
STOP CRITICIZING/JUDGING

Matthew 7 verse 1-6 (ESV)

[1] “Judge not, that you be not judged.

[2] For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

[3] Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

[4] Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?

[5] You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

[6] “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

BIG IDEA:

We have a tendency in life, as believers, as human beings, to see the fault in everyone else and fail to see the faults in our own lives...

We must be harsher on ourselves than we are on others. Let us make sure our consciences are clear before we judge our brothers and sisters.

Are you more critical of others than you are of yourself?

INTRODUCTION

If Christians were to pick their favorite verse in the Bible, it would probably be John 3:16:

If the world were to pick its favorite verse, it would probably be this verse right here in **Matthew 7:1: “Do not judge.”**

Not many people know their Bibles, but it seems everyone knows the verse: “Do not judge.” They may not even know where it is found, they couldn’t tell you the chapter and verse, but they still know it and quote it frequently.

The problem is they don’t know it in its context. Never has a passage of Scripture been so utterly abused, misunderstood and misapplied as this one.

Non-Christians (and not a few misguided believers as well) use this text to denounce any and all who venture to criticize or expose the sins, shortcomings, or doctrinal deviations of others.

One dare not speak ill of *homosexuality, adultery, gossip, cheating on your income tax, fornication, abortion, non-Christian religions, humanism, etc.* without incurring the wrath of multitudes who are convinced that Jesus, whom they despise and reject(!), said that ***we shouldn't judge one another!***

A common saying we often hear is, “**Don't judge me.**”

TRANSITION

Jesus has made it very clear throughout this sermon that there is a big difference between true righteousness from the heart and self righteousness as demonstrated by the Scribes and Pharisees.

True righteousness is demonstrated in the character qualities described in **the Beatitudes**: *poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart and true peacemakers.*

Those who demonstrate these qualities are hated by the unrighteous world and suffer persecution for their righteousness.

This was seen throughout Matthew 5 as Jesus pointed out the Scripture twisting of the Scribes & Pharisees. They concentrated on tradition and disregarded the spirit of the Scriptures.

In Matthew 15:6 Jesus rebukes them strongly for this saying, “So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.” For many of the Jews the traditions had actually replaced the authority of the Scriptures themselves.

The twisted self righteousness of the Pharisees was also seen throughout Matthew 6. In that chapter Jesus contrasted the proper practice of giving alms, praying and fasting with the attention drawing methods of these self righteous religious leaders.

They were more interested in the praise of people than the praise of God.

The opposite of God's desire for us to be humble and seek His praise.

In Matthew 6 Jesus also promotes true righteousness with His command for us to not store up treasures on earth but instead to store up treasures in heaven.

Many of the Scribes and Pharisees claimed to be servants of God, but their hearts were set on the things of this earth and storing up its treasures.

They thought they could serve both God and the things of this world, but as Jesus said so plainly and forcefully, “you cannot serve God and mammon.”

If your pursuit in life is to gain what the world has to offer, then that is where your heart will be and you will serve them for they will be your master.

If you value the things of God, then your heart will be.

You will serve the Lord, for He will be your master, and the things of this world will be inconsequential to you.

Like the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4, you will be content regardless of the circumstances of your life whether you have little or much. You will find that anxiety will not be a mark of your life.

When you know and trust God, you can relax in His care for you with confidence that He will provide for your needs. Your goal is to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

This background is important because it is the context for our passage this evening. Too often passages from the Sermon on the Mount are taken out of context, misinterpreted and used to support error.

Our passage this evening is another case of that. If we do not understand the context then we will be in grave danger of misunderstanding what our Lord is teaching us here.

Jesus is warning us to be fair and humble when we make our evaluations. Human beings are naturally prone to focus on the failings of others and ignore their own terrible sins.

This passage is a passage about our evaluation of other people. Especially with regard to their faults.

How do we relate to people who are at fault?

The Lord Jesus is speaking of that issue in this passage. But one thing that we learn here is the way that we think and speak about our neighbor reveals much about our own experience of God's grace.

If we are quick to condemn, then perhaps we have not been refreshed ourselves by the freedom of God's mercy to us.

If we are not ready to be merciful, then perhaps, we ourselves have not known, the mercy and love of God shed abroad in our own heart.

So even as we learn here, Christ's directives about how we ought to speak and correct those who are at fault, we have an opportunity, even in studying that issue to learn a little about our heart and to learn if we have grasped God's grace in the way we ought to grasp it.

