



This week, we are continuing our series, "High Definition Living, an inside look at the Sermon on the Mount." We've covered a lot of ground in this series. But we still have a little more to go . . . Our message this week teaches us that how we treat people can define how they view us, and more importantly, how they view God.

- **Who is the one person that you know personally that you admire the most? Why?**
- **What characteristics would you use to describe the people that influence your life?**
- **READ: Matthew 7:1-5**
 - Verse 1 has become one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. **Why do you think people in our culture quote this verse so much?**
 - **Does this passage teach us not to help people recognize and overcome their downfalls?**
 - **How does the comparison between a speck and log/plank help us to evaluate our motivations in helping others?**
- **READ: Matthew 7:6**
 - **What does this verse teach us about how we should approach people who are antagonistic?**
- **READ: Matthew 7:7-11**
 - **What does this passage teach us about how to approach God?**
 - **What does it teach us about an attitude of confidence in approaching God?**
 - **Does this passage teach us that we can "name it and claim it?" Why or why not?**
- **READ: Matthew 7:12**
 - **What does this passage teach us about how we should treat others?**
 - **How do you think living this way would help your ability to influence others?**
- **Everyone needs help along the Journey of faith. Ultimately, our help comes through Jesus. However, we need each other to help understand, grow, and overcome our downfalls.**
 - **Is there something that is keeping you from influencing others that your Growth Group can help you through?**
 - **Are there people behind you in the Journey that you can help? How can Journey Church help you help them?**
 - **Are there people around you that are antagonistic toward your faith? Have you been trying to "hit them hard" with the truth instead of investing in them? How do you need to adjust your strategy to invest in them to break down the barriers?**
 - **How serious are you about praying for disconnected people around you? Do you pray with confidence that God will answer?**



Growth Group Leaders:

As always, I appreciate your efforts in leading our Growth Groups to success at Journey Church. Over the past several weeks, several new families have begun to come more regularly to Journey on Sundays. Be looking for these folks and begin to develop friendships with them. If we want to be able to get them involved in Growth Groups quickly, we need to be forming friendships that will draw them into our Growth Groups.

I have been reading about how healthy small groups develop in churches. The best small groups develop from natural (organic) relationships. When a relationship is established prior to incorporation into the small group, the success of the group is increased. When the relationships that develop are artificial or forced, the success of the group is more difficult. When a church like Journey is small, it is sometimes hard to establish organic relationships based on common interests and/or station in life. However, the advantage to being small is that it is easier to spot fringe people and to take steps to begin developing a relationship.

Be sure to take advantage of the Welcome Time and free moments before and after the service. Try not to use that time to catch-up with your current friends, but to try and establish some new relationships that may forge themselves into growth in our Growth Groups in the coming months.

Thanks again,
and God bless!
Andrew

This week, we are continuing our series, “High Definition Living, an inside look at the Sermon on the Mount.” We are nearing the end of this series. We’ve covered a lot of ground in this series. But we still have a little more to go . . . Our message this week teaches us that how we treat people can define how they view us, and more importantly, how they view God.

As usual, the first two questions will help your group get on-topic. The goal of these questions is to help us think about what makes people attractive and worthy of our respect. As you continue through the discussion, you may want to come back to some of the things said here and ask, “What if your life looked more like _____?” Or, “What if that characteristic you said you admired became a bigger part of your own life?” Try to tie your folks to the people they admire as a challenge to step up and make a difference themselves.

- **Who is the one person that you know personally that you admire the most? Why?**
- **What characteristics would you use to describe the people that influence your life?**
- READ: Matthew 7:1-5
 - Verse 1 has become one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. **Why do you think people in our culture quote this verse so much?**

Be careful where you allow this discussion to go. Ultimately, people don't really want to change. They don't want to know their downfalls. Or, they don't want to yield control of their life and circumstances. If they admit they are wrong or need help, they see it as weakness. If someone else can see their weakness, it is taken as a sign that the observer is better than them. Pride keeps people from accepting helpful advice from others.

