



## The Domino Effect

Get Used To Different | Week 21 | Matthew 6:33

### INTRODUCTION

There is a principle that applies to business, physics, and life—it’s called “The Domino Effect.” This principle describes how one event can set off a chain reaction of related events. A great example of this is the atomic bomb, where one atom splitting causes an unstoppable chain reaction. The same concept applies spiritually. In The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes a spiritual domino effect that can transform our lives if we start with the right "first domino." Many people place financial success, personal happiness, fame, or power as their first priority, but Jesus tells us that the first domino should be this: *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:33).

### NOTES

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### KEY POINTS

#### 1. You Must Seek the Ruler of the Kingdom

Jesus begins by saying, “Seek first”—a continuous, daily action. Seeking God's kingdom and righteousness should shape every decision: where we work, how we spend our money, whom we marry, and how we live. But before we can seek the kingdom, we must first seek the King. This happens through daily time in God's Word, prayer, and worship. Many people give Jesus a place or even prominence in their lives, but He desires preeminence—first place in everything. If we make Jesus our first priority, the domino effect will change every area of our lives.

#### 2. You Must Surrender to the Rule of the Kingdom

Seeking first the kingdom means surrendering to God's rule. In every decision, we are either following our desires or obeying God. If we place ourselves on the throne of our hearts instead of Jesus, we are pushing over the wrong domino. Many people chase after what they want in life, but when we align our will with God's, He provides more than we could imagine. True success is not settling for what is "good" but pursuing what is best—God's plan for our lives.



# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## **The Domino Effect**

*Get Used To Different | Week 21 | Matthew 6:33*

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are some “first dominos” that people often prioritize instead of seeking God's kingdom?
2. How can you practically seek Jesus before anything else in your daily routine?
3. In what ways have you seen the “domino effect” of seeking God first play out in your life or the lives of others?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Don't Rush To Judgment

Get Used To Different | Week 22 | Matthew 7:1-6

### INTRODUCTION

If we are truly going to follow Jesus, we must accept that we will be different from the world. Nowhere is that more evident than in Matthew 7, where we encounter one of the most misunderstood, misused, and misapplied verses in the Bible: *“Judge not, that you be not judged”* (Matthew 7:1). This verse has become a cultural slogan, often quoted by people who reject or ridicule the Bible. Even among Christians, the idea that judging is wrong has gained traction, particularly among younger believers. However, Jesus' teaching is not about avoiding judgment altogether but about judging rightly. His message is simple: make sure your heart is right before you call out what is wrong.

### KEY POINTS

#### 1. We Are to Judge Cautiously

Jesus begins with a clear warning: *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”* The word “judge” has two meanings in the New Testament. One refers to discernment, such as choosing ripe fruit. The other refers to condemning others unfairly or with a spirit of superiority. Jesus warns against the latter. We should never judge motives because only God knows a person's heart. Likewise, we should never judge appearance based on skin color, clothing, or possessions. Jesus continues, *“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”* (Matthew 7:2).

Before forming an opinion about someone, we should ask if we would want to be judged in the same way. Judgment should be based on facts, not assumptions. At the same time, judgment is right when done correctly. Calling out sin is not being judgmental; it is standing on God's truth. Saying that lying, adultery, and gossip are wrong is not personal judgment—it is agreeing with God's Word. However, we must ensure that we are not being hypocritical in our own lives.

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## Don't Rush To Judgment

Get Used To Different | Week 22 | Matthew 7:1-6

### 2. We Are to Judge Conscientiously

Jesus asks two questions to help us judge rightly: *“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?”* (Matthew 7:3). The irony is that a splinter and a plank are made of the same material. Often, the very things we criticize in others are the same struggles we have. This is known as the Fundamental Attribution Error—judging others’ actions based on their character while excusing our own actions based on circumstances. If someone is late, we assume they are irresponsible, but if we are late, we blame traffic.

Jesus warns that we naturally magnify others’ faults while minimizing our own. Some people are “speck inspectors,” quick to find flaws in others while ignoring their own sins. The solution is to judge yourself first. Before pointing out someone else’s sin, we must examine our own hearts and motives. Jesus does not forbid judgment, but He tells us to judge correctly: *“Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly”* (John 7:24).

### 3. We Are to Judge Compassionately

Jesus concludes, *“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”* (Matthew 7:5). Notice the words “first” and “then.” Jesus is not saying we should never call out sin. Rather, He is saying we must deal with our own sin first. Once we do, we can help others with humility and compassion.

A spiritual person judges with love, not condemnation. Paul says, *“The spiritual person judges all things...”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Right judgment is based on God’s Word and is always factual, loving, and redemptive. We should respect others even if we disagree, discern right from wrong using God’s Word, and take responsibility to lovingly guide others toward truth.

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**Don't Rush To Judgment**

*Get Used To Different | Week 22 | Matthew 7:1-6*

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Why do people misunderstand Jesus' command, "Judge not, that you be not judged"?
2. How can we balance standing for truth while avoiding a judgmental attitude?
3. What are some ways we can ensure we are judging ourselves before judging others?

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**Keep On Keeping On**

*Get Used To Different | Week 23 | Matthew 7:7-11*

**INTRODUCTION**

**NOTES**

There was a five-year-old girl watching her mother apply cold cream to her face. Curious, she asked, “Mother, why do you do that?” The mother replied, “To make myself beautiful.” Moments later, when the mother wiped the cream off, the girl exclaimed, “What’s the matter? Giving up already?” Just like that little girl’s humorous observation, we often approach prayer with the same mindset—giving up too soon. Have you ever felt like giving up on God? Have you ever prayed and felt like your prayers made no difference? In this message, we’re going to see Jesus give an encouraging, definitive teaching on prayer, reminding us that if we belong to God’s family, He hears and answers our prayers. The key is perseverance. Never give up on the God who will never give up on you. Jesus teaches us four key principles about prayer.

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**KEY POINTS**

**1. There Is A Process To Abide By In Prayer**

Jesus commands us to pray: *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”* (Matthew 7:7). Prayer is not just a request; it’s a requirement. If we don’t pray, we sin—not only against God but also against others who depend on our prayers and against ourselves by missing out on blessings.

The Bible warns about the sin of omission: *“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them”* (James 4:17). Failing to pray is failing to obey. Prayer is not just about receiving; it is about aligning ourselves with God’s will.

**2. There Is A Persistence To Applying Prayer**

Jesus emphasizes continual prayer when He says to ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, and knock and keep on knocking. Each of these verbs requires increasing intensity. Asking expresses dependence—recognizing our need for God. Seeking expresses desire—actively looking for God’s will. Knocking expresses determination—persisting until God opens the right doors.





**Keep On Keeping On**

*Get Used To Different | Week 23 | Matthew 7:7-11*

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Have you ever felt like giving up on prayer? What kept you going?
2. How does understanding persistence in prayer change the way you approach your prayer life?
3. Can you recall a time when God answered your prayer differently than expected? How did it impact your faith?

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**How Do You Get To Heaven?**

*Get Used To Different | Week 24 | Matthew 7:13-14*

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are some ways we can stay on the narrow path in our daily lives?
2. How can we be sure our faith is real and not just going through the motions?
3. What makes it hard for people to follow Jesus, and how can we help them?

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