I. What does Jesus mean by "Do not judge"?

[1] "Judge not, that you be not judged.

Since this verse is so often used out of context, we should begin by answering the question *What does Jesus mean when he says, "Judge not"?*

A. Jesus does not prohibit making moral judgments.

First of all, when Jesus says, "*Judge not*" he does not prohibit making moral judgments, that is, *discerning what is right or wrong according to God's Word.*

We are to discern who is following Christ and who is not. We are to discern what is sinful and what is not.

We know this because in other places the Bible actually requires us to make moral judgments. In fact later on in this very same chapter Jesus will tell us to make moral judgments – twice: in **verse 6** when he tells us not to cast our pearls before pigs, and then again in **verses 15-20** when he tells us to watch out for false prophets.

We would not be able to obey either of these commands unless we were allowed to make moral judgments as to what is right and what is wrong.

In **John 7:24** Jesus says, “*Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.*”

Ephesians 5:11 says, “*Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*”

As Christians we are required to make moral judgments, correctly discerning what is right and what is wrong **according to God’s Word**.

Ironically, although this is not what Jesus means by this verse, this is the way most people who quote the verse interpret it.

They think Jesus is saying you can’t call sin “sin,” that you can’t comment on moral behavior, that you can’t judge someone else’s actions as wrong.

The problem is if you can’t judge something to be wrong, then you can’t judge it to be right either.

And so the same people who say, “*Judge not*” when we make the moral judgment that a certain action is wrong, are also judging when they make the moral judgment that a certain action is right.

When Jesus says, “*Judge not*” he does not prohibit making moral judgments. We must all make decisions concerning what is right and what is wrong. *So what does Jesus forbid here?*

B. He does forbid a critical, judgmental spirit.

What Jesus prevents is a critical, judgmental spirit. He is not talking about evaluating behavior but rather condemning people, looking down on other people.

We find a good parallel to this verse in **Romans 14:10** where Paul says: “Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”

So Jesus in this verse does not prohibit us from making moral judgments. We must discern right from wrong. We must teach God’s commandments. We must proclaim the truth.

But he does forbid you from having a critical, judgmental spirit that exalts yourself while looking down on others. That’s the problem Jesus tackles here, and it’s a big problem that we all must address.

The Lord Jesus reminds us in our evaluation of others, in our assessment of others, we must always be on guard against evaluating too harshly or too severely. We also must be careful about judging or evaluating rashly.

And we can be hasty in making an assessment of a person, either by making an assessment of them that is not based on reality. It has no grounds. As when we make a judgment of a person that we don't know.

We might judge a person on the basis of second or third or fourth hand information and that is a impulsive judgment because we don't know that person or the circumstances of that person.

A reckless judgment also might mean a judgment that was born out of a grudge or out of a disagreement.

II. Why shouldn't you judge others? (verses 1-5)

So we now know what Jesus means when he says, "*Judge not*" He is forbidding a critical, judgmental spirit that looks down on other people.

Next, Jesus goes on to tell us why you shouldn't judge others. And he gives us *four reasons in these verses*.

A. You're not the judge. (1)

The first reason is a real simple one. **You're not the judge.** Look at verse one again: *[1] "Judge not, that you be not judged.*

Guess what, if you are going to be judged yourself, then that means you are not the judge.

Unfortunately, some people like to set themselves up as **judge, jury and executioner**. They have a harsh, critical spirit. They are always looking at other people's faults. They like to play the role of judge.

But there's a reason God is the judge and you're not. You're not qualified.

- You don't know the other person's history or background.
- You don't know the extenuating circumstances.
- You don't know how far they've come.
- Most of all you don't know the other person's motives.

You can see their actions, but you can't see their heart.

The Lord Jesus wants to make it clear that we may not set ourselves up as Lord and judge over any of His people. We are simply brothers and sisters in Christ. And therefore, we don't make the rules.

We may have opinions, which are our opinions, but we may not impose them as law on the rest of the Lord's people.

In our evaluation, we must always evaluate in light of His authority, the authority of the Scripture in this case, and not on the basis of our opinions.

Paul writes in **Romans 14:4** “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.”

What is Paul saying here? You’re not the judge! You are not qualified to be the judge. Only God can judge perfectly.

Read **James 4:11-12**

James says there is only one Lawgiver and Judge, and it’s not you!

James says when you speak against your brother you are not only judging your brother, you are also judging the law.