- **Does this passage teach us not to help people recognize and overcome their downfalls?**

NO! But, the point of the passage is that we should be extremely careful in how we approach and help others. It can be very easy to try and “help” someone, but to really be trying to tear them down or make ourselves look better.

- **How does the comparison between a speck and log/plank help us to evaluate our motivations in helping others?**

Pride can keep us from seeing our own weaknesses. Our tendency is to look at the faults in others to make ourselves feel better about our own faults. When we approach life in a humble manner, we can see how far short of God's ideal our own lives are, and the faults we see in others start to look small in comparison. This perspective allows us to approach the other person and help them not as a superior, but as a fellow sojourner along the Journey to Christ-likeness.

- READ: Matthew 7:6
 - **What does this verse teach us about how we should approach people who are antagonistic?**

This passage and question are not meant for us to give up on those who are the farthest from God. Instead, it is to encourage us to be wise in the effort and time we put into reaching these people.

Instead of engaging in deep arguments about their doubts, which (usually just turn into Pride trips for those people to demonstrate how much they [think they] know about our faith), we can simply lead upstanding Christ-like lives in front of them. They can try to argue all they want, but a truly transformed life can break down the barriers and lead to opportunities to share truth in a meaningful way down the road. Don't give up, take your time influencing them.

Concentrate your verbal witness on those who are willing to actually listen and possibly respond.

- READ: Matthew 7:7-11
 - **What does this passage teach us about how to approach God?**

You can ask and wait for an answer. You can look around (seek) for where God is working. You can beat down the doors of heaven (knock), pleading for a clear answer. God is not intimidated. He can handle it. In fact, God is pleased to know that we are dependent upon Him. He WILL answer. He WILL do what is best for us. We do not need to worry that our prayers are falling on deaf ears.

- **What does it teach us about an attitude of confidence in approaching God?**

Knowing that God is not intimidated, and knowing that God is pleased when we admit dependence upon Him, and knowing that God will answer in a way that is best for us . . . We can have confidence when we come to God. There is no reason for us to come with a “woe is me” attitude. There is no reason to dwell on “I don't deserve it.” If we have stepped over the line of faith in Jesus, God sees us as His children and is PLEASED to hear from us and to give us the best gifts we could possibly get.

- **Does this passage teach us that we can "name it and claim it?" Why or why not?**

Just because God promises to give us the BEST gifts we could ever receive, we can't simply “name what we want” and expect to get it. God promises to give us the BEST gifts FOR us, not EVERY gift we WANT. We can come to God with confidence, knowing that even if our request is not the best thing for us, God hears us and will answer us with what he KNOWS is best for us. And, when we continue to seek Him, our desires will change to line up with His design and plan.

- READ: Matthew 7:12
 - **What does this passage teach us about how we should treat others?**

This is a good time to bring back the characteristics of the people your group admires. Most people will tend to admire people that do things they like. If we begin to treat people in accordance with the way we would LIKE them to act, we may be surprised to find them starting to actually act that way.

- **How do you think living this way would help your ability to influence others?**

This question is a transition to our challenge questions. Use this question to help start a discussion about how we can adjust our own lifestyles to make a bigger impact for the Kingdom in the lives of those around us.

- Everyone needs help along the Journey of faith. Ultimately, our help comes through Jesus. However, we need each other to help understand, grow, and overcome our downfalls.

The rest of the questions are challenge questions. Depending on how your discussion has progressed up to this point, you can use all the questions, or pick-and-choose depending on where you believe the folks in your group will gain the most impact.

- **Is there something that is keeping you from influencing others that your Growth Group can help you through?**
- **Are there people behind you in the Journey that you can help? How can Journey Church help you help them?**
- **Are there people around you that are antagonistic toward your faith? Have you been trying to "hit them hard" with the truth instead of investing in them? How do you need to adjust your strategy to invest in them to break down the barriers?**
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