

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 73.5%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Matthew 6:19 – 21

Monday: Matthew 6:22 – 24

Tuesday: Matthew 6:25 – 34

Wednesday: Matthew 7:1-6 & Luke 6:37-42

Thursday: Matthew 7:7-11

Friday: Preparation Day

Saturday: Sabbath

Current # of email addresses in the group: 727

I hope this study is beneficial to you all. This week we will continue through the Sermon on the Mount, hopefully growing in its full understanding more than ever before.

I have made the hard decision that this is the last week for a while for this study. In the next three weeks I have two wedding ceremonies and one of those is for my oldest daughter and there are many details that will need my extra focus and attention. We also have many guests coming in just a couple weeks. Lastly, the Feast is getting close and I have extra messages to prepare, and as the Assistant Festival Coordinator for Hungary, I have some extra responsibilities I need to focus on. I'm just not sure how I can generate enough hours in the week to get the reading program done also at this time. If I don't get any more reading plans out before the Feast of Tabernacles, I hope you have a deeply meaningful Feast and are rejuvenated by focusing on God's coming Kingdom!

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

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3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 120

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 811 – SUNDAY: August 16th

Matthew 6:19-21

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 19 - As we continue our study through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus now moves us to examine “What do we truly value and where have we truly placed our hearts?” This section is not separated from the questions Jesus has already been leading us through in verses 1 through 18. In those sections we were forced to consider our motives and whether our actions were “to be seen by men” or whether they were truly for God. Giving, praying and fasting could all become ways we accumulate kinds of earthly treasures, such as recognition, reputation, admiration and status. Three times Jesus said that “they have their reward”. So, following these sections, we see Jesus tell us not to “lay up for yourselves treasures on earth”. Jesus here is continuing to force us to consider what reward we are truly seeking. Is it lasting? What is truly important to us?

In Greek the word for “lay up” is *thēsaūrizō* (θησαυρίζω) and it means **to store up, accumulate or treasure up**. But what’s important to understand about this word, it’s about more than simply “possession”, it contains an emphasis on accumulating and storing things that you consider valuable. The emphasis matters because Jesus isn’t telling us that we can’t have money in the bank, or some food reserves on the shelves --- but this is again about where our heart is and what we really value and where we are placing our security in that repository.

If the food we lay up and the money we have in the bank begins to be where we place our security and focus, then it can become what Jesus is describing here. Additionally, notice that Jesus specifically says “for yourselves”. Jesus is describing accumulation directed toward “self”. This reminded me of the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:15-21 which uses strikingly similar Greek language. The parable begins with Jesus saying that “one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” and continues by saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded

plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Jesus Christ goes on to show a couple of end results that can happen to this earthly treasure we lay up for ourselves:

(1) First, moth or rust can destroy it. The word for moth is literally a clothes moth. Valuable clothing was an important form of wealth in the ancient world. Jesus is showing us that we could spend all this time gathering wealth, and something as simple as a clothing moth could destroy it and take it all away. With regards to "rust". It may not be the best translation. The Greek *brōsis* (βρῶσις) is only here translated as "rust". But it fundamentally means "eating, consuming, that which eats away". It comes from the idea of "consumption". Rust still creates the mental imagery that is meant by the word, but the Greek word is broader than simply rust. Jesus may deliberately be using a broad word that points to the multitude of things that can eat away at stored wealth. It could encompass corrosion, pests, insects, or deterioration more generally. Everything on earth has something capable of destroying it. Even the sun destroys things over time. Additionally, we could amass great wealth and possessions, and then we or a loved one gets sick and the medical bills drain it all.

(2) Second, Jesus also shows that people can steal and take our earthly treasures. This isn't possible with spiritual treasure and rewards. In this world, the more we have, the more of a target we are for someone else who simply wants to come and take it.

The point of all of these examples is that we could spend our lives trying to store up and feel secure in our physical treasures only to have them lost anyway. It's not really ever secure.

Verse 20 – As a contrast, we are told to accumulate treasures in heaven. Jesus isn't again talking about physical treasures or security, but He wants us to make sure we are focused on the right treasures, stored in the right place. Earthly treasure is temporary, vulnerable, can be consumed or stolen. Heavenly treasure is enduring, secure, and cannot be consumed or stolen. Jesus doesn't define these treasures of heaven as some sort of commodity. Throughout His teaching, He is describing the lasting value of a life oriented toward the Kingdom of God and dedicated to truly developing a heart and mind like the Father and Jesus Christ.

