

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.
Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
Matthew 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
Matthew 7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?
Matthew 7:11 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 good things to those who ask Him!
Matthew 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

These verses follow the Lord's exhortation that you not be judgmental. Deal with sin in your own life so you can then minister effectively to others who are desperate for the Gospel. As we'll see beginning in verse thirteen everyone you encounter is on one of two paths:

1. One is a difficult path leading to a narrow gate. It's the path you want to be on, however, because it leads to Heaven.
2. The other path leads to a broad gate but it's end is destruction. It leads ultimately to Hell.

The two paths of verse thirteen suggest the various illustrations in verses six through twelve. The dogs and the hogs; the stones and the serpents; all these could be found along the roads you would travel. The asking, seeking, and knocking are another illustration that is suggested by your journey.

There you go each day along the difficult narrow path. You certainly want to reach out to those on the broad road that leads to destruction. In fact, you are seeking them. But you don't know who they are or exactly how to identify them.

Along the actual roads Jesus traveled you would encounter dogs and swine. Not cutesy pet dogs. These are the mangy, half-rabid wild dogs that roam third world countries scavenging for food.

The swine were not like Babe the pig! The wild boar is more likely the beast Jesus was describing.

What is holy a reference to the meat offered in sacrifice at the Temple. The picture is that of a priest throwing a piece of flesh from the altar of burnt-offering to one of the wild dogs. It's something a priest wouldn't do.

You're like a priest along the difficult narrow path. **You're also rich!** **Pearls before swine** depicts a rich man wantonly throwing handfuls of small pearls to swine. Small pearls, called by jewelers *seed-pearls*, would resemble the corn or maize on which the swine feed. They would rush upon them when scattered, and, discovering the cheat, would trample upon them and turn their tusks upon the man who scattered them.

- being changed to bring change -

You're on the narrow path. You have no beam in your eye. You want to identify and minister to those on the broad path that leads to destruction. You have holy, precious things to share with them.

You wouldn't think of sharing the holy and precious things of the Gospel with dogs and hogs! Obviously Jesus meant **people** who are dog-like and hog-like.

An acceptable interpretation of these illustrations is this one given by Warren Wiersbe:

As God's people, we are privileged to handle the "holy things" of the Lord. He has entrusted to us the precious truths of the Word of God (Second Corinthians 4:7), and we must regard them carefully. No dedicated priest would throw meat from the altar to a filthy dog, and only a fool would give pearls to a pig. While it is

true that we must carry the Gospel “to every creature” (Mark 16:15), it is also true that we must not cheapen the Gospel by a ministry that lacks discernment. Even Jesus refused to talk to Herod (Luke 23:9), and Paul refused to argue with people who resisted the Word (Acts 13:44-49).

The Lord loves to see us effective and Satan would love to see us sidetracked. To be effective in ministry, we must make judgments - not for condemnation, but for identification. Is this person open? Is he sensitive? Is he hungry? Or does he just want to argue and discuss endlessly?

How can we know what we should do and where we should invest our time? Jesus gives the answer in the next verses.

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Matthew 7:8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

These verses can be generally applied to persistence in prayer. But these verses first have an immediate, contextual meaning here that is pretty interesting.

Remember in this section you are walking along the difficult narrow road seeking to share the Gospel. You need discernment so you don't end up ineffective – spinning your wheels, so to speak, with those who are closed and insensitive.

Let's say you were walking to a friend's house but weren't sure where he lived. **You'd ask for directions; then you'd seek the house; then you'd knock to enter.**

This illustration is an encouragement that, if you ask the Lord, He will lead you to the folks He wants you to share the Gospel with as you are trudging along the narrow path.

Receptive people are depicted in the next two verses:

Matthew 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Matthew 7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Stones lined the first century roads. Under them, and in the underbrush, were **serpents**. A person, a nonbeliever, walking along the broad road encounters stones and serpents. They stumble; they are bitten and poisoned. All the while their hearts are yearning to know God! You come along and their path is transformed. No longer on the broad road with stones and serpents, they find themselves on the narrow road with bread and fish.

Matthew 7:11 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 good things to those who ask Him!

The people on the broad road are headed for destruction. But it is not God's will they should perish. He puts you in their path to show them His grace, mercy, peace, love, and forgiveness.

Matthew 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

If your circumstances were reversed, what would you want someone to do for you? Do that for them.

With reference to the context of the narrow and broad paths... Be ready and open to God's leading. Be like Phillip and walk up to the Ethiopian!
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How do we know who our Ethiopian is each day? **Ask!**

For this is the Law and the Prophets. In other words, everything you learn about God from His Word will only encourage you to represent Him *more* to those who are perishing.