

*Journeying through the scriptures in our Daily Bible Reading at Prevailing Word Church, we have come across some surprising, if not troubling, passages. From time to time, we are going to attempt to answer some of the questions that might arise from these verses. God bless you as you pursue a deeper understanding of God's Word!*

## **“Evil” Gets a New Look**

Question: Why did Jesus call His audience “evil”?

Reading through the book of Matthew, we come across chapter 7, verse 11, where Jesus asks His disciples and the crowd who had gathered to hear Him teach, *“If ye then, being **evil**, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”*. While it is comforting to know that we have a good and caring Heavenly Father who hears us when we pray and encourages us to ask Him for what we need, it could be a bit offensive for His Son, His very own earthly expression, to call us “evil.”

It is helpful to understand how Jesus is using “evil” in the context of this verse if we look up the original Greek meaning of the word. However, let's say we don't have a Greek concordance handy. One thing we learned at Prevailing Word Church is to let the Bible interpret itself – many scriptures can be understood and explained by reading a chapter or so before and/or after the verse in question. In fact, we see the word “evil” in chapter 6 of Matthew. Jesus is teaching His well-known Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7. He is primarily instructing us to focus on the eternal Kingdom of God, His righteousness and His character in choosing how we live our lives and treat other people. He is calling us away from being consumed with this physical world and our material needs or desires. He is calling us toward entering into His kingdom through the narrow gate. He wants to be our Provider and Source for everything, including our earthly needs. This

point is summed up in Matthew 6:33-34, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the **evil** thereof.”* (Because we do have access to a Greek Bible concordance, we should note here that this word “evil” is a different Greek term; however, it is not necessary to know that information because this definition is related to the overall point Jesus is making in Matthew 7:11.). Here, Jesus is stating that each day produces its own set of opportunities to worry about material things, and He describes this kind of difficulty as “evil.”

We also see the word “evil” in Matthew 6:13 at the end of the Lord’s Prayer teaching: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from **evil**: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* Again, this scripture refers to relying on the Lord for everything we lack versus following the temptations and ways of this world.

Putting it all together, Jesus is defining evil from a different perspective. Yes, it still means sin at various levels, abuse, corruption, and whatever else is usually described as being evil. By comparing this earth and His Kingdom, Jesus is demonstrating that evil can also mean natural, materialistic, without godly influence – specifically, in Matthew 7:11, human nature that is not changed by His nature. In essence, Jesus is comparing our Supernatural, Good, and All-Sufficient Heavenly Father with us human beings in our natural, not-so-good, and not all-sufficient state. That is, even we know how to give good gifts to our children, so how much more does He?