

Many commands in Scripture come with some form of limitation or condition attached to them. For example: Honor your father and mother is limited and conditioned by the concept of not violating God's commands. This is true even with Christian works, like evangelism.

We could look at a great many NT verses encouraging and instructing us to share the good news with our friends and do what we can to help others get to heaven: evangelism! But the most well-known limitation and condition to that is **Matthew 7:6**.

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces"

We typically look at this verse as a stand alone in this sermon on the mount. Instruction to the disciple to be judicious in the spreading of the gospel, not continually trying to force-feed someone who rejects.

That interpretation certainly is consistent with some of the examples we see in the Bible:

Matt. 10:12-14 – "shake the dust off your feet." And if that is what Jesus is talking about, He is very emphatic and serious about it:

"give what is holy to dogs" – In Leviticus 6 and 7, the people were told to offer parts of an animal as sacrifice to God. The meat then could be eaten by the priests. What was left over could not be eaten by unholy men or given to dogs, *but burned with fire*. Jesus is perhaps referencing this to talk about how holy the gospel is, and it is intended to make holy, not to be trampled under foot by spiritual dogs.

"do not throw your pearls before swine..." – McGarvey: *"If a herd of hungry and ferocious hogs are called up to be fed, and instead of grain you throw before them a basket of pearls, they will not only trample the pearls under feet, but in eagerness for the expected food they may rush upon you, pull you down, and tear you to pieces. Likewise, some men, when you press the claims of truth on their attention, will not only despise the truth, but persecute you for annoying them with it. When such men are known they are to be avoided. Jesus acted on this principle when he refused to answer the Pharisees, and the Apostles did the same in turning to the Gentiles when their Jewish hearers would begin to contradict."*

Of course, if we chose to interpret it in terms of evangelism and teaching others, let's understand that it must be established that they are "dogs" or "swine" before we walk away. The disciples went to and even into the house before determining if they should take back the blessing and shake off the dust.

Now, I am not saying our "evangelism limitation" is wrong in this verse, but there may be a greater general principle that needs to be grasp here. And to take hold of it, we will need our best study friend. The number 1 best way of understanding a verse: CONTEXT -- Let's **Read V1-12**

I. **V1-5 – Being too Harsh unto a Blinded Fault**

- a. First, we know this passage isn't telling us not to judge spirituality of others
 - i. **John 7:24** – Jesus welcomed it, but make it righteous and proper
 - ii. Only saying that we will be judged how we judged
 - iii. And we must begin with self examination, SO we can judge others properly.
- b. *Warning, don't be too harsh in how you judge other people. Don't let your own pride or self-estimation cause you to see others with jaundice eye and attack them unnecessarily*
 1. Good message for someone who won't go to a sinner. Who won't interact or try to influence someone in the world. Already decided: lost cause. Too sinful. Will only do harm to me.
 2. Wait a minute. We have to interact with the sinful to shine the light of truth in their lives. Maybe time to self-examine and qualify more people for truth!

II. **V6 – Being too Lenient unto Personal Damage**

- a. Maybe, in the flow of Jesus' sermon, this is talking about *not being selective enough* in who we spend our time with and remain close to. (Too Accepting)
- b. Some people will spend their time with non-Christians, have best friends, date, go places with them... If you ask, "why are you spending so much time with someone who won't honor God." They may say, "well, I am being a good influence and trying to teach them."
 - i. There is a time for that... but there is a time for this verse too!
 - ii. **I Co. 15:33** -- "Bad companions corrupt good morals" -- This could be exactly what Jesus was talking about when He said, "turn and tear you to pieces!"
- c. **II Cor. 6:14-17** – We can't openly and without judgment say, "I'll spend my time with non-believers and eventually convert them." Not with this passage in tow. They can influence you and you have no fellowship with their choices. So, there comes a point when you must "come out and be separate."
- d. When is that point? Do we just cut away all who aren't Christians? Of course not. See v.1-5, we want to see their situation clearly and try to assist them. But, being too lenient and not judicious with our time can be devastating. (Can show acceptance and be enabler)
- e. Jesus spent time with people and then called them like he say them: "DOGS" "PIGS" "FOXES" "WOLVES" –
- f. Now again, this can apply to evangelism with people in the world... BUT...
- g. When is the last time you looked at someone in your life, with clear sight and said, "This person is a spiritual pig and they aren't changing, not by my influence, I need to step out of the pen unless they crush, not just this Pearl (bible), but this one (my spirit)

Now that can be a VERY tough decision. Both of those points: being less harsh and then being harsh enough when it comes to dealing with others in your life. And each circumstance will stand alone. But maybe that is what these last few verses of the section are about!!!! How to get through it!

V7-11 – Prayer for Judgment with regard to Relationship with Others

- a. No surprises concerning the general admonition of this section: PRAY. Are there things you don't have, ASK. Things you yearn to find, SEEK. Somewhere you want to be: KNOCK!
 - a. But how generic is this? My kids want a pool. Should I tell them to pray for it?
 - b. That would be a "good gift" to them, and God gives good gifts to His children!!!
- b. Is the context about interaction with other people? How should I judge a person?
 - a. Should I see them from a different light and be more optimistic and help them?
 - b. Is it time to separate from them to send them a message and for my own good?
- c. These are things we must trust in God's ability to answer! These are the things we should be praying about: RELATIONSHIP! Interaction. Being a Light. Not being darkened!
- d. **Ja.1:5-8** – "God can't help me decide who to be around and how to talk to them!" What do you mean by that? Did not God make us and our neighbor and influence us w His choices?

V12 – Maybe this is God's first answer to those who seek how to interact and deal with others

- a. Do as you would want done to you
 - i. If you were lost, what would you want done to you?
 - ii. If you were caught in sin, what would you want done for you?
 - iii. If you were living in sin, what would wake you up? (saints backing away?)
- b. The answer to "how do I deal with this person" is found (THROUGH PRAYER) and introspection concerning what has brought you to the place of faith you are at now.

Conclusion: Lean on God. Bring sheep into the fold. Keep wolves from taking our own. These are all addressed in this section and are of utmost importance. It is scary out there. There are lions, foxes, wolves, dogs and pigs ... READ VERSE 6. Hold what you have dear, your soul and the Word. And lean on the people who will build you up, not tear you down ... or to pieces.