Several times in the Gospels, Jesus shows that when we use our resources of this life to benefit others, we accumulate "treasure in heaven" (compare Matthew 19:21 and Luke 18:22). In that way, even when we give and have less in this physical life, we actually have more (in the stored up treasure in heaven). Even in this, our motivation shouldn't be about simply earning "kingdom bucks", but about understanding that when we focus on becoming like God and Jesus Christ, that our efforts have lasting value and is the absolute best thing we could be focused on.

Verse 21 – Throughout the scripture there is this connection between our hearts and the outward manifestations of our hearts. The heart was thought to be much more than the seat of emotions. It encompassed our thinking, desires, intentions, loyalties, decisions and values. Whatever we love, we invest in. And our heart doesn't just determine where we put our treasure. What we treasure, also shapes our heart. How can we spend a lifetime growing our bank account and

not be focused on it? We show that it's important to us by the great effort we put into working for it, saving it, investing it, etc.

In Luke 21:4 Jesus tells a true story of a widow who gave “more than all”, even though she gave such a small amount. Jesus goes on to explain that some give out of their abundance, and actually give much less than the person who gives, but doesn't have abundance --- but instead gives out of the very little they have. This should make all of us stop and consider our “treasures” and where our heart really is focused. Is there good we should be doing with the resources God has entrusted us with?

Treasures on earth go far beyond money and things. It can be in reputation, career advancement, social standing, experiences, comfort, and influence. We saw some of that in the motivations of how people pray, fast, and give. Where are we laying up treasure – on earth or in heaven? If we want a heart more fixed upon God's Kingdom, then we have to deliberately invest more of ourselves there.

Day 812 – MONDAY: August 17th

Matthew 6:22-24

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 22 – The lamp here is the ordinary oil lamp that we've previously seen used in Matthew 5:15. In the ancient Mediterranean world, the eye was commonly associated not only with sight but with the inner person's orientation, character and disposition toward what that person sees. In other words, the eye is the point through which a person “see's (perceives and evaluates) the world”. The eye as our lamp, represents the way we look at things (perspective, values, desires, and moral orientation).

“Eye is good” is sometimes translated, healthy, sound or clear. The basic sense of the Greek *haplous* (ἀπλοῦς) is single, simple,

uncomplicated or undivided. It can also mean “generous”. This is likely important because Jesus has clearly been talking about “treasures” (earthly vs heavenly). There are two ways for understanding this “good eye” here. The first is of an eye that has a single focus (undivided). This seems to fit well with the idea of “where is your heart?” from verse 21 and “which master do you serve?” in verse 24. The second way of understanding this “good eye” is generosity. Proverbs 22:9 says “He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.” In Romans 12:8, Paul uses this same word family for *haplous* (ἀπλοῦς) where he says “he who gives, with liberality”. Paul does this also in 2 Corinthians 8:2, 9:11 & 9:13.

My question for you is, are these two ideas really in conflict or do they work together? If we have a singular focus on God’s Way and becoming like God and Jesus Christ and do not overvalue earthly treasures, do we not look out for those in need who have less and give generously --- understanding that we take none of it with us, and it all comes from God in the first place?

“Full of light” – If one’s physical eye is functioning in a healthy way, then we see clearly, and we navigate traffic and paths correctly, and we avoid bad things that might harm us. In the spiritual sense, if we have the right singular focus on God’s Way, then we will have spiritual lives full of light and good things.

Verse 23 - “Eye is bad” – The Greek *ponēros* (πονηρός) means evil, wicked, bad or morally corrupt. Similar to the “good eye”, here the phrase “evil eye” had a financial meaning as well. The phrase “evil eye” was associated with greed, envy and stinginess. Jesus uses the same phrase in the parable of Matthew 20:15, where the landowner asks a worker in the vineyard “or is your eye evil because I am good”. The issue here is envy, where because the landowner was generous with someone, the worker resented it.

In Deuteronomy 15:9 it describes a situation where the debt release is getting close and a person might refuse to lend to a brother in need because they know that the debt will soon have to be released and the scripture warns “and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing”. The concept here is greed/stinginess.

