

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: December 14, 2012

Bishop Rogers, would you be kind enough to lead us in prayer?

Bishop Rogers: I'd be happy to. Lord, at this time, as we prepare for your coming, we humbly kneel before you, mindful that you came finally and ultimately to die upon a cross for us and for our salvation. We give you all the praise and all the glory, and all the Brave Men said...Amen!

Let's turn in our Bibles, please brothers, to Matthew 7, continuing our examination of the Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 5, we dealt with the Beatitudes and the initial introduction to the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus describes the character of a kingdom citizen and the walk of a kingdom citizen. Then we talked in chapter 6 about some of the disciplines of the kingdom life. Now in chapter 7, we're talking about the judgment of the citizens of the kingdom.

If you look at chapter 7, we begin reading by...the Scripture says, "Do not judge, least ye will be judged." As we've been talking the last couple of weeks, the idea of judgment here really means discernment. The idea of judgment means to have a critical spirit to offend. We're not to have that, but we have to be discerning.

Often times, people are going to say, "Well, you're judgmental." There are certain ways in which we do have to evaluate things. We have to discern things. That does not necessarily mean that we're being judgmental. We're just recognizing that there is a standard. In our very eclectic society, which is based upon relativism, there's no standard anymore. It's just whatever people want to be, it's whatever is their standard is their own standard. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about yes, there is a standard that we find in the Scripture that we must bound to, and that requires that we have some discernment.

As we've been noticing the last couple of weeks, we saw that we shall be judged. We are being judged, and we must clearly see that judgment in our own eyes, remove the block in our own eyes, before we can be helpful to other people.

Today we want to talk about our judgment of others. You'll find that in verses 6-20. The reason why we must judge. When I use the word judge, I mean discernment; I mean being discerning. We've got to exercise discernment in our world because of relativism, where not everyone is a sheep. There are a lot of sheep moving around in the church, and there are a lot of wolves disguised in sheep's clothing. We need to be discerning and know the difference. Some people are dogs and some people are hogs, as the Scripture says, and some are really wolves in sheep's clothing. We have to be very, very careful about how we handle the precious things that God gives us.

The reason that we must be discerning, you'll see that in verse 6, "Do not give what is holy to dogs." In other words, you and I, brothers, have been entrusted with the glorious Gospel message of Jesus Christ. We just sang about it. We're going to celebrate the Advent of Christ's coming again to die for our sins on the cross. We've been given the wonderful privilege of maintaining the preciousness of those words.

We have to be careful how we respond to those, and how we handle that. You just don't give that away

flippantly. You just don't give that away unscrupulously. You just don't give that away undiscerningly. We've got to have some degree of discernment. That's what it's talking about. That's going to be difficult for us to figure out we do that, so don't ask me how. That's the role of the Holy Spirit, who will come along side and help us understand that.

As you look at our passage today, we've been given the privilege of handling the holy things of the Lord. He's entrusted to us the precious truths of the Word of God. Take a look at 2 Corinthians 4:7. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. What is the treasure? The treasure is the Gospel life, the message of God, the life of Christ in us, the hope of glory. We've been given that as a precious to manage. We must regard those truths faithfully and carefully.

While it is true that we must carry the Gospel message to every creature—you'll see that in Mark 16—it's also true that we must not cheapen the Gospel by a ministry that lacks discernment. How often times we have a tendency to cheapen the Gospel because we lack discernment. Even Jesus refused to talk to Herod. When Herod asked him a question, Jesus didn't respond. You can read about that in Luke 23.

Notice that Paul refused to argue with people who resisted the Word of God. You'll see that in Acts 13. You've got some examples of just because somebody is attacking you, does not necessarily mean that you have to respond and give them some canned speech. That's where we have to pray for discernment. The real issue there is to pray so the Holy Spirit will lead us.

Now remember the Holy Spirit's job is to guide us into all truth and to call attention to the person and work of Christ, not call attention to himself or to us. We have to be very discerning to know when to talk and when not to talk.

One of my favorite verses is Exodus 14:14, "I will fight for you while you remain silent." Sometimes, when somebody is blasting the Word of God or the holy things of Scripture, I'm not sure what the response should be. That's when we really have to pray and say, "Lord, just give me the wisdom to know should I say something or should I not." The admonition is be discerning. You don't want to take these treasures, these pearls, and give them to swine, because they'll just trample on them and disparage them.

