

## JUDGING OTHERS

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### MATTHEW 7:1-6

In Chapter 6:19-24, Jesus told us to store up treasures in heaven rather than here on earth. In 6:25-34 He told us that worrying is a sin—especially so when our worries are because of our earthly treasures.

Now in chapter 7 Jesus turns to judging others (read text). Verses 1 & 2 are some of the most misunderstood and misused scriptures in the New Testament. We've all heard someone say, "You can't judge me. Jesus said so!" That's not what Jesus is saying at all.

We go through life making judgments. In fact, you are judging this sermon right now. And you should be. Is it the truth? Is it what Jesus is teaching?

The Sermon on the Mount is itself a judgment of the religious leaders of Jesus' day—the scribes and Pharisees. Those religious leaders were self-righteous and oppressively judgmental.

They looked down on everyone who wasn't like them. They were unmerciful, unforgiving, unkind, censorious, and totally lacking in compassion and grace. They were opposite everything Jesus Christ was.

In fact, the entire Sermon shows the complete distinction between a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ and all the false teaching in the world.

We Christians are supposed to judge between truth and falsehood, between the internal and the external, and between true righteousness and false righteousness.

Every message you hear from the pulpit, every Sunday School lesson, every TV and radio preacher you tune in to, is to be judged for the soundness of its biblical doctrine.

We are judges and we continually judge others. Jesus is warning about self-righteous, hasty, prejudiced and unwarranted condemnations based upon human understanding and standards.

## 1. Don't play God.

Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."

I've noticed that when people decide to take up reforming, they first find something that won't interfere with their style of living. Then, brother, can they reform!

Here's what we do: we overlook our own failures even as we criticize someone else's. Other people's sins are always worse than our own. It is hypocritical to judge others without looking at the sin in our own lives.

We judge without mercy because someone may not behave the way we think they should, or because we believe their motives are wrong. We are passing judgment that only God is qualified to make.

You've heard the term absolute truth. That's an oxymoron—something is either true or it isn't. Jesus Christ is the truth. The Bible is the truth. There is truth in the world.

Yet, we hear, "What's right for you may not be right for me." "Your religion is okay for you, but I don't need it." Some even believe that all religions are equal and all lead to the same place. Even some Christians have bought into this falsehood.

Truth rejecters love to say, "You can't judge me!" Well, they're wrong. Jesus does not expect us to turn a blind eye to people's faults—or to refuse to discern between truth and error and good and evil.

We constantly judge others—whether someone is a Christian or not. If not, we share Jesus with him. If someone claims to be a Christian, we watch to see whether or not they are living out their faith.

Every moral and ethical decision requires judgment of some kind. It's right that we speak out against that which is immoral or unjust or destructive.

But our attitude in judging others is important. Some of us live to condemn other people. We seem carry around a harsh spirit.

My granddad was a harsh man. I really don't think he liked anyone, including his family. He was extremely opinionated and judgmental about people. He had an acid tongue and was quick to use it.

Don't judge harshly. We are Christians. Any judgment of others is to be in love and reconciliation. We must remember very one of us is capable of the very sins we so harshly condemn. Some of us seem to be natural born fault finders. After a sermon on spiritual gifts a lady told her pastor, "I have the gift of criticism." He said, "Do you remember what the man with one talent did?" "He buried it," she responded. He said, "Go and do likewise."

If you are always finding fault, you need to bury it. There's no such thing as a 'natural born' fault finder. Fault finders are always negative. They seem to take pleasure in criticizing others. And get this—they especially enjoy pointing those wrongs out to others.

Some of us have a superior attitude. “You would never catch me doing that (drinking, immorality, wrong behavior, etc.).” Or, especially in regards to ministry, “I could do it better.” When we do this we are setting ourselves up as better.

The person with a superior attitude is in effect saying, “You are answerable to me.” But that’s not true, is it! Since when have you been other people’s lord and judge?

## 2. You don’t know all the facts.

Matthew 7:2, “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

(GF 1061) A traveling salesman met an attractive young clerk in a country store and began dating her. He became very serious, but before proposing marriage he decided to check out her reputation. He ran credit rating on her and hired a PI to track down any information he could. After a week the detective reported, “Excellent reputation, nothing bad in her past, gentle, even tempered, excellent health, widely respected in the community and by her fellow employees.” “The only thing puzzling about her character,” the report continued, “is that recently she has been seen publicly with a traveling salesman of very questionable reputation.”

Jesus simply says, “In the same way you judge others, you will be judged.” The question here is, and the point, are you qualified to judge your fellow humans? Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful.” Merciful means to get into someone’s skin.

