

*John 1:12 NLT - 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.*

*Romans 8:15 NLT - 15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."*

No matter what our experience was with our earthly father, God is the perfect Good Father.

*If you haven't spent much time with your heavenly father lately, you might be reluctant to return. The longer we put off what we should do, the harder it becomes to do it. We might even become fearful of God's reaction. But what response does our Father have when His children return to Him?*

*Luke 15:20 NLT - 20 "So he (the prodigal) returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.*

Don't let anything keep you separated from God's presence; not fear, busyness, complacency, or any other excuse. As you draw near to God, He will run to you with open arms.

## Wrap Up

God is our good and loving father. He knows how to give us good things. But He wants us to remain diligent as we ask, seek and knock. And because we have experienced the unconditional love of the father, we can give that love to others, by treating them as we want to be treated ourselves.

## Memory Verse

*"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you."  
- Matthew 7:7 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs. \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Set aside time this week to be with God as you ask, seek and knock.*

## "Relating to our Good Father" Upside Down Kingdom- #7

### INTRODUCTION

Jesus addressed many issues in the sermon on the mount. But all of them essentially related back to the two most important commandments, "love God and love others". In this passage Jesus focuses on how our good Father relates to the needs of His children. And it is bookended with how we relate to others.

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Who did you see as the portrayal of "the perfect father" when you were growing up?

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. Relating to Others

Leading up to this point Jesus told us to be careful how we judge others, but we still need to have discernment. Without it we may end up wasting that which is precious. Verses 6 and 12 both give us a perspective on how we relate to others.

*Matthew 7:6, 12 NLT - 6 "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you. ... 12 "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.*

At first glance it appears we are writing off a group of people who are "unholy pigs". Pretty harsh words.

*But in verse 6 what are we not to do, and what should we expect if we did do it?*

The word for holy (*hagios*) means a person or thing devoted to God, sacred. That is quite the opposite of unholy (dogs) and swine which would be impure. This is the condition of the unsaved audience that does not want to hear about Christianity. They mock and reject everything from God. Even if we aren't to "waste holy things" on them now, it doesn't mean we give up hope.

*Do you know of an individual who was once antagonistic towards Christianity, but now is a believer? Is there someone in your life who is not yet ready to receive the gospel, but whom you are praying for a change of heart? What would their response be if you approached them before they are ready?*

It is the job of the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of unbelievers to receive God, and our job to be attentive and discern the right time to speak.

*Maybe you've been there, or maybe you haven't, but put yourself in the place of that antagonistic, unsaved person and apply verse 12. How would you want to be treated?*

*Philippians 2:3 NIV - 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,*

Philippians 2:3 similarly tells us to humbly value others above ourselves. When we treat others as we want to be treated, it should not be with a motive to be treated better ourselves. In the kingdom of God we give unconditionally because we have received God's unconditional love for us.

## 2. Effective Prayer

*Matthew 7:7-8 NLT - 7 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

Earlier in the sermon on the mount Jesus taught his followers how to pray (Mat 6:9-13). So, when we pray, we know our prayers should be for God's will to be done, as well as for our daily needs and protection. Taking Mathew 7:7 in isolation we might be tempted to think if we ask for anything we want; we will receive it. But there are many passages in scripture the shed light on why we do or don't receive what we ask for.

*What does James give as reasons why our prayers go unanswered?*

*James 4:2b-3 NLT - 2b ...Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. 3 And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong--you want only what will give you pleasure.*

It would be a mistake to stop asking God for our needs. In fact, He commands it. Matthew 7:7 doesn't say, "if you pray", it says keep asking, keep seeking and keep knocking.

Consider each-

- *Ask God to supply your needs and support you. What is one thing you would ask Him for today?*
- *Seek God for something valuable or something you've lost. What are you seeking?*
- *Knock at God's door. What will you do when He ushers you into His presence?*

God will respond to us, but he asks us to be diligent in our pursuit of Him. So ask, seek and knock.

## 3. The Good Father

*Matthew 7:9-11 NLT - 9 "You parents--if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.*

Rabbi Jesus takes this opportunity to use a method common among Jewish teachers called *gal vahomer*. Its logic is, if something lesser is true then something greater is most certainly true.

Where do children go when they have a need; to their parents. And it is true that even sinful parents provide for the needs of their children. So, if that is true, how much more willing and capable is God of providing for the needs of His children when they come to Him?

*How do we know if we are God's children? (Jn 1:12, Rom 8:15)*