Do you know why that is? It’s because the law tells you to love your neighbor as yourself, and when you speak against your neighbor, you are no longer loving them but judging them.

When you set yourself up as judge, you make yourself out to be better than other people, and there’s two problems with that.

First of all, you’re not, and secondly you are failing to love your neighbor as yourself. **You cannot love and judge at the same time.**

Why shouldn’t you judge others?

The first reason Jesus gives us is because you’re not the judge.

B. God will judge you the same way you judge others. (2)

The second reason is this. Because God will judge you the same way you judge others.

[2] For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

God will judge you the same way you judge others.

- Are you severe and overbearing toward others? Then God will judge you severely.
 - Are you loving and merciful toward others? Do you have a generous spirit, overlooking the faults of others? Then God will show you mercy.
- God will treat you as you have treated others.

He is reminding us that in our evaluation of others, we must remember that there is a coming day of judgment in which God will evaluate us and our charity in judging others will reflect whether we have experienced the charity of God towards us in judgment.

If God has forgiven us much, we will be slow to rebuke and patient when wrong.

But if we ourselves have not experienced the mercy of God, we may find ourselves trying to justify ourselves by being critical of others. And the Lord Jesus is warning against that.

Jesus has already taught this principle several times in the Sermon on the Mount. Right at the beginning in the Beatitudes Jesus taught: *“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.”* (Matthew 5:7) And then again in the Lord’s Prayer: *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”* (Matthew 6:12)

We find this same principle in other parts of Scripture as well.

Paul writes in **Romans 2:1**

If you criticize someone else for doing something and you do it yourself, you prove you know right from wrong because you have seen the wrong in someone else.

In reality this passage proves once again that true righteousness comes from God, because no one can live according to Jesus’ injunction here apart from God, and apart from God’s grace & mercy we all stand condemned by our condemnation of others.

Self righteousness condemns itself in its judgment of others. True righteousness does not neglect the standard of holiness, but it seeks it while relying on God’s grace and mercy for themselves and others. When that standard is not upheld they mourn over the sin and offer mercy.

In other words Jesus says you may expect to receive judgment on the same basis as you give it.

We read in **James 2:12-13**

Once again God urges us to be merciful to others rather than have a strict or critical spirit.

This is the second reason Jesus gives why you shouldn’t judge. Because God will judge you the same way you judge others.

C. You should judge yourself first. (3-5)

The third reason why you shouldn’t judge others is this. **You should judge yourself first.**

[3] Why do you see the *speck* that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the *log* that is in **your own eye**?

[4] Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the *log* in **your own eye**?

[5] You *hypocrite*, first take the *log* out of **your own eye**, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

The emphasis in these verses is on those two little words **“your own.”** Three times in three verses Jesus speaks about **“your own eye.”**

We are very good at judging others but not so good at judging ourselves.

The Lord Jesus knows that our tendency is to think other peoples' faults are big. And ours are just little mistakes. Other peoples' faults, especially when they have been directed at us, are horrible. But our faults, oh, they are just little moral glitches once in a while.

If you are quick to find fault in others, Jesus asks you: **"Are you just as quick to find fault in yourself?"**

Do you realize that your very quickness to find fault in others is in itself a great fault?"

The aim of this passage is to overcome the blindness in our pride that keeps us from being lovingly helpful to our brothers. That is the point of the passage.

This passage is about how to become helpful, how to become loving, how to become effective eye doctors who help other people see and live and enjoy God's will for their lives.

1) You know your own sins better than anyone else's. (3)

Jesus gives us three reasons in this illustration why you should judge yourself first.

The first reason is this: **You know your own sins better than anyone else's.** Look at verse 3 again: *Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*

The **"log"** in this verse refers to a large piece of wood.

So this **log** in your eye is not just a two by four, but rather a large beam maybe several feet wide and forty feet long.

Jesus says you've got this huge beam coming out of your own eye, and you're looking at the speck in your brother's eye? *Are you crazy or something?*

And the reason Jesus pictures your sins as the **log**, and your brother's sins as a **speck** is because you know your sins so much better than theirs.

Whatever sin you may see in someone else, you know your own sins so much better. You only know what you see of your brother, but you know your own long history, your own sinful words and actions, your own sinful thoughts.

Your sins are a log to you, but your brother or sister's sins are only a speck.

When you ignore your own sins and you concentrate on the sins of others, you will develop the harsh, critical, judgmental spirit that Jesus forbids in this passage.

But when you are truly conscious of your own sins before God, you will grow to be far more generous and loving towards other people and their sins.