I don't know how to tell you what to do or what not to do. All I'm saying is you've got to be discerning. You may have had situations in your life where the most powerful thing you can do is just be silent and let the Lord fight for you. I know I've been in situations where I've just wondered should I say something or should I not. I really don't know what to do at those times.

You'll notice the admonition as we move through these verses, the next thing is pray. That's what prayer does. When you don't know what to do and what to say, that's the moment you ought to be praying so that you don't faint. Luke 18 says, "Be persistent in your prayers so that you don't lose heart." It's very easy to lose heart when somebody is disparaging the Gospel truths that you and I hold so dearly. We have a combative spirit, and sometimes we think that we can defend God. Well I'm learning more and more that sometimes the way I defend God is to keep my mouth shut because sometimes I'll open my mouth and insert my foot, and that's not going to help the cause of the Gospel very much. I wish I could tell you what to do, but I really can't do that. All I'm saying is follow the Scripture.

You'll notice right after this section, he leads us into a session of prayer. Somebody would say, "Why is

there an interruption in what he's instructing?" No, he's just basically saying, "Look when you don't know what to do, pray." That's our great weapon is just to pray that the Lord will give us the wisdom that we need in these situations.

The reason for judgment, for discernment on our part, is not that we will condemn others with a critical spirit, but that we might be able to minister to them correctly and most powerfully under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That requires great wisdom on our part and great discernment.

Notice that Jesus always dealt with individuals according to their needs and their spiritual condition. He didn't have one canned speech. Now I'm not suggesting that we don't have a format for presenting the Gospel. I'm not suggesting that. All I'm saying is sometimes a canned speech isn't appropriate for somebody, but it might be for somebody else. Notice that he used different expressions with different people. He didn't have a memorized or a canned speech that he used with everybody. He discussed the new birth with Nicodemus, "You must be born again." With the woman at the well, he talked about living water in her spirit and who he was. He identified himself as the Risen Lord and the waters of refreshment would be with her forever. He didn't have the canned speech, but he always knew how to respond. That's where we have to have discernment, to know what to say, when to say, how to say it, and when not to say.

Sometimes the best response may be to do nothing at that time. If in doubt, my advice would be say nothing, and at that moment, just go to prayer and just say, "Lord, give me the wisdom to know what to say. Should I say something?" and just trust the Holy Spirit. I'm open to some suggestions that some of you have had in situations that might be applicable to us to help us understand this. This is a difficult issue for us to come up and say, "Here are the ten steps you do." You just can't do that, because you don't know where people's needs are.

You see, the beautiful thing about communication and the proclamation of truth, it is the Holy Spirit's job to guide us into all truth. You have to be discerning to know when are people receptive to the truth and when are they not. That's the real key in my judgment. You have to know can they accept it and hear the truth today or can they not? In other words, you're going to say the same thing today, the truth of the Scripture, hopefully, that you would say next week. The difference is are they more receptive next week than they are this week? We don't know that. That's where we have to trust the Holy Spirit by prayer.

***Audience Member:** I have a situation that occurred in November of 2003. I sat down to eat a meal, and a gentleman that I met as part of the team that I was with. I was an over-the-road truck driver at the time. I bowed to pray over my meal. He slammed me so bad [UNCLEAR]...*

Did he really?

***Audience Member:** What he said was, "Hey, that was nice, but keep that in your pocket. My sister tried to ram that down my throat for 20 years." I wanted to reach across the table, and a still small voice of the Holy Spirit said, "Shhh...wait until you see what I have in mind for him." Before New Year's, he came to know Christ as Savior because he followed me around. We were going to a little church outside of Finley, Ohio. By Easter of 2004, he and I were paid to go to Springfield, Massachusetts, where I had the opportunity to baptize him in his home church with his sister filming it. He came back to Pittsburgh five years ago to be my best man at my wedding. I just got a text from him last night. He picked up on a habit I had of looking at church signs and reading all the sign boards on how Christ is proclaimed. He*

sent me a text last night [UNCLEAR].

Wonderful. You just never know how the Holy Spirit's going to...you've got to be discerning, guys.