So again, we have this concept of wealth, but it really also makes us think about the kind of heart we have. Is it in alignment with God and Jesus Christ, or do we really have a split-heart. One that clings to possessions and things of this earth, while also claiming to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

“Full of darkness” – If our physical eye is corrupted or not working properly, then we won’t see clearly, and therefore we stumble or might walk into a bad situation. Spiritually, if we have a split-focus, our desires, priorities, choices, behaviors, relationships, use of resources will be split somewhere between good and evil. Both concepts, “where is heart” and “is your eye good”, are really dealing with the same thing. Are you all in for being a disciple of Jesus Christ and becoming like the Father, or are we trying to have both this world and God’s Kingdom at the same time?

“How great is that darkness!” – When our vision is off, and we aren’t aware that our vision is off, great problems can arise. When we don’t realize spiritually we have split-priorities, then we may mistake darkness for light. One can think their priorities are perfectly fine, but the very eye that is evaluating their world view is distorted and leads to incorrect conclusions. It would be wise for all of us to ask God to help us evaluate clearly our vision. Do we truly have “a good eye” that sees with a clear singular focus that our heart, mind and life is clearly dedicated to our great calling? Or have we allowed the cares of this world to split our focus?

Verse 24 – Based on the previous verses, it's no surprise where Jesus Christ takes us next. We can't serve two masters. It's impossible. Trying to do so leads to failure. The word for "serve" is not the ordinary idea of doing work for someone. This is the Greek *douleuō* (δουλεύω) that means to serve as a slave (to be in subjection to a master). A first century slave could not have two owners with competing priorities for them. If trying to serve both, the slave would eventually have to choose between the two and reveal where his real allegiance lay. Within the idea of hate, we understand it can mean "love less (in preference and allegiance) by comparison" as we see in Matthew 10:37.

"You cannot serve God and mammon" – The Greek *mamōnas* (μαμωνᾶς) translated mammon, comes from an Aramaic term associated with "wealth, possessions, property, material resources". This fits with what Jesus has clearly been teaching us about wealth and generosity. We cannot be enslaved to both God and material things. As true Christians, wealth can never be our master. If we try to serve both God and wealth, we will eventually face moments where our true master is clearly shown.

God and Jesus have called us to an undivided life. Where does our true trust and security lie? That question connects us right into tomorrow's reading.

Day 813 – TUESDAY: August 18th

Matthew 6:25-34

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 25 – Notice this verse starts with "therefore". So the context to starting this verse is "You cannot serve God and mammon".

Jesus is not suddenly changing subjects, He is instead continuing this flow from treasure, wealth, and divided loyalty. If we look to money, possessions and earthly things for our security, then what happens

when those things are in doubt or get taken away? We have anxiety. We worry. We will feel insecure. The key word in this section of scripture is the Greek *merimnaō* (μεριμνάω) and it shows up in verses 25, 27, 28, 31 and 34. While this word can mean “anxious” or “worried”, it can also mean “care” and “concerned”. It’s used in a positive way in 1 Corinthians 12:25 and Philippians 2:20 where it’s translated “care”. But here in this verse, the care and concern is cast not on people out of our love for them, but here it is on earthly things that may or may not remain.

If God gave us life and a physical body, does He not care about us and have a plan for our life and body? Do we trust Him with our life and body? If He wants that life and body to continue forward, will He not provide food, clothing, and meet our basic needs? That’s really the perspective Jesus is wanting us to truly consider through the rest of this passage.

Verse 26 – It says here for us to “look at the birds”. The Greek means to look carefully at and consider. Jesus is trying to get us to slow down and take a moment to really ponder. I’ve been watching some blue jays in my back yard for weeks now. They have no money. They can’t buy anything. Yet they have been taking my window screens apart to build a more structurally solid nest. I’m not advocating for stealing what we need (ha ha), but they wake up, find what they need, and work hard to build that day. They don’t have little gardens down in my yard where they plant seed and later reap a harvest. But they eat my grapes off my grape vines, and they share my chickens’ food and water. They don’t stock pile those grapes or other food in their nests. Day by day, God provides for them, and they don’t starve. Do we doubt that we are more precious to God than an average bird? Jesus is forcing us to consider that if birds don’t have to lay up treasure and are taken care of daily by God, will He not do the same for us, His children?