We have a natural tendency to magnify the faults of others and to minimize our own faults.

The context here indicates that the log size sin is that of being self righteous.

- It is self righteousness that Jesus has been speaking against all through the sermon.
- It is self righteousness that is so blind to its own sinfulness.
- It is self righteousness that by its very nature seeks to justify itself while condemning others.

Self-righteousness is a sin of blindness, or of grossly distorted vision, because it looks directly at its own sin and still imagines it sees only righteousness.

**Root and tear out the poisonous weed of self-righteousness, and show me my utter nothingness.
#VOV**

Jesus says you should judge yourself first. Why? First of all, because you know your own sins better than anyone else's.

2) It's hypocritical to care about others' sins more than your own. (4)

The second reason Jesus gives is this. Why should you judge yourself first? Because it's hypocritical to care about others' sins more than your own.

Look at verse 4: Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?

It's hypocritical to care about others' sins more than your own.

It's hypocritical because you are appearing to care about the other person when you really don't.

Think about it. Why do you care so much about the other person's sin?

Is it because you care about God and his glory?

Or is it because it makes you look so much better? The real reason we put other people down is because we are trying to lift ourselves up.

As Jonathan Edwards wrote: "Proud people tend to speak of others' sins."

The Pharisee in (read **Luke 18:11-14**) is the classic illustration of the man who sees the specks in others but is blind to the log in his own eye.

The man was a religious leader who was supposed to point people to God, but until he got the log of self righteousness out of his eye, he would be unable to help his brother get the speck out of his.

It is hypocritical to place yourself in the role of judge when you have sin of your own.

We need to ask ourselves: **"Am I equally concerned about all sin against God – including my own?"**

If you are truly concerned about God and his glory, then you will be more concerned about your own sins than anyone else's. It is hypocritical to care about others' sins more than your own.

The **hypocrite** "is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was" (**James 1:23-24**). He sees but he does not see. He is like those to whom Isaiah was sent, a people who would

listen but not perceive and look but not understand, because their hearts were insensitive and “their ears dull, and their eyes dim” (Isa. 6:9–10).

3) You can't help others with their sins until you've first addressed your own. (5a)

Why should you judge yourself first? 1) You know your own sins better than anyone else's. 2) It's hypocritical to care about others' sins more than your own. And then finally 3) You can't help others with their sins until you've first addressed your own.

Look at verse 5: “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”

How can you possibly help your brother with the speck in his eye when you've got a log in your own eye?

You've got this huge beam, forty-feet long, popping out of your eye, and you're walking up to your brother or sister and saying, “Here let me help you with that.” It's a ridiculous idea. It's impossible.

Jesus says you've got to take care of your own sins first.

It's like when you're on an airplane, you've got to secure your own oxygen first before you can help someone else's with theirs.

Now this doesn't mean you need to be perfect before you can help others, otherwise no one could ever help anyone. But it does mean you need to confront and confess your own sin to God before you are in a position to help others with their sin.

Why shouldn't you judge others? The third reason is Jesus says you should judge yourself first.

D. God calls you to help others rather than judge them. (5b)

And then the fourth reason you shouldn't judge others is this: God calls you to help others rather than judge them.

Look at verse 5 again, and especially the second half of the verse: “*You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*”

In other words, you should not ignore the speck in your brother's eye. The speck does need to be removed. It is not loving to ignore another person's faults.

If we truly love our brother, we will want to help him with his sin. But Jesus says we must approach him as a brother or sister rather than as a judge.

August Van Ryn writes: “Be a helper of the other's faith, instead of a critic of his faults.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: “Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating.”

You need to get rid of the log in your own eye so you can see clearly to help your brother.

The Scriptures teach us the importance of gentleness when helping someone with their sin.

We still have the responsibility to be involved with one another and helping each other overcome sin.

John says, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds” (2 John 10–11).

Not to rebuke sin is a form of hatred, not love.

1 John 2:9,11 tell us that hating our brother indicates that we are still in the darkness and not walking in the light. We are to love one another and that includes “admonishing one another” as

Romans 15:14 tells us to do.

Leviticus 19:17 says that to not reprove a neighbor would be hatred. “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor.”

Refusing to warn a person about his sin is just as unloving as refusing to warn him about a serious disease he may have. A person who does not warn a friend about his sin cannot claim love as his motive

Matthew 18:15 tells us that we are to go to our brother when he sins and reprove him in order to win him back.

