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SERMON TITLE If You Love the Lord, part 5

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Matthew 7

SYNOPSIS If you love Jesus, you will obey his commands no matter how difficult

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ If You Love the Lord

John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

To demonstrate your love for the Lord, you will obey him. Repentance, reconciliation, reliability, and even perfection are commands from the Lord. These are not easy, which means we much rely more and more on him. Ultimately, obeying his commands is only possible through his strength, so we must keep running back to him.

☞ Today, we will start in **Matthew 7:7...**

Matthew 7:7-8

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

☞ **Pray Persistently**

Ask = beg, desire, crave; request for oneself

Seek = try to find with effort, almost to the point of demanding

Knock = pound on a door

☞ All three of these are in the present tense meaning to **keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.**

*David Guzik... We see a progressive intensity, going from **ask** to **seek** to **knock**. Jesus told us to have intensity, passion, and persistence in prayer. God promises an answer to the one who diligently seeks Him. Many of our passionless prayers are not answered for good reason, because it is almost as if we ask God to care about something we care little or nothing about. God values persistence and passion in prayer because it shows that we care about the things He cares about. **Persistent prayer does not overcome God's stubborn reluctance; it gives glory to Him, expresses dependence upon Him, and aligns our heart more with His.***

Here, Jesus references good gifts, which is really referring to anything God is giving us. If he's giving a gift, you know it's going to be a good one. Sometimes people don't want to pray, "Lord, let your will be done," because they are afraid they won't like whatever his will is. But, I'm telling you his will and his gifts are always good. (Jeremiah 29:11)

In Luke 11, the same language is used, except it more specifically references the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is an awesome gift given to us when we ask. He guides us into all truth; he reveals spiritual things to us; he develops spiritual fruit in us; and, he grants us spiritual gifts. The



☞ gift of Holy Spirit is worth the effort of asking, seeking, and knocking. **Ask, seek and knock for the Holy Spirit** and pray persistently.

Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

☞ **Practice the Golden Rule**

How would you like others to treat you? Then do that for them! *Do you want to be shown respect? Then respect others. Do you crave a kind word? Then speak words of kindness to others.*

Jesus' Golden Rule is not the "ethic of reciprocity," as some philosophers call it; neither is it, as some say, a common ethic shared by all religions. The way Jesus says it in this command has a subtle, but significant difference. A quick survey of the sayings of Eastern religions makes this plain:

- Confucianism: "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you"
- Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you"
- Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful"

These sayings are similar to the Golden Rule but are stated *negatively* and rely on passivity. Jesus' Golden Rule is a *positive* command to show love proactively. The Eastern religions say, "Refrain ☞ from doing"; Jesus says, "Do!" Other religions say it is enough to **hold your negative behavior in check; Jesus says to look for ways to act positively.**

This applies especially to Christian fellowship. If you want friendships with other Christians and wish others would reach out to you, then you need to reach out to others. I've occasionally interacted with people who felt like nobody ever reached out to them or invited them to do anything. Almost without exception, when I asked, "When's the last time you invited someone to do something?" the answer is, "I haven't." If this Golden Rule were actually followed by everyone, this world would be a much better and loving place. Do to others what you would want done to you. Practice the Golden Rule.

Matthew 7:13-16

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. 15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them.

☞ **Pass through the Narrow Gate**

*There is a right way and a wrong way, and Jesus appealed to His listeners to decide to go the more difficult way, **which leads to life.** The true gate is both narrow and difficult. **If your road has a gate that is easy and well-traveled, you do well to watch out.***

Proverbs 14:12... There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.



☞ Jesus was very countercultural, going against the flow. If we find ourselves often **without any resistance, it's at least a caution** for us. We are called to challenge the culture to be more like Jesus. Last week we talked about judging and found that it's okay to differentiate between right and wrong as well as good and better. There's a cultural movement to widely accept and approve of just about anything, but ultimately it leads to death. God's way is the right way which leads to life.

Then, after saying there is a path to destruction, Jesus warns us about false prophets who would lead us right down that road. And, he says, "watch out." Obviously, judgment is required. In Acts 17:11, the Bereans were commended because they examined the scriptures every day to double check even what the Apostle Paul was saying.

Not every preacher with a great smile and uplifting message is telling the truth. They may think they are, but even they may be deceived. One of our plumb lines at OBC is, "we believe character is more important than charisma." Now, charisma can be a wonderful thing, but character is matters more.

Jesus told us to evaluate the fruit of those we listen to. Does their character line up with their claims? Do they practice what they preach? Do they actually preach the Word of God? We must follow the narrow path, examining the Scriptures for ourselves so that we know what is really true. That's the foundation on the rock, which Jesus describes later in this passage.

Jesus, himself, promoted a narrow path when he said that he is the only way to the Father in John 14:6. For many people in our society today, that is narrow-minded and bigoted, but it's what the Lord, himself, said. Either Jesus is telling the truth or this whole Christian, gospel thing is a farce.

Jesus even warned that some who call him Lord and even do miracles will not necessarily enter the kingdom of heaven. Just because someone sounds wonderful and does amazing things does not qualify them as a godly person. The real question is, "are they following Christ and adhering to the Bible?" Jesus says that to some of those people, he will say, "I never knew you." That statement gives us insight to what really matters to the Lord. It's not all about what you say and ☞ even how much good work you do. **It's really about having a true connection with Jesus** – that you know him and he knows you.

Then Jesus talks about the wise and foolish builders and concludes right where we started. The ☞ wise man is the one who **hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice**. That's the entire premise of this series. If you love the Lord, you will obey his commands.

☞ **Pray Persistently, Practice the Golden Rule, Pass Through the Narrow Gate.**