Ian: *Well, you said that the job description of the Holy Spirit is to guide us into all truth. I'd like to hear from Lou, who is without his sight, who better to tell us what it's like to be guided and to need to be guided than him. What's it like to be guided, completely dependent upon someone else for your next step?*

Lou: *Well, you have to, I ask the Lord, if I'm in a situation where I don't know what's ahead of me. I ask the Lord to guide my steps. I would like to know even more of what you have in mind.*

Ian: *It seems to me that a person with, and I don't know, but a person without their sight, in an unfamiliar situation, doesn't want to take a step without some sort of guidance, to know what's around.*

Lou: *You're in situations where mentally you have to, you're in the same position. It doesn't matter if you can see or you can't see, physically...*

Ian: *I guess that's the parallel that I thought might exist.*

Lou: *A lot of it is a decision that you have to make, you have to make that...if you get into a relationship, you don't know if it's going to be bad or whatever it's going to be. The same thing is the same for me. We make that decision, and we have to suffer the consequences if it isn't right.*

Our lack of sight is not limited to physical sight. Its mental sight and understanding sight as much. That's why the next session, when you go to those verses, notice verses 7-11, talks about prayer. Our response right after, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw pearls before swine." Then right after that, he says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." That's an admonition for us to pray. The context of that, you've got to look at those verses in the context of the passage. It's in the context of not knowing what to do about having the treasures of the Scripture or the Word of God. You don't know what to do. What do you do? You ask, you seek and you knock. In other words, pray for wisdom. As we're told in James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." (James 1:5)

The reason you have those verses of ask, seek and knock...it's not here just...this is not an appendage of saying, "Okay, now's the time to pray and ask for all the things you want." He's basically saying, "Ask, seek and knock for wisdom," knowing what to say, when to say, how to say it and when not to say it. That's the context of these verses.

So many people take this out of context and basically say, "Oh, this is just a free-for-all time to ask for whatever you want." No, it's in the context of this chapter 7, which is the handling of the truth of the Scripture, the Word of God, the treasures that God gives us. How do we do that? And when you don't know what to do, you ask, seek and you knock. You ask him basically for wisdom. Remember the difference between knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Knowledge is the desire and the ability to acquire truth. So we pray for that. It's the knowledge and the ability and the desire to acquire truth. Wisdom is the application of that truth. Understanding is understanding the consequences of the application of that truth. That's what we're praying for—for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. We

need to have the wisdom to know how to apply the truth of the Scripture in these situations, and the admonition here, and the instruction is, when you don't know what to say, or when to say or how to say it, that's when you ask, you seek and you knock. God will honor that because that's the context of which we see chapter 7 and these verses of prayer.

That's the resources that God gives, is really our prayer life. We ask for wisdom. We seek his wisdom, and we knock for wisdom, and he gives us that. That's the resources we have to know how to respond.

***Audience Member:** I wanted to inject the word patience, too, with this discernment. My personal definition of patience is allowing the Lord enough time to function. When you're getting discernment, if you apply patience as part of this operation, you're waiting upon him to give you the discernment that you need. But if you didn't use patience, you want to go on and do it, and say what you want to say, then you're not really waiting for the Lord to lead you.*

That's good. Patience is certainly critical in all of this. I think one thing we have to remember, what Bishop Rogers has told us several times, which is so powerful, that the human default system is human effort. We have to be careful about that. Sometimes when all else fails, we need to read the directions; go to the Scripture. Often times, we say when all else fails, do it yourself. That's the tendency. That's the human default system. We result back to our own human efforts. We've got to be very, very careful about that.

I'm sure that you can understand situations where you will be confronted, or have been confronted, with somebody who is doing something that's offensive to the Gospel, and you and I have a tendency to be combative. Now I'm not saying that you sit back and do nothing. Understand that's not what I'm saying either. All I'm saying is at that moment is when you and I need to be asking, we need to be seeking, we need to be knocking on the throne of grace for God's wisdom to know what we should do and how to respond at that point. That's when we become an aggressive responder. Remember Jesus was an aggressive responder when he says in John 5 and John 8, "I do nothing of my own initiative. I only do those things I see the Father doing." He became an aggressive responder to what he saw the Lord doing around him. That's the best thing that we can discern is what is the Lord doing around me in this situation, so I can become an aggressive responder in that situation, and I can be discerning in that situation and handle the truths of the Scripture in a manner that glorifies God and not throw it before swine.

That's a huge task that we have. The thing is I've studied this recently, that I appreciate is the timing of the suggestion in verses 7-11 that we pray because that's exactly what we need to do in those situations when you don't know what to do. Often times, we have a tendency to revert back to our human default system, which is human effort, and think that we can defend God. God is perfectly capable of defending himself. That does not mean, at the same time, you sit back and do nothing.