Do you know their heart? Have you walked in their shoes? Do you know where they’re coming from? The person brought up in a good Christian home doesn’t have a clue about the temptations of someone brought up in the slums or ghettos.

When we think we are wise enough to judge others, then we are claiming knowledge that we don’t have. We are claiming to have all the knowledge necessary about the circumstance. To illustrate His point, Jesus paints a ludicrous word picture (read vv. 3-5)

### (1) The plank in the eye.

Jesus had a sense of humor. His listeners laughed at this one. The first thing we see is the plank in the eye of the faultfinder. Imagine this big plank or beam protruding out of the eyes. You would be absolutely blinded, unable to discern and make judgments.

### (2) Sawdust in the eye.

In the other part of the picture, instead of a plank, there is a speck of sawdust in the eye. It is completely opposite of the one with the plank. It’s just a speck, but it still hurts and impacts vision.

The person with the plank is trying to remove the sawdust from the other. He's trying to do eye surgery while totally blinded by the plank. What's Jesus' point?

### (3) A hypocritical attitude.

While visiting a neighbor, five-year-old Andrew pulled out his kindergarten class picture and immediately began describing each classmate. "This is Robert; he hits everyone. This is Stephen. He never listens to the teacher. This is Mark. He chases us and is very noisy." Pointing to his own picture, Andrew commented, "And this is me. I'm just sitting here minding my own business."

His point is hypocrisy (v. 5). Jesus doesn't forbid us from judging others. Notice, first, get the plank out of your eye. It's hypocritical to judge others when there is sin in our lives.

Both the sawdust and the plank represent sin. The first thing we need to admit to ourselves is that we are sinners. We can be extremely judgmental about the sins of others, while overlooking our own. Here's an example I've seen more than once:

Suppose a woman marries the wrong man while she is young. The marriage ends in divorce. She marries again. The couple is dedicated to serving the Lord, and He blesses this second marriage giving her and her husband opportunities for service through their church.

But there's a busybody who finds out about the divorce—and though it happened long in the past, was confessed and forgiven by God—it's not long before the busybody is sharing his discovery.

"Did you know?" "What kind of bad example are we setting by letting them teach (or whatever)." You can hear the tone of superiority in the one who is spreading the story.

That's the plank in the eye. Yes, the divorce was a failure, but it was only a speck of sawdust, long since removed, compared to gossiping about it; that was a plank in the eye.

Do you know all the circumstances? Do you know what's going on in that person's life? The fact is that too often we're not genuinely interested in helping the other person, but in condemning them.

When you have removed the plank in your eye, then, very humbly with the knowledge that you, too, are a sinner, you may help your brother or sister remove the speck of sawdust from their eye.

A brother or sister may have fallen into some sin of the flesh, an immorality, or some little error here and there. It is nothing compared to your hypocrisy that sees only their sins, but not yours. You've got to start with your own self, your attitude, and admit to yourself the truth about yourself. I would suggest you read 1 Cor. 13 every day to see if you really have that kind of attitude toward people.

### 3. Learn spiritual discernment.

Matthew 7:6, “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.”

Jesus now moves on to v. 6 which very plainly points out that we are to use spiritual discernment and judgment. Our Lord tells us not to be hypocritical. But we are to be discriminating. Both dogs and pigs in ancient Israel often ran wild. Dogs were the scavengers of the community, not domesticated as they are today.

In the Jewish mind pigs stood for all that was unclean. So it is fascinating that our Lord uses these terms to describe certain people. What’s He talking about?

To be honest, I’m not completely sure. But His whole sermon seems to be telling us to not be like the Pharisees. These religious people were very hypocritical and judgmental.

There comes a point where it becomes apparent that further sharing of the Gospel with some people is useless—supported by other N.T. passages.

We must use our powers of spiritual discernment in making that kind of decision. Here’s what I think...

#### (1) The truths of God’s Word are our treasures.

Not only are they our treasures, but they are not for everyone. The Apostle Paul said that “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

#### (2) We must use spiritual judgment and discrimination.

Jesus is telling us not to waste time on the hardened. It is an irresponsible use of time and effort to continue to hammer on a door that is firmly closed. We are not to be storm troopers for the kingdom of God.

We are to be equipped with the most sensitive radar to see where the Spirit of God is already preparing the way. Then we should move in and join Him in that work.

### Application:

Remember, you are a sinner, saved by God’s grace. He loves you and forgives you. He expects you to do the same with others. Exercise great care in your judgments. When you are judging be aware of your weaknesses and use good spiritual discernment in understanding others.