For the sake of balance, I think it's important to point out that birds still work. I watch them constantly work. The adults don't just sit in their nests with their mouths open waiting for food to fall into their beaks. Instead --- they search, gather, build and provide for their young. God's provision doesn't eliminate their responsibility to work daily. This passage isn't about us not working, it's about us not worrying about our future. We work. God provides.

Verse 27 – In this verse, Jesus really asks us the benefit of worrying about things we can't change or control. What impact does worrying really have on our lives? The Greek word for "stature" is *hēlikia* (ἡλικία). It can refer to physical height/stature or age/lifespan. A cubit is roughly the distance from the elbow to the fingertips (about 18 inches). Adding 18 inches to one's height is an enormous amount. *Because hēlikia can also refer to one's lifespan, many scholars believe Jesus was talking about adding a small amount to one's lifespan --- using a cubit as a metaphorical measurement applied to one's life. Either way, the point is the same --- that anxiety/worry of and by itself does nothing good for one's life. And based on medical data, it actually does a lot to harm our physical and mental health.*

Verse 28 – Here again, Jesus asks us to consider the creation, this time lilies. What can we study and learn from slowing down and thinking about wild flowers in the fields. Just as birds don't sow seeds and reap harvests, neither do flowers perform textile work (toiling and spinning). Remember the context of this scripture is worrying about clothing. To produce a garment was an enormous amount of human labor. Let's pretend we were making a wool garment. We would have to obtain the raw wool, prepare it, spinning fibers into thread, weaving thread into cloth and then produce a garment. Spinning was an essential household activity associated with domestic work. We see this called out in Proverbs 31:19 (NLT) "Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber." This was repetitive time-consuming work.

A substantial amount of thread had to be spun even before anyone could begin weaving a garment. The idea of “toil” wasn’t as simple as just work, but instead it was laboring to the point of exhaustion. Flowers do neither worry or toil.

Verse 29 – Consider King Solomon for a moment. He was not just an example of a famous king, he was the embodiment of wealth, luxury, and royal splendor. The Bible presents his rule as a time period of extraordinary prosperity --- where 1 Kings 10:23 states “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.” Even those in his service were noticed for their apparel (1 Kings 10:4 – 5). So as we consider the great human effort that would have gone into crafting his amazing clothing, from the number of craftspeople, textiles, efforts, etc., yet it’s of no comparison to the beauty of God’s creation and workmanship.

Verse 30 – Jesus now makes His clear point. If God does that level of craftsmanship and design for part of His creation, which existence is astonishingly brief and ultimately, its beauty is burned up as fuel, what would God do for you, who are so much more valuable to God?

“O you of little faith” – Literally “little-faith ones”. We see Matthew records this phrase of Jesus a number of times (Matthew 8:26, 14:31, 16:8). It’s not that they had no faith. Here their faith is being contrasted with the size of their worry/anxiety about all these things. Faith is ultimately about trusting our lives into the hands of the Almighty God. If God is Good and Love, and we trust our lives in His hands, then why do we worry about things that God is fully capable of taking care of. Jesus is exposing that their anxiety is revealing that they are struggling to trust in God’s care.

Verse 31 – Here again, we get a “therefore” statement. In light of the evidence that Jesus has just laid out about God’s great care for aspects

of His creation (which by comparison to our value to Him have far lesser value), we are told not to worry about our basic necessities (food, drink, clothing). We need all those things. These are not extravagant desires. But Jesus is clearly leading us to understand that EVEN when the need is real and the concern is legitimate, anxiety/worry is not the answer.

Verse 32 – Jesus shows that even non-believers, who have no real understanding of the Loving Father, are dominated by their pursuit of these same things. And that's understandable. If you don't know that there is a Loving Father looking out for you, then "who's going to take care of me if I don't?" Jesus is essentially telling them, this isn't your world view. You know you have a heavenly Father that knows that you need all these things. He doesn't say, these things don't matter. He says something incredibly comforting: Your Father knows!

Verse 33 – In contrast to chasing all the things we can chase in this world, including basic essential needs, chase something different! Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and become like Him (have His righteousness). Becoming like God and Jesus Christ MUST be FIRST in our lives. The Greek for "first" carries both the idea of "first in sequence" and "first in importance and priority". Everything else in our lives must come second to becoming like God. Remember the Sermon on the Mount so far has been taking us through (bit by bit) a process of showing us who we must become if we are to become like God and Jesus Christ. That must be our absolute first priority in life. And if it is, then God has us. Is your life defined everyday by seeking to live according to the values and principles of God's Kingdom right now? If so, you can have faith in the promise that God will provide the food, drink and clothing you need.