I just had a situation recently where I was at a Christmas party. Several of my friends are Jewish. One of the young ladies came up to me and we just started talking about Christmas. Out of the blue, she just said, "I can't believe in Jesus Christ. I could never do that." I said, "I agree with you. You can't." She said, "You're right. I just can't do it." I said, "I agree. You're absolutely right. You can't believe in Christ." "Well, I tell you what, I'm never going to do that." I said, "You're right. You never can." She said, "I'm saying I can't do it." I said, "I know you can't." She said, "Yes, I can." I said, "No, you can't." {LAUGHTER} She said, "I could decide on Jesus right now." I said, "No, you can't, because

you just said you couldn't." She said, "Well, wait a minute. I know I can't, but I can." I said, "Make up your mind. Can you or can't you? {LAUGHTER} I'm saying you can't." She said, "Well, what if I decide to?" I said, "You can't." She said, "Why not?" I said, "You just said you can't." She said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "You can't do that unless the Holy Spirit prompts you to do so." She just looked at me. I had no idea what I was doing. {LAUGHTER}

But what I tried to do...the only thing that came into my mind was this—agree with your adversary. It's what the Scripture says—agree with your adversary. She said one thing that I agreed with. She can't believe in Christ. I agreed with that. That's exactly what Nicodemus was told by Jesus. You can't even enter the kingdom of heaven unless something supernatural happens. All I was thinking was I'm just going to do that and deal with it logically. It's all I said. When she said, "I can't," I said, "You know, you're right. I agree with you. You can't." By the time it was over, she said, "I can if I want to." I said, "No, you can't, because you just said you couldn't." What will happen with that? I have no idea. {LAUGHTER}

You see, all I was thinking at that moment was agree with your adversary. Find something you can agree with, and just stuck on that one point. I grew in the point that without regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit, she could not believe in Jesus even if she chose to. That's regeneration. That's being born again. That's John 3:3. You see, that's how you handle the Scripture. I'm not saying that's the perfect way to do it. The principle for me is, I was thinking, as I heard her talking, and when she was telling me why she couldn't believe in Christ, and I said, "Lord, give me wisdom. Keep my mouth shut. Let me know what to say," and then I just—agree with your adversary. So that's what I tried to do—agree with your adversary.

I'm not saying, guys, you sit back and do nothing. All I'm saying is you've got to trust the Holy Spirit by ask, seek and knock for wisdom, discernment, at those moments in time when you don't know what to do. That's why we do not have our bracelet say, "What would Jesus do?" What would Jesus do—WWJD. I have no idea what he would do. I don't have the mind of Christ. His ways are not like mine. My thoughts are not like his. That's why our bracelet says, "What has Jesus done?" I know what he's done. He's died for my sins. He's paid for my life at the cross. He's given me justification by faith alone. I know those thing he has done. That's what impacts your life, not what would Jesus do. It's what has he done. That's what we need to remember, as we go through this.

Remember the context of this ask, seek and knock. Those are responsibilities we have as we have been given the responsibility of managing the treasures of the Gospel of Christ. You'll see that in Matthew 7:7-11.

Then we come to a guiding principle. You'll see the guiding principle of our response is verse 12. This is what we would call the so-called "Golden Rule." It's one of the most misunderstood verses, I think, or concepts in all the Scripture. This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth. It is not the sum total of the Gospel. It is not God's plan of redemption or salvation. You should no more build your theology on the Golden Rule, than you would build your astronomy on Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. You don't build your theology on the Golden Rule. It's a great truth, in principle, that ought to govern out attitudes, but you don't base your Christian life on this. It applies only to believers. This is the verse for believers. Non-believers can't do this anyway, so it only applies to believers. It must be practiced in every area of our life, especially in these situations where you're confronted with not knowing what to say, how to do it, so you have an attitude that basically says the person who practices this, as a believer, refuses to say

or do anything that would harm himself or someone else. That's essentially what it's saying. You refuse to say something or do something that would either harm you or somebody else.

A non-believer can't practice that. We flippantly throw that around and say, "What's the basic rule of Christianity? The Golden Rule." That's not the Gospel at all. It's just a principle of how you and I operate when we're lacking discernment. We need to be thinking about how do I say something that is not going to harm him or her or harm myself? That's the attitude that I have, and that's the beginning of getting discernment through your prayer. You see how all of these things flow together?

