

SIMPLE FAITH

The Most Powerful of All Four-Letter Words

Matthew 7:6–12



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The Sermon on the Mount overflows with frequently quoted statements that have become familiar mottoes. Most are better known than Ben Franklin's wit and wisdom . . . and they're certainly more penetrating! Stop and consider several of them:

“Let your light shine.”

“Every jot and tittle”

“An eye for an eye . . . a tooth for a tooth”

“Turn the other cheek.”

“They have their reward.”

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“You cannot serve God and mammon.”

“Oh ye of little faith”

“Do not judge lest you be judged.”

In this lesson, we'll examine three other well-known, penetrating statements: “casting pearls before swine,” “ask, seek, and knock,” and a third that's known as the Golden Rule.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Impact of “a Word Fitly Spoken”

A well-timed word packs maximum impact . . . for good or bad. Other words, spoken at just the right (or wrong) moment, can offer soothing healing or deal unrecoverable blows. We can glean examples and insight on our words from both the Old and the New Testaments.



Quotable

*If there is
one place we
have the right
to be bold
before our God,
it is in prayer.*
— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. The Power of Jesus' Penetrating Principles

We have seen that Scripture is full of significant words. Jesus added to the total, yet He has the honor of being the only person to have ever delivered *only* words fitly spoken. He always spoke the right words at the right time. In this section of the sermon, His fitly spoken words dealt with three key pairs that help us understand the importance of communicating well.

- Pearls and Pigs (Matthew 7:6)
- Asking and Receiving (7:7–11)
- Others and Us (7:12)



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

Mange and Filth in the Ancient World

Two of the Bible's most iconic images for insignificant, gratuitous appetites are dogs and pigs. These appear in a negative context virtually every time they receive mention. This might be surprising to us, especially in the case of dogs, which are generally seen as useful or friendly creatures today. However, in the ancient world, wild dogs roamed cities scavenging for food and sometimes lashing out violently at people and other animals. Furthermore, these dirty animals, with nowhere to go and no master to serve, made a nuisance of themselves by barking at all hours. By speaking of dogs in parallel with pigs—unclean animals according to Jewish Law—Jesus intensified His description of those who oppose truth and seek to hurt His followers, making it clearer . . . and more striking.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:6–12 progresses from how we speak (or don't speak) to others to how we speak to God to how we "speak" with our lives. As humans, we understand the power of communication. As believers, we understand the gospel should be at the center of our lives, serving as the lens through which we see the world. We must share the gospel! However, we must also remember that we never speak with only our words. The greatest message we can communicate involves both our words and our deeds—it is *the message of Christlike character*. When we speak like Christ *and* live like Christ, we make the most positive difference we can make in this world. This is the message, the calling, God has for all who profess belief in Christ: be like Him.

In what areas does your character resemble Christ's?



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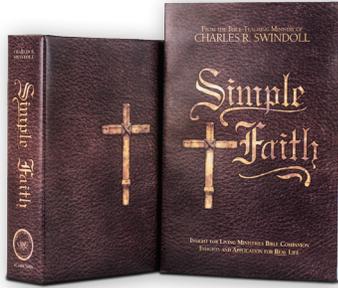
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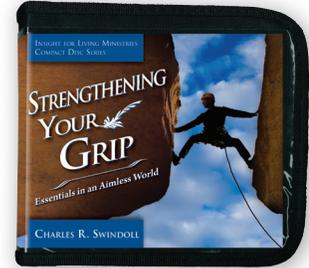
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