonymous. Before believing in Christ, he attended AA meetings for years. Over the years, he has shared with me that those who are fighting addiction are helped most, not by people who scold and judge, but by those who have admitted their own powerlessness and confess that change comes only from a higher power. AA has learned some truths that the church doesn’t always practice: We can only help others when we recognize that we are desperate and sinful people who need a higher power. Of course, we know that the higher power is the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus Himself wants to break you today so that you, as a broken vessel, can humbly help others in their spiritual pilgrimage. *Be slow to judge others and quick to judge yourself.*

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### **Scripture References**

Matthew 7:1–12

Romans 2:1; 14:4–13

1 Corinthians 4:4–5; 11:31

Galatians 6:1–5

Luke 11:9–13

1 John 5:13–17

Romans 13:9–10

### **Study Questions**

1. When have I illegitimately judged another Christian (7:1)? Is there a specific non-essential issue that I am prone to judge? Why is this issue such a “hot-button” for me? How can I balance my position on this matter? This week, pray the following prayer: “Lord, may I be slow to judge others and quick to judge myself.”
2. How have I judged another believer for a sin that I have committed or am currently committing (7:3–5)? Have I been guilty of having a double standard toward another brother or sister in Christ? Will I repent of my hypocrisy? Will I confess my sin to the brother or sister in Christ that I judged and offended? Am I guilty of judging unbelievers? If so, how can I remedy this faulty worldview? How can I view people who sin with a spirit of grace and concern rather than with a spirit of condemnation?
3. Have I been cramming or force-feeding Christianity down people’s throats (7:6)? How do I know that I’ve gone too far? What are telltale signs that I can recognize in the future? When it comes to sharing the gospel with lost people, how can I know when “enough is enough?”
4. Do I aggressively seek God for His wisdom and discernment in matters of judgment (7:7–11)? How can I ensure that this is an active and strategic part of my Christian life? Would others characterize me as a man or woman of prayer? Why or why not? How can I grow in my prayer life? This week, will I seek help from a prayer warrior that I respect?
5. How have I learned to do unto others as I would have them do unto me (7:12)? In what particular relationship do I struggle living out this kingdom principle? What tangible step of obedience can I take this week to love this person as I would love myself?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Preaching Now Vol. 7 No. 27 7/29/08: R.T. Kendall, *Ministry Today*, Jan-Feb 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Church Leaders Intelligence Report Enclosed – 8/20/08.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Luke 6:37–42.

<sup>4</sup> The basic meaning of the Greek word for judge (*krino*) is “to set apart so as to distinguish, separate.” Then, by transference, “select” and “pass judgment upon.” BDAG s.v. *krino*. Hagner actually inserts the word “unfairly” into his translation of *krino* in 7:1. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*. Word Biblical Commentary series (Dallas: Word, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The present tense command could be translated “Stop judging!” “Don’t make a habit of judging.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 165. J.B. Phillips renders this verse, “Don’t criticize people, and you will not be criticized.” In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrases it, “Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment.” Although there is some measure of truth in these renderings, they miss the mark because God is most likely the One who judges, not other believers.

<sup>6</sup> See John 7:24; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 1:8; Phil 3:2; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1.

<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*. Preaching the Word Series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), Electronic ed.

<sup>8</sup> The word “judge” (*krino*) in this context means to come to a negative conclusion about another person and then to condemn him or her. David S. Dockery & David E. Garland, *Seeking the Kingdom* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1992), 101; Michael Eaton, *The Way that Leads to Life* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 160.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*.

<sup>10</sup> The Greek text is emphatic: “With the judgment you judge you will be judged.”

<sup>11</sup> See Rom 2:1–3.

<sup>12</sup> All three passive verbs in 7:1–2 (*krinete* [“judge”], *krithete* [“you will be judged”], *metrethesetai* [“it will be measured to you”]) clearly imply divine agency and should be viewed as instances of the divine passive. Wallace 437–38. France notes that this is also supported by Jesus’ words in Matt 6:14–15 about forgiveness. “Just as God will only forgive the forgiving; so he will judge people as they judge others.” R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 274.

<sup>13</sup> This is especially true for teachers: “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jas 3:1).

<sup>14</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 274.

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 305.

<sup>16</sup> The following Scriptures provide clear guidance on judging other believers: Rom 2:1; 14:4–13; 1 Cor 4:4–5; 11:31; Gal 6:1–5.

<sup>17</sup> Ken Hemphill, *Empowering Kingdom Growth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 249.

<sup>18</sup> Eaton, *The Way that Leads to Life*, 161.

<sup>19</sup> Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*.

<sup>20</sup> Paul summarized this principle well in Gal 6:1: “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

<sup>21</sup> Robert Jeffress, *Grace Gone Wild!* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2005), 195.

<sup>22</sup> See also Jay Dennis, *The Jesus Habits* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 56–57.

<sup>23</sup> This is a very difficult section. Regarding 7:6 Hagner writes, “This verse appears to be a detached independent logion apparently unrelated to the preceding...or following context, inserted here for no special reason but only as another saying of Jesus.” About 7:7–11 he says: “This is another self-contained unit having no connection with the material that precedes or follows it.” Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 171, 173.

<sup>24</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 131–32.

<sup>25</sup> See also Bob Deffinbaugh, “The Fatal Failures of Religion: #5 Misdirected Effort” (Matt 7:1–12): [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).

<sup>26</sup> To refer to a person as a dog was a grave insult, reducing the person’s status to among the lowest in the social scale (2 Sam 16:9). Dogs are looked down on in verses like Prov 26:11 and Matt 15:26–27. The Jews also used the word “dogs” to refer to Gentile outsiders (cf. Phil 3:2 and Rev 22:15).

<sup>27</sup> Isa 66:3 and 2 Pet 2:22.

<sup>28</sup> Matt 10:14; Acts 13:44–45, 50–51; 18:5–6.

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<sup>29</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 310–11.

<sup>30</sup> Donald A. Carson, “Matthew.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), Electronic ed.; Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 240; David L. Turner, *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 203.

<sup>31</sup> France argues that these verses don’t link with 7:1–6; however, they do link back to 6:25–34. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 278.

<sup>32</sup> Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*.

<sup>33</sup> In Luke 11:9–13, when this is given is not wisdom but the Holy Spirit.

<sup>34</sup> Wilson observes, “People have argued that the Golden Rule isn’t unique to Jesus. Confucius said, ‘Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.’ The Stoics had a very similar saying. In the Old Testament Apocrypha we read, ‘Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate.’ Rabbi Hillel in 20 BC said, ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary.’ But notice that each of these is in the negative, somehow limiting or prohibiting certain actions. Jesus’ statement is in the positive, guiding and directing all our actions toward others. It is like the command, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ It is not a negative limitation but a positive guideline, a high standard indeed. See Ralph F. Wilson, “Prayer: Asking in Faith” (Matt 7:7–12): [http://www.jesuswalk.com/manifesto/12\\_asking.htm](http://www.jesuswalk.com/manifesto/12_asking.htm).

<sup>35</sup> See Eaton’s extensive remarks on 7:12 in *The Way that Leads to Life*, 170–76.

<sup>36</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal* (Matthew): Electronic ed.

<sup>37</sup> Long, *Matthew*, 81.

<sup>38</sup> Deffinbaugh, “The Fatal Failures of Religion.”