



CHARACTER OF GOD // GOD PROVIDES

**Matthew 6:26:** “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.”

The created world is full of wonder. Generation after generation of animals survive in seemingly hostile conditions. From the smallest insects to the largest whales, the surviving and thriving of animals is a testimony to God, their heavenly provider.

God himself points this out to Job. God asked Job: Do you feed the lions? Do you feed the baby ravens? (Job 38:39–41). The point is that God alone provides for his creatures. Humorously, God points to the example of an ostrich mother: she’s so foolish that she lays her eggs on the ground where they could get crushed, and then when they hatch, she is not even a good mother (Job 39:13–18). Despite that, the ostrich survives and puts even the horse and rider to shame when it runs.

When Jesus spoke about God providing for the needs of even the smallest birds, his point was that God will also supply the needs of his children. If God provides for little birds, how much more will God provide for his people who love him? Therefore, Jesus says, do not worry about what you will eat or what you will wear (Mt 6:25). God, your heavenly provider, knows what you need. The same God who provides for the lion, the raven and the ostrich will provide for you.

**APPLICATION** ✚ Jesus talks about God being our heavenly provider to teach us to trust in him. Sometimes we can get caught up in cycles of worry: Will we have enough? What if we don’t? Our thoughts spiral into fear and fretting. Jesus wants to break us out of those unhealthy cycles. He reminds us that God already knows what we need, and God is our loving provider. Worry will not help us. We need to bring our hearts and minds back to God, our heavenly Father.

Judging Others

7:3–5pp // Lk 6:41,42

**7** “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup>“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your

7:1 <sup>1</sup>Lk 6:37;  
Ro 14:4, 10,  
13; 1Co 4:5;  
Jas 4:11, 12  
7:2 <sup>9</sup>Mk 4:24;  
Lk 6:38

7:7 <sup>h</sup>Mt 21:22;  
Mk 11:24;  
Jn 14:13, 14;  
15:7, 16; 16:23,  
24; Jas 1:5–8;  
4:2, 3; 1Jn 3:22;  
5:14, 15

own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

<sup>6</sup>“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

**Ask, Seek, Knock**

7:7–11pp // Lk 11:9–13

<sup>7</sup>“Ask and it will be given to you;<sup>h</sup> seek and you will find; knock and the door

allow it to take our eyes off Jesus. We substitute despair, hopelessness, or fear in place of God and turn to our own efforts at trying to control our environment. This can be a harsh world, and worry can consume us. A way of reversing the trend toward anxiety is to look around at what we have and what God has done and then say, “Thank you.” He is our master and provider, the one who has given us kingdom life, kingdom priorities, and kingdom values, by which we can truly say, “Thank you.”

**7:1–5** True disciples, those who have been impacted by the mercy of God in the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, will exhibit mercy toward one another, not judgment. The responsibility to help each other remove the “speck” of sin must come from

a humble and self-examined life: one that has first removed the “plank” of self-righteous judgment. **7:6** In the ancient world, dogs lived in squalor, running the streets and scavenging for food. The reference here includes all those who are hostile to Jesus’ disciples. The gospel of the kingdom must not be defiled by those who are unreceptive to, or have rejected, Jesus’ invitation.

Pigs, like dogs, were scavenging animals. “Pearls” symbolize the value of the message of the kingdom of heaven. Something so valuable should not be given to those who have no appreciation for such precious truths; their nature is demonstrated by their rejection of that message.

