

The Old Paths

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“The Doctrine Of Matthew 7:12”

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The doctrine (teaching) of Christ is little appreciated by our society at large. This is sad, especially in light of the fact that it is the doctrine of Christ that will lead us from earth to Heaven! A prime example of Christ’s earth-shattering doctrine is the statement made in Matthew 7:12. The more I read and study that verse, the more I realize that that simple statement completely turns the world upside-down. What Christ taught in this verse was truly earth-shattering to those who first heard it. It is also earth-shattering to our “modern” minds today when we understand what is commanded in that simple statement! I think this is why so many people fight against Christ and His words. They are more than happy to acknowledge a little baby in a manger, but they do not want to listen to Him when He is full-grown!! This is because the little baby requires nothing of them. The full-grown preacher and Son of God demands much more, including what is said in Matthew 7:12.

Let us study Matthew 7:12, and then look at two other New Testament passages which are applications of this verse. May we learn much from this study and then be willing to apply it to our day-to-day lives.

Matthew 7:12

This text is probably familiar

to a majority of the world. Yet, we often fail to appreciate just how far this verse reaches. Before ending His sermon (context: Matt. 5-7), Jesus told the people, *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”*

This passage is often called the “golden rule.” It is a statement that is the complete opposite of what the world says. When followed, this passage will completely change our attitude toward others. In our world, we are taught to look out for “#1” and to make sure to not feel deprived of anything. Yet, Jesus said that citizens of His kingdom do not look out for selfish interests, but treat others as we want them to treat us.

This passage is completely shakes our world, because:

1) This passage says we are to be active and treat others the way we want to be treated, rather than passively wait to respond to how a person first “treats” us!

2) Jesus says that the *“law and prophets”* are based upon this truth. In other words, when we honestly examine the commands of God to people, it would have this principle as its basis. We can see that this is true, for, *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* is a command found nine times throughout the Bible! Loving your neighbor as yourself would demand we treat them the way we want to be treated!

3) This passage shakes our world because Jesus tells us how the citizens of His kingdom act; but this

verse does not guarantee what the response will be to our action! When we treat others the way we want to be treated, this does not mean that they will automatically reciprocate! It is easy to follow Matthew 7:12 when we are pretty positive others will respond in kind. However, are we ready to endure harsh treatment from others after we have treated them well? (Read: Matt. 5:10-12) Are we ready to continue to treat folks well even when they still treat us in an unfair or unkind way? This is what citizens of Christ’s kingdom do! (Read Matt. 7:12 and Rom. 12:17-18.)

4) Another reason this passage has such an effect upon us is because Matthew 7:12 forces us to be like Christ! Think about it: Who was Jesus thinking about when He went to the cross? Was this a selfish or selfless act? When people spit on Him, beat Him, mocked Him, and harmed Him in so many ways, what did Christ do? Did He retaliate? No! He treated folks as He wanted to be treated all through His life upon earth, EVEN WHEN He knew they would not return the courtesy. This verse demands the same of us!

In connection with this verse, we could read Matthew 5:44, which says, *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”*. This passage certainly has Matthew 7:12 as its basis. Who among us could love, bless, pray, or do good for enemies when we have just experienced their cruelty? Jesus said to do it, though! When we think of what Christ endured for our sins, *“while we were yet sinners,”* i.e., His enemies (Rom. 5:8), surely we can treat our fellow man the way we want to be treated, even when he is spiteful to us!

Two Passages Which Have A Connection With Matthew 7:12

In writing the following, I am not suggesting that these are the "only" passages to consider, but these are two passages which have an obvious connection with Matthew 7:12 and treating others the way we want to be treated. For example

Ephesians 4:28

This passage teaches the necessity of working and how we ought to be givers instead of thieves. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."* When we read this passage, though, can we not also see Matthew 7:12? Paul says we are not to steal from others, but give to others! Which would WE rather have done to us? If we'd like to have folks give to us, then we must first give ourselves. In fact, Jesus told folks, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35)! When we understand Matthew 7:12, then we can understand how it is that giving is better than receiving in the eyes of Christ. Remember, God Himself has given so much to us (Jn. 3:16). Therefore, when we give, we are acting like God!

This world tells us that we are "owed" certain things just because we live on earth. Christ does not teach this. Rather, He shows us that generosity and concern for others ought to characterize us as we treat others the way we want to be treated. In this case, Ephesians 4:28 shows that we need to be active in working and labor so that we can give to others, rather than being a person who is lazy and takes from people! What a difference between the description of the

child of God/ citizen of Christ's kingdom and what the citizens of this world think we ought to do!

Hebrews 13:4

In this verse, we read, *"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* Again, wouldn't this passage also have Matthew 7:12 as its basis? I think it does. How is this possible? Let's approach it this way:

1) Would you want someone treating you as nothing more than a sex object? Would you want someone to just use you and throw you out? Then, do not treat others like that!

2) Would you want someone treating your sister or brother as nothing more than a sex object for a time before leaving them? Then, don't you treat someone else's sister or brother like that as you date them!

Friends, Hebrews 13:4 teaches us that within the relationship of marriage, wherein is love, commitment, service, and sacrifice, the physical act of love is a beautiful thing (Gen. 2:18-25; Prov. 18-19; Song of Solomon; etc.). God says in this relationship, He considers the bed "undefiled". Yet, outside of this relationship, when folks are not married to each other, God says that act is sinful, and a sin not only against God, but also against one's own body (I Cor. 6:18-20).

Let the unmarried people remember this, and not be guilty of trying to stir up passions and desires that ought not be stirred (Sng. of Slmn. 3:5). If we are truly interested in living Matthew 7:12, then let us live it at all times, obeying Hebrews 13:4, and respect the opposite sex. Let us treat them as we want to be treated, and wait until marriage to fulfill those desires.

Conclusion

As I said earlier, I recognize that the complete extent of our study is not just these verses. However, may these verses, as well as our study of Matthew 7:12, encourage and challenge all of us to be better in the future than we have been. We listen to this world entirely too much, and as a result, have twisted our thinking when it comes to how we treat others. Those who are Christians (Acts 11:26; Mk. 16:16), or citizens of God's kingdom (Phil. 3:20), need to remember who we are and be determined to follow Matthew 7:12 in all aspects of our lives. We remember Colossians 3:17, which says, *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."* What has Christ authorized? He has authorized the principles laid out in Matthew 5-7, which include Matthew 7:12! Let us remember this fact during worship, at home, at school, and everywhere we go.

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