

“Hog’n’Dogs” and Dads

Matthew 7:6-11

- I. A Disciple’s Characteristics: 8 Blessings (5:1-12)
 - II. A Disciple’s Influence: 2 Metaphors (5:13-16)
 - III. A Disciple’s Righteousness: Six Contrasting Illustrations (5:17-48)
 - IV. A Disciple’s Piety: Three Religious Practices (6:1-18): Giving, Praying, Fasting
 - V. A Disciple’s Commitments: Four Contrasting Choices (6:19-34)
 - VI. A Disciple’s Relationships (7:1-20)
 - A. To siblings (7:1-5)
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NCIS – solving the mystery of “who done it”

Introduction: Two interpretive dilemmas –

- A. An unexplained picture (7:6)
- B. An “unrealistic” promise (7:7-11)

I. Dogs and Hogs – Another Prohibition

A. The contribution of *cultural setting*

1. Key words

- “Dogs” = mean, vicious scavengers

These are not pets. Our pets become members of the family. We prayed that the dog of a board member would not die until he got back home. God answered our prayer.
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- “Sacred” = likely refers to meat sacrificed in the Temple
- “Pearls” = that which is of supreme value (“Pearls of Great price”)
- “Pigs” = unclean, vicious animals (We know about this from Parable of Prodigal son)

2. Point: Do not give what is holy and precious to that which is dirty and worthless.

3. Reason: You will lose not only the thing of value but possibly yourself as well.

B. The contribution of *biblical usage*

1. Others references to “dogs” and “pigs” –

- Psalm 22:16 – a Messianic Psalm where David views himself as being under attack; it becomes a fore-view of Jesus on the cross. Dogs = evil men who are out to get him. Vs. 20.
- Philippians 3:2 – “Beware of dogs!” = false teachers who emphasize that you must keep the law in order to be saved.
- 2 Peter 2:22 – again speaking of false teachers who look like true believers. Then they revert to their true nature. These folks who are hostile to God and his truth.

2. “Dogs” and “Pigs” = People who are in settled opposition to Jesus and his message.

This understanding of biblical usage has led to a couple of common interpretations of Mat 7:6.

- a. The oldest book of church order, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, gave this instruction: “Let no one eat or drink of the eucharist except those baptized into the name of the Lord. For as regards to this the Lord has said, give not that which is holy to dogs!” But there’s not reference in the SM to the Lord’s Supper

- b. Most refer to the message of the gospel. If the “pearl of great price” is salvation, the idea would be, do not press the gospel on people who mock it. Perhaps this is the counter-point to “do not judge your brother. This is what the apostles did with Jewish audiences who rejected the gospel – they took it to the Gentiles (ironic). But such an interpretation doesn’t seem to relate to the material around it.

Believers are to be merciful, forgiving, and slow to judge (7:1–5), yet they should wisely discern the true character of people and not indefinitely continue proclaiming the gospel to those who adamantly reject it, so that they can move on and proclaim the gospel to others (cf. 10:14; also Acts 13:46; 18:6; Titus 3:10–11). [ESV Study Bible].

C. The contribution of *literary context*

At first, it appears that this sermon is really a bunch of mini-sermons strung together.

German scholar, Bornkamm, saw a pattern (like staring at a 3-D pictograph).

Guelich read Bornkamm.

Context: Matt.6 – don’t do your religious duties to be seen by men. When he gave a model prayer, he introduced it in verse 8.

Work through the “Do nots” – four units.

Summary of first unit: “Let God be God in your life”

The interpretive context for Mat. 7:6 is Matt 6:12.

1. Sermonic structure: (Turn the page over)

- a. This exhortation corresponds to the petition, “**deliver us from the evil one.**”

The prayer for protection is supported by a commitment to stay away from people who are evil!

- b. This exhortation is similar to the warning of 5:13: “Don’t lose your saltiness.”

2. Point: Do not surrender your loyalty and trust in Christ (6:19-34) to the enemies of God. Maintain the integrity of your commitments. (See Luke 22:31).

ILLUSTRATION: “**Don’t help him out!**” Satan is out to get you. Don’t help him out.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."³³ Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."³⁴ Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me." (Luk 22:31 ESV)

[3. If you give your life to the enemies of God, they will tear you apart.

ILLUSTRATION: Dallas Cowboys football player.]

II. Prayer and Promises – Another Instruction

A. Unpacking the text

1. The Invitation (7)

- a. The verbs emphasize diligence.

- “Ask” is stated 5x
- Ascending scale of urgency

Richard Glover suggests that a child, if his mother is near and visible, asks; if she is neither, he seeks; while if she is inaccessible in her room, he knocks. [Stott]

- b. The tenses (present) emphasize persistence. “Keep on asking”

2. The Promise (8)

- a. Universal (“everyone”)
- b. Emphatic (repeated + threefold)

3. The Analogy (9-11)

- a. “Evil” fathers give “good” gifts
 - Bread and fish were the two staple foods of Palestine.
 - A rock or a snake might look like food, but they are worthless, or even dangerous.