**7:7–8** “Ask” indicates coming to God with humility. “Seek” links praying with action; for instance, praying for a job while at the same time checking out leads. “Knock” includes perseverance, as

will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds;<sup>i</sup> and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup>“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! <sup>12</sup>So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,<sup>j</sup> for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.<sup>k</sup>

### The Narrow and Wide Gates

<sup>13</sup>“Enter through the narrow gate.<sup>l</sup> For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

### True and False Prophets

<sup>15</sup>“Watch out for false prophets.<sup>m</sup> They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.<sup>n</sup> <sup>16</sup>By their fruit you will recognize them.<sup>o</sup> Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?<sup>p</sup> <sup>17</sup>Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree can-

7:8 <sup>l</sup>Pr 8:17;  
Jer 29:12,13  
7:12 <sup>i</sup>Lk 6:31  
<sup>k</sup>Ro 13:8-10;  
Gal 5:14

7:13 <sup>l</sup>Lk 13:24

7:15 <sup>m</sup>Jer 23:16;  
Mt 24:24;  
Mk 13:22;  
Lk 6:26;  
2Pe 2:1; 1Jn 4:1;  
Rev 16:13  
<sup>n</sup>Ac 20:29

7:16 <sup>o</sup>Mt 12:33;  
Lk 6:44  
<sup>p</sup>Jas 3:12

**Mt 7:24** ♦ How can we best put Jesus’ words into practice today?

not bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.<sup>q</sup> <sup>20</sup>Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

### True and False Disciples

<sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.<sup>5</sup> <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day,<sup>t</sup> ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’<sup>u</sup> <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’<sup>v</sup>

### The Wise and Foolish Builders

7:24–27pp // Lk 6:47–49

<sup>24</sup>“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice<sup>w</sup> is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup>But everyone who hears

7:19 <sup>q</sup>Mt 3:10

7:21 <sup>r</sup>Hos 8:2;  
Mt 25:11  
<sup>s</sup>Ro 2:13;  
Jas 1:22

7:22 <sup>t</sup>Mt 10:15  
<sup>u</sup>1Co 13:1-3

7:23 <sup>v</sup>Ps 6:8;  
Mt 25:12, 41;  
Lk 13:25-27

7:24  
<sup>w</sup>Jas 1:22-25

when the disciple faithfully prays for unbelieving family members’ salvation, shares the gospel, and demonstrates gospel values in their life.

**7:9–11** The heavenly Father, who is absolutely trustworthy, will always give to the disciples what they really need.

**7:12** Jesus’ teaching on prayer and the Golden Rule brings to light two significant points about stability in one’s discipleship. First, stability will come as disciples learn how to depend on their heavenly Father. Second, stability will come through a healthy commitment to live for the benefit of others.

♦ **7:1–12** The kind of balance advocated in this passage means to take two seemingly opposite truths and live with them both at the same time, even though we may not be able to understand completely how they fit together. In this section we come across a number of issues that require us to balance two truths. Doing so is demanding, because we are always thinking and weighing our actions and thoughts. We must recognize that in the Christian life, we are always in process. But our pursuit of the goal to understand and apply all of God’s truth is what will help us to stay balanced.

**7:13–14** One can travel comfortably on the roomy road. However, the comfort is deceiving, because it

ends in “destruction,” a common word for eternal punishment. The narrow gate and road are more restrictive because they are limited to Jesus and his manner of discipleship. The way of discipleship stretches throughout one’s years on earth, ultimately leading to eternal life.

**7:15–20** Jesus admonishes his disciples to be “fruit inspectors” of those passing themselves off as prophets. False prophets will lead people away from God or speak prophecies that are not fulfilled.

**7:21–23** False disciples claim prophetic status and point to charismatic activity as a sign of discipleship (v. 22). False disciples gain power “in Jesus’ name,” but their activities are meaningless for their own eternal destiny. The ultimate authenticity of one’s life will be proven in at the end of time. Here Jesus claims the divine right to know the inner recesses of a person’s heart.

**7:24–27** The audience of the Sermon on the Mount would readily understand the surface meaning intended in the parable. But would they see Jesus’ point? Would they reject the shifting sands of the religious leadership and choose instead Jesus’ words as the foundation for their lives? The choice is no less stark in our own day. Wise men and women build their lives on Jesus, regardless of the current cultural or religious values or circumstances.