To leave a person in their sin violates Scripture’s command to us and demonstrates that we do not love them.

The author of Hebrews calls for a level of spiritual maturity wherein Christians “because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (5:14).

We read in **Galatians 6:1**: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”

How do you remove a speck from someone’s eye? Carefully! Gently!

And in a spirit of love. 1 Peter 4:8 says: “Love covers over a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8)

Billy Graham said: “It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to convict, God’s job to judge, and my job to love.”

That’s the fourth reason why you shouldn’t judge others. God calls you to help others rather than judge them.

III. What about those who refuse to be helped? (verse 6)

Which brings us to our final point. What about those who refuse to be helped? What about those who do not want to hear about God and their sin?

Jesus addresses this situation in verse 6: “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. (Matthew 7:6)

Not everyone wants you to help them with their sin.

Not everyone will take it kindly when you try to help them with their sin.

In biblical times **dogs** were seldom kept as household pets in the way they are today. Except for those used as working animals to herd sheep, they were largely half-wild mongrels that acted as scavengers. They were dirty, greedy, snarling, and often vicious and diseased. They were dangerous and despised.

It would have been unthinkable for a Jew to have thrown to those dogs a piece of holy meat that had been consecrated as a sacrifice in the Temple.

Some parts of those offerings were burned up, some parts were eaten by the priests, and some would often be taken home and eaten by the family who made the sacrifice. The part left on the altar was the part which was consecrated exclusively to the Lord, and therefore was holy in a very special way. If no man was to eat that part of the sacrifice, how much less should it be thrown to a bunch of wild, filthy dogs. Such an act would be the height of desecration.

Swine were considered by Jews to be the epitome of uncleanness.

Because a Jew would never have tried to domesticate a **pig**, most of the swine they encountered were, like the dogs, wild animals who foraged for themselves, often in garbage dumps on the edge of town.

Like the scavenging dogs, those swine were greedy, vicious, and filthy even by ordinary pig standards. If you came between them and their food they would likely turn and tear you to pieces with their tusks and sharp hooves.

Jesus’ point is that certain truths and blessings of our faith are not to be shared with people who are totally antagonistic to the things of God.

Such people are spiritual dogs and swine, who have no appreciation for that which is holy and righteous. They will take that which is holy, the pearls (the rarest and most valuable of jewels; see Matt. 13:45–46) of God’s Word, as foolishness and as an insult.

A wild animal whose primary concern is scavenging for food will hardly appreciate being thrown a pearl. He will resent its not being something to eat and possibly attack the one who throws it.

Dogs and swine represent those who, because of their great perversity and ungodliness, refuse to have anything to do with the holy and precious things of God except to trample them under their feet, and turn and tear God’s people to pieces.

There will be times when the gospel we present is absolutely rejected and ridiculed and we make the judgment to turn away and speak no more, deciding that we should “shake off the dust of [our] feet” (Matt. 10:14) and begin ministering somewhere else. There will be times when those to whom we witness will resist the gospel and blaspheme God, and we may speak words of judgment.

Like Paul, we must then say, in effect, “Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

When people not only reject the gospel, but insist on mocking and reviling it, we are not to waste God’s holy Word and the precious pearls of His truth in a futile and frustrating attempt to win them.

We are to leave them to the Lord, trusting that somehow His Spirit can penetrate their hearts-as He apparently did with some of those who at first rejected the preaching of Paul and the other apostles-or leaving them to the just judgment of God.

CONCLUSION:

So how are you doing in this area? What do we say then, by way of application from these truths?

We would each do well to ask ourselves, who have I been critical of this week? Has my focus on their faults blinded me to my own? Then we need to ask God to help us see ourselves as we are.

- Do you find yourself being indignant about what other people do wrong, and yet you never stop to repent for your sin?
- Do you have a tendency to justify yourself, or do you have a lack of sense of personal need for repentance and reformation?
- Do you have a tendency to justify yourself by condemning others, or do you lack a sense of need for repentance and reformation in your own life?
- Do you remember your own sins and then reprove and rebuke and correct in light of the way that you would want to be reproved and rebuked and corrected if someone were dealing with you for your sins and faults.

We must be humble, sympathetic, conscious of our own sins, and without condemnation. We need God’s mercy. We need to be people who speak the truth in love because the love of God controls us.

May the Lord give us that spirit of heart as we engage in what he calls us to as brothers and sisters, mutually encouraging one another in the faith. Let’s look to Him in prayer.