

"TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE"

Matthew 7:1-6

Pastor Ray Fowler provides us a quick overview of the Sermon on the Mount.

5:1-12. . . The Christian's character

5:13-16. . . The Christian's influence

5:17-48. . . The Christian's righteousness

6:1-34. . . The Christian's motivation

7:1-12. . . The Christian's relationships

7:13-27. . . The Christian's destiny

What did Jesus mean when He said, *"Do not judge so that you will not be judged."* Is it wrong to judge people under any circumstances? Read Matthew 7:15-20

Is there a difference in judging and being judgmental?

Judging. . .

Definition: Making evaluations or forming opinions based on evidence, facts, or reason.

Purpose: Can be used for making decisions, understanding situations, or setting boundaries.

Impact: Can be constructive, leading to positive outcomes or helpful feedback.

Example: A hiring manager assessing a candidate's qualifications based on their resume and interview performance.

Being Judgmental. . .

Definition: Making harsh, critical, and often unfair evaluations of others, often based on limited or biased information.

Purpose: Can be used to criticize, condemn, or belittle others.

Impact: Often harmful, creating negativity, conflict, and damaging relationships.

Example: A person constantly criticizing others' appearances, choices, or behaviors, often behind their backs.

Should we or should we not judge other people's ideas, conduct, or beliefs? Many people misinterpret Jesus' words in vs. 1—"Do not judge lest you be judged"—and use them to fuel an attitude of tolerance for just about anything.

- This interpretation leads to statements like, "Who are you to judge a person's attitude and actions?"
- This interpretation leads to religious tolerance that assumes that every religion has merit and will ultimately lead to God.
- This interpretation is used by teenagers to rebel against their parents' decision to forbid them from hanging around with a certain group of people or dating a certain individual.
- This interpretation is used by believers caught up in a sinful action. "What right do you have to judge me about my decision to leave my wife for this other woman that makes me happy?"

It is absolutely imperative that we dig into this text and discover exactly what Jesus expects of us as believers. To begin with we must recognize the context of our Lord's words. Much of the Sermon on the Mount was a correction of the toxic religious rhetoric and actions of the Scribes and Pharisees. It would

be helpful to examine just how their harsh, critical spirits played out in real life. Look at **Luke 18:10-14** and **John 8:1-11**. Do you see how the Scribes and Pharisees elevated himself by attacking the tax-gatherer and the woman caught in adultery?

It is this mean, critical spirit that forms the backdrop for this part of our Lord's teaching. Now, with that clearly in mind, let's dig into the text and see if we are to judge or not judge.

1. THE PROBLEM JESUS ADDRESSES

Matthew 7:1–2... "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. **2** "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

The word for "**judge**" implies "*a careful evaluation.*" Now, it is very clear in the Bible that we are to make careful judgments or evaluations based on solid facts. Take for instance the following references. . .

John 7:24... "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

1 Corinthians 5:1–3... It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. **2** You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. **3** For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.

James 2:1–4... My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. **2** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, **3** and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man,

"You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," **4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

As a follower of Jesus, you are to make careful well-thought-out judgments about people's attitudes, actions, and beliefs.

The word "**judge**" also can imply "*a condemnation*." This is reserved only for God. Look at Romans 2:1-3. This type of harsh, critical judging is what Jesus is attacking in verses 1-2. John Stott sized up this problem in the following way. . .

"Jesus does not tell us to cease to be men (by suspending our critical powers which help to distinguish us from animals) but to renounce presumptuous ambition to be God (by setting ourselves up as judges)."

Jesus continued to expose this issue of being judgmental in verse 2...

Jesus is here commanding his followers to stop criticizing others. The immediate practical rationale for his command is that others may treat us in the same manner we treat them. Verse 2 provides the premise for v. 12. ¹

2. THE PRACTICE JESUS APPROVES

Matthew 7:3–5... "Why do you look at 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,' and behold, the log is 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.**

¹ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 127.

Keep in mind the Pharisees were critical of others to make themselves look better. Believers, on the other hand, should make sound judgments to help other people and to encourage them.

Jesus used a rather humorous illustration. Here is a man with a two-by-four sticking out of his eye and he is trying to pick a speck of sawdust out of someone else's eye. This huge exaggeration was used to drive home the point that we must first discipline ourselves to look inside ourselves before we seek to make judgments about others.

It is easy to become unbalanced in this matter of self-examination. . .

First, we can be too shallow. That is we can easily look over our own faults to point out other people's faults. Listen, we must dig deep and find out if there is anything in our lives that is grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit.

Second, we can be too ruthless. That is, we do a deep dive on our faults. This results in beating ourselves to a pulp. Balance is the key to this practice that Jesus advocates. We can make careful evaluations of others only after we have carefully evaluated ourselves and confessed and forsaken all known sin.

3. THE PERCEPTION JESUS ADVANCES

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."

As God's people we are a part of His eternal kingdom. He has entrusted to us the riches of His Word, His gospel, and His blessings. We must never do anything to cheapen these precious gifts.

So, Jesus says that we must practice good discernment. "**Do not give what is holy to dogs**" and "**do not throw your pearls before swine**" are parallel in meaning. The dogs here are wild scavengers while the pigs represent

unclean animals for Jews. As a believer, you must practice sound judgment.
(Acts 18:1-6) Don't engage those who treat the gospel with contempt.

Proverbs 9:8... Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

The idea that you are never to judge any person's actions, attitudes, or beliefs is insane! However, your judgments must always be designed to help others, to encourage others, and to be a blessing to others. It's okay to judge. It's not okay to be judgmental!

CONCLUSION

To John Barrier, it wasn't the 60 cents, it was the principle. Barrier walked into his bank to cash a \$100 check and then asked the receptionist to validate his parking ticket. Even after mentioning that he was a "substantial depositor," Barrier's request was refused. The receptionist explained that validation was only given for transactions involving a deposit.

Barrier felt his appearance—*dirty construction clothes*—contributed to his treatment. He thought the bank manager looked at him like he'd "crawled out from under a rock." Barrier contacted bank headquarters with his complaint. When no one returned his call, he started emptying his account, *\$1 million at a time*.

According to Barrier, "If you have \$100 in a bank or \$1 million, I think they owe you the courtesy of stamping your parking ticket." Citation: Elisa Tinsley, "Bank gets \$2M Lesson," USA TODAY (2-21-89, p. 1A)

The truth we must take away and apply to our lives is this—**Jesus Christ wants you practice sound judgment!**