We have the reason for our being discerning, the resources that God gives us, and now the guiding principle of our discernment is really, "I don't want to say something that's going to harm them or harm me or harm the Gospel of Christ." That's what requires discernment in these situations so that we don't put our pearls before swine.

I really don't know how to make this much more applicable than to say this is something that we really have to trust the Holy Spirit. There's no ten-step plan of what you should do in these situations. We just don't know that.

You see, if our judging of others is not governed by this principle, then we will become proud and critical and our own spiritual character will be degraded because we will be offending people. Now I'm not saying that you don't offend people when you proclaim Christ. You certainly will do that. All I'm saying is the principle is this. I want to be careful that I don't say something that's going to harm that person or harm myself while I'm trusting God's discernment for teaching me how to handle the truths of Scripture. There's no black and white issue on that. That's something that's going to be changing because the situation is different. That's why it's so critical that we understand those three responsibilities we have of ask, seek and knock. That's an admonition for us to pray in those situations to seek God's wisdom.

***Jay:** Bruce, I just [UNCLEAR] having the mind of Christ that kind of, I heard Sig say this morning that we don't have the mind of Christ, and then I heard you just say that we don't have the mind of Christ. For some reason, I just, like in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that says, "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him," and then it says, "But we have the mind of Christ."*

Sure we do. Sure.

***Jay:** Where is the difference whenever we say mind of Christ...*

We've been given the mind of Christ because of our regeneration, through the Holy Spirit. We have the mind of Christ that way. In other words, you're now able to think spiritual things that you couldn't beforehand. Before you were regenerate, you could not think spiritual things. There was nothing you could do to think of anything spiritual, anything related to the person and work of Christ. Now that you have the mind of Christ, that's the role of the Holy Spirit. Remember in Ezekiel 36, he calls us to himself, he cleanses us from ourselves, he creates a new life within us, he completes us with the Holy Spirit and he causes us to be obedient. That's the mind of Christ.

It's your desire now...you have different desires than you did before. The best way to look at the mind of Christ is I have a different desire now to be glorifying to God and to be obedient. You didn't have that

beforehand. That's the mind of Christ.

What we say when we use the statement, WWJD, "What would Jesus do?" we're basically saying this is what Jesus would do in this situation at this very moment. I don't know that. That's the difference. One is the mind of Christ means I have the desires for Christ, I have a desire to honor God, I have a desire for spiritual things that I didn't have before. That's the mind of Christ. We've taken that and take it to the point of saying this is what Jesus would do if his shoe was untied; this is how he'd handle it. I don't know that. That's the difference.

***Audience Member:** You've talked before about the secret will of God and the revealed will, so could we kind of say that that's like the secret will of God. We don't know what he would do...*

That's correct.

***Audience Member:** ...in whatever situation. Can't go to Scripture and look and say, "Oh, this is exactly what," you know...*

We don't know that. Some of those things are the secret will of God. We know what his revealed will of God is, but the secret things we just don't know. As the Scripture says in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to God." I don't know all the secret things of God. You don't base your life upon the secret; you base your life upon the known, and that's revealed to us in the Scripture. There's a difference between my having now the desire and the capability to consider spiritual things. That's the mind of Christ. But that doesn't mean that I'm going to know how to tie my shoes at certain situation if Jesus did it that way. That's what we're talking about. That's a good question. Thanks Jay.

Bishop Rogers, do you want add anything to that?

***Bishop Rogers:** No sir.*

Thank you. {LAUGHTER}

***Bill:** Taking you back to verse 6 where the admonition with regard to dogs and hogs. Is that also instruction to us with regard to being good stewards of our time?*

Oh, I think so. I think it has to do with everything of the Christian life. In other words, we've been... look at 2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves." The treasure there is the life of Christ, the truths of Christ, the Gospel message—anything that's associated with the Gospel of Christ, which includes the quality of your lifestyle. The treasure is the life of Christ in us, which includes the verbalization of it through the Gospel, but also the manifestation of it by my life.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God. That's all inclusive. It's just not the presentation of the Gospel. It's everything related to a Gospel oriented living life. That includes the use of my time. It includes the use of my stewardship capabilities and responsibilities. It's a total issue dealing with all the aspects of my life. I have to be careful where I use my time. I don't give my time to dogs and swine. I don't give my money to dogs and swine. I've got to be discerning. So it's just not relative to our words; it has everything to do with our life. We have to take

a look at where do I spend my time. Am I really giving my time to the dogs and swine of this world who are offensive to Christ? I don't know that. It's just a question you have to ask.