Verse 34 – THEREFORE, don't worry about tomorrow. Notice, we can still think and prepare for the future. Planning asks "what should I

responsibly do today?”. This is about worry/anxiety --- don’t do it. Jesus is realistic in that each day we will face challenges, difficulty, adversity and hardship. Face it when it happens, but don’t drag tomorrows imagined or predicted problems onto today. Tomorrow will come, and it will come with God’s provisions --- but also its own challenges, and that’s when those will be faced as well. At that time, they may be real and not imaginary, so we won’t waste potential time, energy and health on what may be.

As we come to the end of Matthew 6, we can see that Jesus has been doing far more than giving us a collection of rules for Christian living. Throughout chapters 5 and 6, He has been describing what a life truly surrendered to God looks like: from the attitudes of the heart in the Beatitudes; to our relationships with others; to our response to enemies; to our giving, prayers and fasting --- and even the way we view money and the worries of everyday life. Again and again, Jesus takes us beyond outward obedience and directs us inward to the heart. God is not simply looking for people who do the right things, but for people whose hearts, motives, priorities and loyalties are being transformed to reflect Him. We are called to love differently, forgive differently, give differently, pray differently, and even worry differently because we know our Father and trust (with faith) in His care. Ultimately, the question running through these chapters is: What are we seeking first? Jesus calls us away from divided loyalties and toward a life centered completely upon God—seeking His Kingdom, pursuing His righteousness, and trusting that the Father who knows what we need will faithfully care for us -- His children.

Day 814 – WEDNESDAY: August 19th

Matthew 7:1-6 & Luke 6:37-42

Daily Deep Dive:

We now come to the last chapter of Jesus Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:1 – “Judge not, that you be not judged” – The word family for “judge” comes from the Greek *krinō* (κρίνω). *Krinō* has a broad range depending on the context. It can mean “to distinguish or decide”, “to evaluate”, “to form a judgement”, “to determine a matter”, “to pronounce a judgment” or “to condemn”. Based on numerous scriptures, including scriptures in this very chapter, Jesus is clearly not telling us it’s wrong to evaluate right and wrong behavior. We clearly see that even Jesus Himself evaluated right and wrong. Even still, John 3:17 tells us that “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn (*krinō*) the world...”

Luke 6:37 not only uses the same Greek for “judge” but adds a line telling us that we should not “condemn”. That in the Greek is *katadikazō* (καταδικάζω) --- **and it means to pronounce someone guilty, condemn, or pass an adverse judgement against someone. We are not the world’s judge. Jesus is telling us not to condemn.**

Both Matthew 7:1-2 and Luke 6:37-38 show us a principle that we would be wise to consider deeply. The standard we use comes back on us. It’s always easier to see the sins, the hypocrisy, and the choices of others more clearly than we see ourselves. Jesus paints a picture of someone holding up a measuring instrument to another person’s life. The warning is if we hold it up to someone else, that’s the same measurement that will be held up to us. On the flip side, God doesn’t require or ask us to hold it up at all. We can recognize and discern evil, and stay away from it in our life, without needing to condemn and measure others. Understanding that we ALL are sinners and ALL have hearts that naturally lead us away from God’s Way, should lead to a humility. Who would I naturally be if God hadn’t called me to this Way and given me His Holy Spirit? How do I still fail, even though I have His Spirit? We all desire God to deal patiently with us in our weaknesses. That’s what we should want for everyone else too.

Since it's our measurement and judgment that will be applied to us, what if we were the ones responsible for bringing down the biggest measurement and judgement on ourselves? This is well brought out in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant that Matthew later records in Matthew 18:23-35. Remember in that story that the Master first poured out overwhelming forgiveness and mercy. That was the Master's character and true desire. It was only after that same person who had received that huge forgiveness and mercy, applied a different measure to someone else's life that the Master came back and applied that same measure now to his life. He had forgiveness and mercy in the bag, but lost it due to the measurement with which he used. It's sobering.

