

# Measuring Up

## Matthew 7

God's justice is very, very fair. Think back through the Sermon on the Mount and you'll see a trend. Remember, Israel, the historic people of God, has been crushed time and time again. They wonder why God's blessing is with-held. Somehow, they seem to have forgotten God's ancient promise - that their blessing would be restored when they turned back to him with all their heart and all their soul. So far in the Sermon on the Mount, we have seen Jesus calling for repentance, and a thirst for true righteousness, that goes all the way to the core - but the religious leaders of Israel seem content with "religious acts" designed to impress others. Their devotion to God is "skin deep." What do they expect in return?



### What do I really want from God?

Write down your answer. You won't be asked to share it with the group unless you volunteer!

### Read Matthew 7:1-12. These two sections are both about "getting what you ask for."

#### Getting What You Ask for Part 1...

1. What does Jesus mean by the command he gives in 7:1? Does this mean "anything goes", and we're not able to be discerning? (Compare with 7:15.)

Jesus has already had some harsh words for the Pharisees, who he called "hypocrites" in 6:2,5 etc. He uses the same word here in verse 5. What are the Pharisees actually doing, and what's the danger they face?

Is God more, or less, harsh in his judgement than the Pharisees?

Are YOU happy to be judged by the standards you set for others?

What can we learn from the mistakes of the "hypocrites" Jesus is addressing?



#### Getting What You Ask For Part 2...

2. Read verses 7 to 12 again. If you have a mental picture a harsh, demanding and ungracious God, it's time to rethink. What sort of view of God would the religious observances of the Pharisees create?

What good thing does God most want us to have? (Look back to the end of Study 4 - what are we to **seek first**?) Think back too to the beatitudes. What are we to **hunger and thirst** for?

Are you asking for, and seeking these things? Why, or why not?

What result does Jesus promise for those who ask and seek?

While the Pharisees assume God is harsh and hard to please, Jesus paints a very different picture of his Father. He is ready to give the good gift of righteousness to any one who asks! Israel's response to God's law, then, should be both simple and heartfelt. There's no point going through the motions of keeping the law like the Pharisees do when God's real interest is in the type of people they are, and the state of their hearts...

3. A Jewish Rabbi once said “If you hate people doing something to you, don’t do it to anyone else.” How does this compare with what Jesus says in 7:12?

How does “doing unto others what you would have them do to you” **sum up Israel’s law and prophets?**

What sort of attitudes would result from following this principle? How would it be different to the Pharisees approach in 7:1?

## **Decision Time!**

The Sermon on the Mount closes with a dramatic call to Israel to make up their minds once and for all.

### **Read Matthew 7:13-29.**

1. How are the two gates and two roads in v13 and 14 different? In what sense is the gate Christ offers the more difficult one? What tough choices would there have been for anyone listening to him in the crowd that day?

What tough choices does following Jesus present for you?

2. Clearly, Jesus wasn’t the only one offering options to his hearers. The “wide road” had plenty of promoters. How can **false prophets** be distinguished from the genuine article?

Can you think of present day examples of religious teachers who produce the wrong kind of fruit?

Jesus says, not everyone who says to him, “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who *do the will of his Father in Heaven*. In other words, the Kingdom of Heaven is for those who are genuinely hungry for righteousness. We need to be clear on this! Admission to the Kingdom of Heaven is free, and open to the undeserving. But it’s an offer that’s only open to the hungry, the meek, those who are thirsty for righteousness. Paying lip service to Jesus while living to suit yourself means you’re at risk of hearing Jesus say “Away from me you evildoers!”

3 Jesus concludes his sermon with a story of two housebuilders. What is the difference between them?

What does building on the rock look like in the life of a wise Christian?

What does building on sand look like in the life of a foolish Christian?

Which Christian are you?

4. How can we help one another avoid the danger of foolishness?

5. Notice the reaction of the crowds as Jesus finishes teaching. (v28-29) What has your reaction to the Sermon on the Mount been?

Are there any things you’ve been working at changing during this series?

What other areas will you be working on?