Bill: I think specifically what was I thinking about is often, in my past, and many times now, I find myself almost on a mission, and it becomes a personal mission to convert, as if I could do that, some individual. I just spend excessive amounts of time and energy [UNCLEAR] let's say person X...

I see what you mean.

Bill: ...as opposed to sitting there and saying, "Is this for me? Is this...what I'm going," like once again, is this a concept that it's the Holy Spirit at work here and I need [UNCLEAR] follow the spirit guiding me to do? I'm just saying, as human beings, we tend to, once again, be action oriented, as Bishop Rogers was saying, and many times, we're not silently listening to that voice in back that's saying "Be still and know the I am God."

This a good point. Sometimes we evolve back to our human default system, which is human effort. "I can't make that happen. I'm going to convert them."

How many of you have had this guilt trip laid upon you? "If you don't witness to them, they won't come to saving faith." How many of you have had somebody say that? "If you don't go witness to him or her, they might not come to Christ." What is that a violation of? The sovereignty of God. You see, that's the beauty of the doctrine of election. God's elect will come to saving faith. Now you might lose the joy, the blessing, the encouragement, the thrill, of being there when that person was regenerate. But that person will come to saving faith. The only reason the Lord Jesus has not returned yet in all of his glory is because not all of his elect have come to saving faith.

Audience Member: Is that [UNCLEAR]...

I don't know.

Audience Member: If you don't go, they won't come [UNCLEAR].

It might be. Often times, you hear an evangelist, "If you don't share Christ with your neighbor, they won't come to saving faith." Boy, what an offense to the sovereignty of God that is. You see, it is the power of the Gospel that is the power unto salvation, not my efforts.

People have always asked me, "How many people have you led to Christ?" My answer is, "None that I know of, but I've been the OB/GYN who's presided at their new birth. But I've never led anybody to Christ." Somebody's planted a seed. Somebody has watered that seed. I just happen to be in God's providence to receive the blessing, the joy and the thrill of being there, of ushering in the new life. But I was certainly not cause of the new life. I was just the OB/GYN who presided at the new birth. You see, we need to understand that.

That does not mean that we sit back on our haunches and don't say anything. That's not what I'm saying. Please understand, when we're talking about Matthew 7, about discerning, I'm not saying you sit back and say nothing. All I'm saying is, guys, this ought to drive us to our knees to be totally sensitive to the leading of the spirit in those situations when we can share Christ. But you've got to be discerning

when you do it and know what to say and how to say it. That's the whole point.

Audience Member: *I have another testimony. A month ago, my step-son, he was down in Maryland. He was coming back to Pittsburgh for some holiday [UNCLEAR]. He has a daughter that's very, very sick, and he has an au pair, a new one from China. She's 26 years old [UNCLEAR]. She's a pediatric nurse and she's taking care of our two granddaughters. I knew, for two weeks, she was coming, and I just felt the leading of the Holy Spirit, "You've got to share with her." But I have no idea because I don't speak Chinese. She was going to spend the night at our house, and her employer, my step-son, at his brother's house. We had this wonderful afternoon at one of the brother's houses. [UNCLEAR] and my wife and I was just having a great time sharing that night. My wife and I were wearing the wristbands, by the way, this brings a lot things, and all of a sudden, about 10:30, she grabs our wrists and says, "What these mean?" I saw the opportunity. I had no idea what to say. She could read and write the English language and understand it quite well, but the speaking was a little off. [UNCLEAR] writing her name in Chinese, so I wrote out what has Jesus done. I explained, I said, "He did for you because he loves you. He loves Grammy." She calls my wife grammy as our grandchildren. I said, "He loves you. He died for you, as he died for all of us." My wife was astounded. She said, "I never hear this thing Jesus before." We talked and I shared and I just said, "He just loves you. He just loves you." The next morning, she was coming through our dining room, someone last year, a little triangular thing that says "The man who walks with God always gets to his destination," and she saw that and she read it. She looked at me, she pointed at that, she said, "This God and this Jesus the same." She knew God. She knew of him. I said, "Yeah." My step-son, because his father fell in love with evangelism, his father died, he knows Christ, but he hasn't been walking, so that's going take discerning. She mentioned to him when he came to pick her up, he said, "I'll explain it to you on the way back to Maryland." The wristband, and obedience to God's will, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and I know I'm a big mouth, but I don't know, and so I seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in all cases. Do I open my mouth? Do I shut my mouth? Or what do I do? He has always been faithful.*

That's the idea. Praying when you have those situations. Ask, seek and knock. Let me give you the opposite illustration. That's a great illustration, brother. Let me give you the opposite one.

My second tour to Vietnam, I'm flying over on a plane. I'm sitting beside this Navy Commander. Here's my thought process. "Alright, when do I give him the four spiritual laws? {LAUGHTER} Do I do it before the meal or after the meal? Maybe I should do it before desert. No, maybe I should do it after desert. What if I don't do it? He won't come to Christ. I've got to do it. I've just got to do it. So when do I do it? I was [UNCLEAR] sweat beads of sweat coming down my cheek as I think, "When do I do it?" While they serve him the food? Should have I done it before he opened his napkin? What about, do I do it before he drinks his coffee? Maybe I should do it after he drinks his coffee. When do I do it? I know I've got to do it. That's what I was told to do. That's what I'm supposed to do. I've just got to do it." One two three, "Do you know that God loves and has a wonderful plan for your life?" He said, "Don't hand me that crap." {LAUGHTER} See I knew I should have done it before desert. {LAUGHTER}

Now that's the opposite. You see, that's where I was at that point in my life. Then about eight months later, I'm on a plane down to Sydney, Australia, for a week of R&R. I get on the plane. I'm sitting there by the window, and guess who sits beside me? {LAUGHTER} That same Navy Commander. The first thing I did was, "Gulp!" I just kind of went, put the pillow up, "Maybe he won't recognize me. Maybe he won't know who I am." So I said, "Lord, this is your show. I've learned a lot in these six months. I'm going to go to sleep. If you want something to happen that's contrary to my resting in you and glorifying

you while I sleep, just make it obvious. I want to be an aggressive responder, because I know this—the real issue is what is that you want to accomplish on this flight, not what I think I should do.” So I went to sleep.

About halfway over the Pacific Ocean, just as we crossed the equator, I got an elbow in my wrist. The guy said, “Can I ask you a question?” I said, “Certainly.” He said, “What is this phrase, ‘the person and work of Christ’ mean?” I said, “Well, I think I can help you with that.” We had a wonderful conversation for the next hour-and-a-half, just freely discussing what it meant to have the person and work of Christ. I went through justification by faith alone, you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. He took down some notes. He listened. When it was over, he said, “You know this has been a fascinating discussion because I’ve just thinking a lot about that since I’ve been here in Vietnam.” I said, “Do you have a Bible?” He said, “No, I don’t.” I said, “Well, let me give you mine. Why don’t you just take this? Why don’t you read the book of John, because that will tell you that Jesus is God? Why don’t you do that on your way back?” We got off the plane and I’ve never seen him since then.

The contrast was so radically different, because you see, my default system was this—human effort. Gotta do it. That’s what you’ve been told to do. That’s what you do. As opposed to saying, “Lord, you’re sovereign. I just want to be an aggressive responder to whatever it is you’re going to do on this plane. If it’s to glorify you by sleeping, then let me be the best sleeper on the plane. But if you want me to do something else, I’m just going to watch and see what you do and then I’m going to become an aggressive responder.” Now I don’t know whatever happened to that man, but that was such a contrast that I think back upon that frequently, just the difference between who I was at that time and what I thought I needed to do, as opposed to who I was and what I needed to be. Huge difference.

That’s what Jesus is talking about here in Matthew 7, when it talks about having the treasure before swine and dogs. You’ve just got to be very, very discerning.

***Audience Member:** Just real quick. It’s not going to come across as a perfect analogy, but we all know that when coming to God, we can’t earn his grace. We talk with others and talk to friends [UNCLEAR], we almost have to earn that grace through them, a relationship with God and our relationship with other people. It’s really different in the sense that when we share the Gospel with strangers or friends, we have to first buy or earn their friendship, otherwise, that Gospel is going to come out very canned.*

It’s a matter of timing. We’re going to say the same truth. Jesus always said the same thing. He used different approaches. It was packaged differently. To Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, unless you’re born again, you won’t enter the kingdom of heaven.” To the woman at the well, he said, “If I told you who I was, you’d have streams of living water that would have no end.” You see, it was the same message, but it was a different package because the person was different and the timing was different.

Part of the issue here is a matter of timing. We’re going to say the same thing about the person and work of Christ whenever we say it. The difference is their receptivity. That’s what we don’t know. We don’t know that. That’s where we have to be trusting of the Holy Spirit and become an aggressive responder to what he’s doing in the midst of that moment in that person’s life.

***Audience Member:** Just out of curiosity, did he ever mention the first encounter you had?*

No. The gentleman never mentioned the first encounter...thankfully. I thought about, “What if he says,

‘Aren’t you that twit who tried to convert me on the way down?’” {LAUGHTER} No, he didn’t mention that, much to my relief.

Guys, there’s a lot in here that we can talk about. The only other thing I would say in Matthew 7, we’ll save it for next time because it’s going to be two questions I want to ask us about our Christian life, and we’ll wrap it up the next time we meet with Matthew 7. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to be with us.

***Sig:** Bruce, before we pray, this is the one Friday when Dick Johnson has enough courage to get up before the men and...I know you love this day as much as we do, but Dick Johnson wanted just a couple of minutes just to say thank you.*

***Dick:** Sig did the great intro to it, but we are so blessed to have you, not only as a friend, which is really important, but as a mentor and as a teacher. We really have hearts of gratitude. So, therefore, this is our Christmas card to you, brother.*

Are you going to read that?

***Dick:** I am going to read it. {LAUGHTER} I’m going to try. It’s pretty small print there.*

We’ll be here all day. {LAUGHTER}

***Dick:** Stay calm, brother.*

Alright.

Dick: With great appreciation, dear Bruce, we lift you up in prayer, our brother in Christ and teacher of the Word, wishing you, Becky and your children a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year. The Brave Men of Friday Morning Bible Study. We have a couple of those little things that you remind us of throughout on there. You can read those and just refresh your... {LAUGHTER}. This is to our beloved teacher. May God the Spirit continue to use you to teach us through your faithfulness. These gentlemen haven’t had a chance to read all this, but have signed their names to it. But let me read it for us:

THE SPIRIT AS TEACHER
(Arthur Bennett – The Valley of Vision)

O GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT,
That which I know not, teach thou me,
Keep me a humble disciple in the school of Christ,
learning daily there what I am in myself,
a fallen sinful creature,
justly deserving everlasting destruction;
O let me never lose sight of my need of a Saviour,
or forget that apart from him I am nothing, and can do nothing.
Open my understanding to know the Holy Scriptures;
Reveal to my soul the counsels and works of the blessed Trinity;
Instill into my dark mind the saving knowledge of Jesus;
Make me acquainted with his covenant undertakings
and his perfect fulfillment of them,
that by resting on his finished work
I may find the Father’s love in the Son,
his Father, my Father,
and may be brought through thy influence
to have fellowship with the Three in One.

O lead me into all truth, thou Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
that I may know the things that belong unto my peace,
and through thee be made anew.
Make practical upon my heart the Father's love
as thou has revealed it in the Scriptures;
Apply to my soul the blood of Christ, effectually, continually,
and help me to believe, with conscience comforted,
that it cleanseth from all sin;
Lead me from faith to faith,
that I may at all times have freedom to come to a reconciled Father,
and may be able to maintain peace with him
against doubts, fears, corruptions, temptations.
Thy office is to teach me to draw near to Christ with a pure heart,
steadfastly persuaded of his love,
in the full assurance of faith,
Let me never falter in this way.

I just have to say that, for my life, but I speak for these Brave Men of Christ, that these Friday mornings have done more to inform me of Christ, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to mature me as a man of God, probably than any other aspect of life, so I really...

Thanks Dick.

Dick: *Thank you brother. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]*

Thank you brothers. I could not think of a greater gift than the prayer that you just gave. My response would be the response of the prayer of Luke 18, which is “Have mercy upon me, the sinner.” That’s the most powerful prayer I can say in response. Thank you, brothers, very much. This is extremely meaningful and one that I will treasure. I will have to say this—I’m really overrated. You guys really overrate me, and I’m very grateful that you put up with me. Thank you.

Dick: This is just a small token of our appreciation—really for Becky more than anybody else {LAUGHTER}, all the hours that you spend preparing for Friday mornings and Thursday afternoons—a couple of your favorite restaurants so that you can spend some time together building even deeper that relationship with Becky.

Becky will say thank you. {LAUGHTER} Thank you very much. Thank you, brothers. Thank you very much. Blessings to you. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]