Matthew and Luke also draw out a beautiful flip side. Our giving and forgiveness can also come back on us in a wonderful way. We often look at this giving through the lens of finance, and that's not an incorrect application. However, we should stay focused on the immediate context which has been "judge not, condemn not, and forgive." In all of this, Jesus is describing the ways we should deal with other people. This imagery of Luke 6:38 of "pressed, packed down, and shaken" comes from the measuring of dry goods at that time. If someone wanted to give a generously good measure, he could fill the container, press or pack it down, shake it so that the contents settled and fill all empty spaces and then add more to the top until it overflowed. Jesus is pointing to extravagant generosity! And the context of this passage points to us being extravagantly generous with mercy, forgiveness, and grace toward others. Not merely with money.

Luke 6:39 – In the context of our measuring and judging others, both Luke and Matthew will record Jesus Christ's teachings about clear vision. Luke records "can the blind lead the blind?" Before I presume to be the guide of someone else, I better be sure that I can see clearly.

Luke 6:40 – As I read this verse in the context it's given, I've come to see that I really missed the point of this verse before. In many ways, this Sermon on the Mount has been about discipleship. And in a positive context, we are all striving to be exactly like our Master. That's the goal, to become perfectly trained to speak, act and think like Jesus Christ. We talked about that with taking on His yoke and learning from Him (being His disciple). The Greek for "perfectly trained", *katartizō* (καταρτίζω), can mean equip, prepare, or make complete. The point is not so much perfection, but that the disciple has been trained to completion so that he has become like his teacher/rabbi.

However, the context before and after this scripture is about "blind leading the blind" and not having clear vision. In that context, Jesus makes no reference to Himself. The religious leaders at that time become famous throughout the Gospel accounts for their self-righteousness and judgment of everyone around them. In that context, disciples were trained in that system to become exactly like the religious leaders of that day. The system itself ensured that blind rabbis/teachers produced blind disciples. Therefore, there is a warning here that before we attempt to lead or correct others, we better be sure we have been trained --- and our vision shaped by the right Teacher.

Matthew 7:3 – The "speck & plank" – The word "speck", *karphos* (κάρφος), refers to something like a splinter, a bit of straw, a tiny piece of wood or chaff, etc. We've all gotten small things like this in our eye before. It is problematic, causes pain, and needs to be dealt with. The word "plank", *dokos* (δοκός), is not simply a larger splinter, but instead is a beam used in construction. It's meant to be a gigantic contrast to the other. Jesus is wanting us to imagine someone walking around with an enormous roof beam protruding from his eye all the while trying to tell others that they need to, and how to, get something small out of their eye. The message is clear. Each of us can possess astonishing clarity in evaluating others' tiny faults, while remaining

remarkably blind to our own enormous ones. We should be carefully examining our own lives with much more focus and time than we do worrying about everyone else.

Matthew 7:4 – Notice, this might even be done with good intentions, believing we are loving and helping them. Again, the clear point is to focus on your own issues first, before seeking to help others with their problems.

Matthew 7:5 – Jesus says “then you will see clearly”. In the Greek this is one word, *diablepseis* (διαβλέψεις), and it means to see clearly or distinctly. Notice, we move from first thinking we were the one who could see clearly, even while having this massive building plank sticking out from our eye, to then coming to see we, through our own sin and nature, had a distorted perception. However, once my plank has been confronted, I should be more humble, compassionate, patient, aware of weakness and our shared dependence on mercy. I may now actually be in a position where I could help someone.

Notice the pattern is self-examination, personal responsibility, repentance, change, growth and transformation. Then with clear vision (and a pure heart) we help others where we can.

The goal is to help them grow and overcome (“remove the speck”). The goal should never be to win some argument, expose someone, embarrass anyone, establish our righteousness, etc. The goal is to help them have clear vision and grow to become exactly like the Father and Jesus Christ. And notice that both Matthew and Luke refer to is the other person as a “brother”. This is someone with whom there is a relationship.

Matthew 7:6 – Now we have a verse that in many ways feels disconnected. We talked first today, that clearly Jesus was not teaching us not to discern and recognize good versus evil. This verse clearly

requires discernment. Dogs in the ancient world were typically scavenging animals that roamed about settlements. The term “dog” was used for people who acted shamefully. Swine was a clear reference to animals that were “unclean”. Neither someone who acts inappropriately or shamefully, nor those who are not yet holy or clean, can recognize the value of something holy or truly valuable. Dogs and swine wouldn’t know the value of what they received, just as many in this world wouldn’t yet know the value of the Truth if they received it. Not only may they trample the truth and what is Holy, they may also trample you too.

