

# The Father's Heart is to Do Good

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## *The Father's Heart Series II*

Matthew 7: 7-12 "... if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good [gifts] to those who ask him?"

### Kingdom Mentality

Jesus is continuing his teaching on the Kingdom of God as he begins what seems like a series of disjointed and random thoughts. However, they are all related to what we can experience within God's kingdom, and how we should conduct ourselves in light of that. Earlier in this discourse, Jesus gives the command to be holy, or perfect *as your Father in heaven is perfect* (Matthew 5:48). So, their standard of conduct was no longer supposed to be themselves, or even the priests or scribes, but God himself.

#### ***How can I be perfect like God? I'm only human?***

Good question. Jesus continues his teaching, showing ways in which we can be like God, and act as citizens of His kingdom.

### A Heart After You

In Matthew chapter 7, we see Jesus helping his listeners, and us, to understand one on the basics of kingdom living: *citizens of the kingdom are outwardly focused*. He shows this through three examples:

Example	Scripture
<b>Don't judge others</b>	Matthew 7:1-2
<b>Don't focus on others' problems/deficiencies</b>	Matthew 7:3-5
<b>Don't dishonor others</b>	Matthew 7:6

This becomes the basis for any subsequent focus on self. Jesus himself demonstrated this selfless life many times during his time on earth, and taught the same

*...Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. – Matthew 20:21, 26-28*

James and John were seeking recognition and position for themselves thinking this would prove their worth, whether to themselves or to those around them. Jesus wanted to change their thinking so that they were no longer concerned about their position, but rather on the place of those around them in the kingdom.

## Behind the "Ask"

After Jesus set the stage in the first part of Matthew 7, he opened the door to, not a formula for asking and receiving, but the heart of it.

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened – Matthew 7:7-8*

Like James and John, we can make this about our efforts, our formulas, or our position, but in doing so we miss the reality of the kingdom life that is being shown in this teaching. How many times have we sought something –like a job, or money, or people, or even love, friendship or peace, only to never find it? How many doors have we knocked on that didn't open? We've even heard teaching that the finding is in our persistence... to keep knocking until the door is answered.

As true as this last statement is, it is actually not about our efforts to get what we want. Rather, it is about the heart of the One who wants to answer:

I receive, not because I ask	<b>I receive because He wants to give</b>
I find, not because I seek	<b>I find because He wants me to discover</b>
The door is opened not because I knock	<b>The door is opened because He wants to open it</b>

We start to see the heart of the Father in this that He wants to meet our needs, our expectations, our desires, and so much more.

Jesus continues with his examples by comparing the similar scenario of parents and children:

*Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? – Matthew 7:9-10*

Parents love to provide for their children, and wouldn't think of giving them something inappropriate to their request or something damaging to them. The listeners probably imagined their own children asking them for something to eat, and how they would respond with a heart of love, care and compassion for their own children. **How much more** would God show love, care and compassion toward us when we ask?

## What is Good?

Jesus qualifies the heart of God by contrasting the good that people do for their own children, being evil, with God's desire to do good for His

*If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? – Matthew 7:11*

Oftentimes, though, we want “good” to be according to our terms. We want what we want, what we think we need, and what we see will fit the situations. Just like James and John, their answer to their dilemma was to “sit at Jesus right and left hand in his kingdom”. Jesus however had bigger things in mind for them. Similarly, when we ask, God’s desire and will is to do us good, and He will.

*As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher”, he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.” “Teacher”, he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy” - Mark 10:17-20*

This man was a man of means. A leader. And, by his own admission, a man who did good since he was young. He was looking for the key – the one final thing he could do to secure his position. Now, he was not a bad man, probably not even a selfish man. He was, however a man who didn’t understand the heart of the Father, and where his own heart should be. Jesus challenged this man’s notion of good.

*Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack”, he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me”. At that the man’s face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth – Mark 10:21-22*

For Jesus and for the Father, the “good” that the man was looking for was not good enough because it was 1) situational – he was looking for something tangible that he could do or produce to, effectively, trade for entrance into the kingdom; 2) internally focused – while Jesus was offering him eternal relationship (come, follow me), he was looking for temporal justification.

**Good, therefore, is not simply the delivery of the specific question asked, but the meeting of the person where they are to give them what is needed to get them to where they are supposed to be.**

### Jesus As Coach

Jesus was willing to take this man under his wing, show him much more treasure than he currently had, and show him what life in the kingdom could really be. The man wasn’t prepared for this because he thought that what he had, the life he had, was good enough. In this, Jesus was like a coach who sees something in a young player that he cannot see in himself. The best that Jesus could do for him was to open his thinking to a new and better way of life. Jesus was calling the man to be perfect (mature, complete, lacking nothing, content), like his Father in heaven was.

Similarly, Jesus sees in us the potential to be mature, complete, satisfied citizens of his kingdom, and will do what is necessary to get us there. His good is less about the specific circumstance, and more about who we are, and who we are to become.

Because of this, it is necessary to not know the “situational good” that God can do (God answered my request in the way I asked it), but to know that God wants one thing for us, and that is our best. Paul understood this:

*Not that I have already attained this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me – Philippians 3:12*

Paul knew that there was a future that God had for him. A future that was much more than his current circumstances could speak to. A future for which he would be able to *be perfect, as our Father is perfect*. Paul dedicated himself to that path, because he understood God's heart for him. We also must know that God's heart, His desire, His will is to do good for us, and that good is for our ultimate future, not just for our immediate circumstance. When we understand and accept this in our lives, it will color everything else we do and how we respond within the kingdom