ILLUSTRATION: As a practical joke, parents gave their son a “toilet paper” cake. They videotaped it to get his reaction. He cried.

ILLUSTRATION: The Mafia members give good things to their children.

- b. The argument: “How much more . . .”

Augustine: “For what would he not now give to sons when they ask, when he has already granted this very thing, namely, that they might be sons?”

B. The impact of context

Why does Jesus suddenly change from talking about dogs and pigs to the subject of prayer. The fact is that he is talking about prayer all through this segment. He closes this section in the same way he opened it: “Your father will give to you if you ask.”

1. The sermonic structure: The assurance that God will answer those who ask (6:8; 7:11) brackets Jesus’ instruction on the WORDS of the prayer and the LIFE of the pray-er.

IN THE SQUIGLY CIRCLE: “Your father gives good gifts to his children who ask” (7:7-11)

2. Qualifies the promise

- a. Subjects: Citizens of the Kingdom
 - Jesus has already excluded the hypocrites who already have their reward and the pagans who think they will be heard for their many words
 - Mat. 6:33: Seek first . . . all these things will be added.
- b. Objects: The concerns expressed in the Pattern Prayer (not a blank check)

The best way to approach this problem (of ‘unanswered prayer’) is to remember that the promises of Jesus in the SM are not unconditional. A moment’s thought will convince us of this. It is absurd to suppose that the promise, ‘Ask, and it shall be given to you’ is an absolute pledge with no strings attached; that ‘Knock, and it will be opened to you’ is an ‘Open Sesame’ to every closed door without exception; and that by the waving of a prayer wand every wish will be granted and every dream will come true. The idea is ridiculous. It would turn prayer into magic, the person who prays into a magician like Aladdin, and God into our servant who appears instantly to do our bidding like Aladdin’s genie every time we rub our little prayer lamp. In addition, this concept of prayer would place an impossible strain on every sensitive Christian if he knew that he was certain to get everything he asked. ‘If it were the case,’ writes Alec Motyer, ‘that whatever we ask, God has pledged to give, then I for one would never pray again, because I would not have sufficient confidence in my own wisdom to ask God for anything; and I think if you consider it you will agree.’

- c. Provision: God will meet the needs of his children (Provision, Pardon, Protection)

3. Underlines the key point: We are to persist in prayer, for God has promised to answer.

“Nothing is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard” (John Calvin).

Chris Tomlin: “I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart want to [pray.]

C. Two experiential questions:

1. At times, it appears that there is no answer.

That is the point of “seeking” and “knocking.” This is what Paul did with respect to his thorn in the flesh. In Romans 1, he was “knocking.” The answer was “not yet.” The process we go through turns out to be as needful as the answer that comes at the end of the process.

2. At times, it appears that the answer is not good.

Jesus told the disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come.” So they did. And the king was crucified.

Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. (Luk 24:18 ESV)

They prayed for a fish; surely it seemed that they had received a snake.

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luk 24:25 ESV)

ILLUSTRATION: PRAYER OF THE CONFEDERATE SOLDIER

Perhaps we could put the matter in this way: being *good*, our heavenly Father gives only good gifts to his children; being *wise*, as well, he knows which gifts are good and which are not.” What if the children (through ignorance or folly) were actually to ask for a stone or a snake? What then? Certainly our heavenly father would never give us something harmful, even if we asked for it urgently and repeatedly, for the simple reason that he gives his children only ‘good gifts.’

Note what Jesus did not say: “Ask, and the thing ask for will be given; Seek, and you will find what you are looking for. Knock, and the door before you will open.”

The point is not to figure out how to bring God into service to us. The point is that when we pray, we have Someone who hears and responds every single time. And He is good.

TRANSITION: I have two sermons. Which one shall we apply.

III. Summary of the segment: True righteousness is a product of persistent dependence (prayer) and passionate commitment (obedience).

A. There is nothing dumber than praying the prayer without the commitment.

B. There is nothing dumber than trying to make the commitment without the prayer.

“...your Father knows what you need...” (6:8)

	The WORDS of PRAYER (6:9-13)	The LIFE of the PRAY-ER (6:19-7:11)
Concerns of the King (Father)	1. Person (“Hallowed”)	“Do not lay up treasures on earth . . . serve money” (6:19-24)
	2. Program (“Kingdom”)	
	3. Purpose (“Will”)	
Concerns of the Citizens (Family)	1. Provision (“Daily bread”)	“Do not be anxious about food, clothing” (6:25-33)
	2. Pardon (“Forgive...as we forgive”)	“Do not judge your brother” (7:1-5)
	3. Protection (“from evil one”)	“Do not give what is holy to that which is dirty” (7:6).

“Your father gives good gifts to his children who ask” (7:7-11)

Communion is the reminder that God is good.

<p>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Rom 8:31 ESV)</p>
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