While Jesus does not specifically define what these Holy things and pearls are, I think we can understand accurately that they are anything that belongs to God and is precious to Him. This certainly would include His truth and instructions. We see Jesus practice this principle throughout the Gospels. How many times did He understand certain questions had hidden agendas and not even answer their question. They weren’t interested in the truth, they were interested in exalting their selves or entrapping Him. There are many people who right now are not ready for or wanting the truth. We do not need to try to force the truth on them. They will have a time to see and understand. Most will not be called to understand at this time. That doesn’t mean there aren’t times where there may be an opened door or opportunity where we see what God may be doing. All of this requires wisdom and discernment as led by God.

Day 815 – THURSDAY: August 20th

Matthew 7:7-11

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 7 - “Ask...Seek...Knock” – “Ask” in the Greek is not demanding. It’s the act of asking or requesting from someone who is in a position to give. It fits the father-child relationship that Jesus develops in verses 9 to 11. Not everyone likes to ask. My wife and I had one child that

wouldn't ask and one that would. Sometimes one wouldn't have something, because they never asked for it. Asking involves some level of humility and risk. We can be told "no" and that feeling or risk can lead some not to ask. It also requires acknowledgment of both our need and someone else's ability to provide it. That can be humbling. To "seek" in the Greek means to search for or strive to find. This is the same verb used in "seek first the Kingdom" (Matthew 6:33). This moves out of passively waiting for someone else to do everything for us, and requires an active pursuit of what is desired. Lastly, "knock" in the Greek meant to literally "knock at the door". All three of these words in the Greek are recorded in what is called the "present imperative". This means to do something and keep on doing it. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking. This doesn't mean that this is all we do ongoing without stopping, but it does mean that God expects us to be people who repeatedly turn to Him.

Verse 8 – Here the confident expectation is striking. The one who asks receives. The one who seeks finds. The one who knocks the door has it opened. Does this mean that no matter what I ask for, I should confidently expect to receive it? For several reasons the answer to that question is "no". Why? First, we've been building through this entire Sermon on the Mount to come to see that we must become like Jesus Christ. And to do that, we must have our hearts and minds transformed to come to think not like us, but like the Father and Jesus Christ. Therefore, to confidently ask and expect to receive means we have grown to develop a mind and heart so in lock-step with the will of God that our will now reflects God's will. That's a tall task. Since I'm not there yet, it requires me to ask knowing that I'm relying on the goodness and wisdom of the Father who is answering. I must trust that He is loving and wonderful and wants what is best for me and will answer me based on His wonderful character.

Verses 9-10 – Imagine the cruelty of a father who might give a round stone in place of the desired round bread. Or he wants a fish, and the father gives him a snake (unclean to eat). A child wants nourishment and has real daily needs, but the father meets him with something useless or potentially dangerous. Jesus is working from a basic understanding that no decent father, let alone a good father, would ever do such a thing.

Verse 11 – Jesus isn't saying we are all as wicked as we could possibly be. He is establishing a comparison between our flawed human nature (and therefore our flawed parenting) --- yet even in our flaws, no decent parent would ever do such a thing. Then by comparison, since God isn't flawed, but is instead wonderful, loving, amazing, merciful, generous, etc., how could we expect Him not to do right by us? As a parent, if my child wants something that is good for them, I certainly want to provide it if I can. Jesus has been repeatedly using this argument. If God feeds the birds, how much more will He do for you? If God clothes the grass, how much more will He do for you? If you being flawed, would give to your child, how much more would the perfect loving Father do for you? Notice the two qualifications here in this verse. It has to be "good things" and we have to "ask". Who defines whether it's a "good thing". God does. A child may ask for something they "think" is good, but a parent may know that it isn't ultimately. So many things we may think we want and would be good, God may clearly see would be physically or spiritually dangerous/harmful for us. God actually knows what is good, but we don't. This again requires faith in Him.

Why ask if God already knows? Prayer, then, isn't to inform God or tell Him something He doesn't already know. Prayer is for our good. Asking expresses our dependence on Him, our trust that He can provide. We build a relationship with our Father, and we submit that

our Father knows best. We can always trust that God will give what is for our good. Do we trust the character of the Father?

Day 816 – FRIDAY: August 21st

Preparation Day

Daily Deep Dive:

Day 817 – SATURDAY: August 22nd

Sabbath

Daily Deep Dive:

