

# Judging Others

## Matthew 7:1-6

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*King of Kings! (Gospel of Matthew Series)*

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Sunday, September 15, 2013, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

“A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself, but a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself.”

A.W. TOZER

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 Open your Bible to **Matthew 7:1-6**. We are continuing in a series through the Sermon on the Mount entitled: “King of kings.” This morning we are looking a message entitled: “Judging Others.”

### **Hard on Others, Easy on Self**

I have a problem with pride. We all have a serious problem with thinking too highly of ourselves. You'll notice the Christian life is a series of God building us up and then crushing us. Why is that? Because we tend to think too highly of ourselves and be too dismissive of others. AW Tozer once said, “A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself, but a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself.” God wants us as Christians to be discerning about judgment – giving out truth like a gentle stream to our fellow believer, not like a fire hose. *How* things come out of our mouth are just as important as *what* comes out of our mouth.

### **Criticisms**

Richard DeHaan, in his book *Men Sent from God*, lists some of the criticisms pastors receive. The list is written “tongue in cheek,” of course. If the pastor is young, they say he lacks experience. If his hair is gray, he is too old for the young people. If he has five or six children, he is irresponsible; if he has no children, he is setting a bad example. If he uses a lot of illustrations, he neglects the Bible; if he does not use enough, he is not relevant. If he condemns wrong deeds, he's cranky; if he does not, he's compromising. If he drives an old car, he shames his congregation; if he drives a new one, he's setting his affection on earthly things.<sup>1</sup>

### **Attitude is Everything**

We come to chapter 7 and we find how to identify true kingdom citizens. The first 12 verses are about our attitudes in human relationships. When you come to know Jesus, your

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, R. K. (2001). *The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom* (p. 227). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

attitude changes. Verses 1-6 talk about the critical judgmental attitude of a false convert. They are self-righteous and condemning. What we are going to see next week is that the true kingdom citizen is broken, humble, loving, and discerning.

### **Criticism Sells**

A critical spirit, a judgmental, condemning spirit, is endemic to the human situation. Controversy sells! Strife and confusion and chaos sells. The media, our social relationships, our schooling, and our work situations are immersed in it. And though we often joke about it, experiencing it is most unpleasant. Few things are more exhausting and debilitating than harsh, unloving criticism.

Even sadder, the church of Jesus Christ is itself full of those who make a habit of criticism and condemnation. Some seem to think their critical spirit is a spiritual gift. But the Lord does not agree. In the opening verses of Matthew 7 (the final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount), our Lord sets the record straight in no uncertain terms. He tells us how we should relate to our brothers and sisters in this matter of judgmentalism, especially in respect to the fact that we will all undergo a final judgment.<sup>2</sup>

Let's read what our Lord says in Matthew 7.

### **Reading of Holy Scripture**

Matthew 7:1-6, "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."

### **Outline**

We are going to see today that:

1. Withhold judgment until you have **all the facts** (1-2).
2. Withhold judgment until you have considered **your own sin first** (3-5).
3. Godly judgment is rejected **by false teachers** (6).

## **I. Withhold Judgment until you have all the facts (7:1-2).**

Matthew 7:1-2, "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."

How often do we come to rash and harsh conclusions without taking the time to gather all the facts? How often are we easily offended and hurt without having all the information?

### **We Think Too Highly of Ourselves**

Often we sit in the seat of God as if our surface judgments are accurate! We often trust our first impressions. That's dangerous! We often have a very high view of ourselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 227-28.

We believe God is on our side. We think we know the Bible. We've grown. We begin to think more highly than we ought to think. Perhaps that we are the spiritual elite. I'm right, and everyone else is wrong. And we start to judge others. We start to look down our nose at those who perhaps don't have the same theological system as we have. Perhaps they don't school their children like we do. They have a different version of the Bible. When we are on a diet we tend to think others who are not on the diet and exercise program are fat and lazy. Or that all translations outside of my favorite one are just deficient.

We might say, "Oh, well, of course he's an Arminian, or he's a Calvinist."

We might say, "My child is superior because they truly live out their faith in public school." Or "Christian school is superior." Others believe homeschooling is the best.

We need to be people that don't box people in. We need to listen to people's heart. Jesus says be careful how you judge. What was he saying? Let's first consider what he **didn't mean**.

## The DEFINITION of "Do Not Judge"

### What Jesus Didn't Mean

Jesus doesn't mean: "Do not judge ever." Christians are not to be spineless jellyfish.

These first three words, "Do not judge," have been wrongly taken by some to mean that good Christians must never exercise any critical judgment. Did he mean that all manner of judging is absolutely and without any qualification forbidden?<sup>3</sup> Some believe model Christians are totally accepting, whatever the situation. Christlikeness is equated with a **suspension of critical faculties**—a pious, all-accepting and naïve blindness.<sup>4</sup>

The world loves articulate and strong positions on everything – politics, music, art, literature, culture – but if you are articulate about biblical morality, suddenly the world abhors you. The world in this sense likes Christians to be non-opinionated, non-discerning, non-judgmental people. The ideal Christian in the world's eye, especially a Christian leader or pastor, would be one who is tolerant of every view. The world loves the religious jellyfish. The all-accepting professing Christian who is tolerant of everything and believes nothing is most cheered by the media.

But this could not be farther from what Jesus is saying. "Do not judge" cannot mean "Do not discern or do not take strong positions." Why? It's easy to prove.

### Jesus Commands us to Judge and be Discerning

**Matthew 7:6** commands us to make a judgment: "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." We have to discern who the **dogs** are and who the **pigs** are. We cannot obey Jesus' command here unless we must judge who "dogs" are and who "pigs" are. Similarly, just a few verses later in verse 15, Jesus warns us to "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." This requires subtle, discriminating judgment on our part. Many additional Scriptures exhort us to exercise judgment:

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<sup>3</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. 9, p. 356). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>4</sup> Hughes, 128.

**1 John 4:1**, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

### **What Jesus Means: The Definition of Judging**

What Jesus is saying we ought not to do is to **judge superficially**. We ought not to make snap judgments of people’s hearts based on mere circumstances, or what we perceive. We can sincerely perceive a lot of things, but most of the time we are sincerely wrong. What is Jesus saying by “Do not judge”? He says it a different way in **John 7:24**, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Those who make snap, superficial judgments on others live in folly and shame according to **Proverbs 18:13**, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”

### **Jesus Forbids the Judging by Mere Appearance**

Christians have an obligation to exercise critical judgment! What Christ means when he says “Do not judge” is that we are to refrain from hypercritical, condemning judgment of motives.

Don’t be like the self-righteous Pharisees. Their evaluation of others, like every other aspect of their hypocritical system, was based on appearances, on the external and superficial (John 7:24; 8:15). They lived to justify themselves in the eyes of other men; but Jesus told them that their judgment was utterly contrary to God’s and was detestable in His sight (Luke 16:15).<sup>5</sup>

### **Metra Train Man: Easy to Judge by Mere Appearance**

How easy it is to judge based on appearance. We are prone to judge without gathering information and thinking the best of people (one of the laws of love).

You remember the man who boarded the Metra train with five very wild children. The man was zoned out. He was not paying attention to the children. People around him were huffing and puffing. They were upset. Won’t someone tell this man to control his children? One witness was in mid-sentence, about to rant on Facebook, when the man’s friend boarded the train and quietly mentioned to one of the passengers that this man’s wife had just died and they were returning from the intensive care unit in the hospital.

How often do we make snap judgments about people?!

## **The DIFFICULTY of Righteous Judgment**

It’s really difficult to judge fairly and righteously.

1. We have to gather all the facts. Proverbs 18:13, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”

### **Because of Adam’s Sin our Judgment is Flawed**

When Adam sinned, he corrupted the entire human race. Each of us has inherited from him an inherent tendency to sin, which includes a natural inclination towards mistaken, negative judgments.<sup>6</sup> Because of Adam’s sin, our judgment is severely flawed.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (p. 430). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Ken Sande. *Judging Others: The Dangers of Playing God*.

We ought to assume therefore that *we are mistaken* when we might be tempted to think the worst about someone. We ought never trust the first appearances of a situation. We must investigate. We need to be careful not to “lean to our own understanding” but to “judge righteously” (Jn. 7:24) and carefully according to the Word of God. We can only judge righteously when we have *all the facts*.

There are so many misunderstandings on earth. Thankfully there are NO misunderstandings in heaven!

2. We ought to overlook the small stuff. Listen, the time will be right to confront about certain things. But it is always better to overlook personal hurts.

**Proverbs 19:11**, “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” If your plan to confront people, after being wronged, is fueled by a desire to even the score it's time to repent. That's the best advice I can give myself sometimes!

There is a difference between being sensitive and being touchy. Touchy people are self-focused. Sensitive people are others focused and God-focused. Touchy people take. They are take personal offenses deeply. They hold grudges. They sometimes can make you pay for hurting them.

It is glorious not to be personally offended, but instead overlook personal offenses. We don't like to do that. We often judge wrongly without all the facts. We end up with very harsh judgments over petty things.

## **The DANGER of Wrong Judgment**

### **Playing God**

We must not play God! **Matthew 7:2**, “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

Very few of us dare to pray, “God, judge me as I judge my fellow men and women.” Our Lord means to put a holy fear in us so we will put away our critical hearts! God is going to judge us as we judge others. The tone of our life is going to become the tone of our eternal judgment.

### **Jesus Makes Two Eternal Judgments**

Though there is one Judgment Day when “ yet there are **two eternal judgments**: one for unbelievers and one for believers. One is the separation of believers and nonbelievers: “Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:31–46).

### **Judgmental Believers**

True believers, of course, are the sheep who will go to be with God will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive their proper rewards. There **God will judge us as we have judged others**. Judgmental believers will still go to be with God forever, but they will have very little reward, for their hypercritical spirit will have vitiated much of the good they had done.<sup>7</sup>

**2 Corinthians 5:10–11**, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”  
11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.”

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<sup>7</sup> Hughes, 230.

## Don't Play God

So Jesus says, **Matthew 7:2**, "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."

James has the same principle in mind when he warns, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). The person who is qualified to teach is judged on a stricter basis than others because as a teacher he has greater understanding and influence.<sup>8</sup> "To whom much has been given much shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

**Transition:** So we ought never judge without having all the facts first! Be careful how you judge, because if you judge harshly, God will judge you harshly.

## II. Withhold Judgment until you have considered your **own sin** first (7:3-5).

**Matthew 7:3-5**, "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."

There is a sense in which learning the Bible can be dangerous. We are prone to apply it to others, but NOT to ourselves.

### Bad Breath

Have you ever met someone with bad breath? All the time right? Did you know that bad breath is very prevalent? In fact the truth is, we all have bad breath from time to time.

The bad thing about bad breath is that you never know you have it. It is virtually impossible to test your own breath!

We all at times have bad breath. And the truth is we all have areas in our lives that need changing. We need to not be quick to judge others. We need to not judge hypocritically.

### The Log and the Speck

The picture Jesus gives here is as ludicrous and sarcastic as possible. The word translated "plank" ("log" in other translations) denotes a huge piece of wood, like a rafter in a house. "Speck" is a small twig. With such a monstrous log in a man's eye, his vision would not be simply impaired—he would be absolutely blinded! The idea of his lending a helping hand to another man who has a speck in his eye would not only be comical but impossible! The tragedy is, the situation Jesus is portraying is common.<sup>9</sup>

### The Speck is Not Completely Insignificant

A *karphos* (**speck**) is not a tiny piece of dust or soot but a small stalk or twig, or possibly a splinter. Though small in comparison to a **log**, it is not an insignificant object to have in the eye. Jesus' comparison, therefore, is not between a very small sin or fault and one that is large, but

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<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, 434.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes, 231.

between one that is large and one that is gigantic. The primary point, of course, is that the sin of the critic is much greater than the sin of the person he is criticizing.

Some interpreters suggest the **speck** represents a rather minor infraction, whereas **log** represents an extremely vulgar and repulsive sin. But people with obviously terrible sins usually spend their time trying to hide or justify their own great sin, not in criticizing the small sins of others.

### **The Log of Self-Righteousness**

The **log** in this illustration represents the same foundational sin of **self-righteousness** that Jesus has been condemning throughout the sermon. The log is the person's BLINDNESS to his own sinfulness. Almost by definition, 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.<sup>10</sup> The wretched and gross sin that is always blind to its own sinfulness is self-righteousness, the sin that Jesus repeatedly condemns in the scribes and Pharisees, not only in the Sermon on the Mount but throughout His ministry.

### **The Root Causes of a Critical Spirit**

Do you and I sometimes have a critical spirit? YES!! Well, we need to find the root causes and get rid of it! Where does the critical spirit emanate from? We know all sin comes from our idolatrous heart. **Matthew 15:19**, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander."

The first area is **selfishness**. When others stand in the way of what we want, we strive to remove their opposition by tearing them down and diminishing their credibility and influence in any way we can (vv. 1-3).

**Pride** is another source of critical judgments. Thinking that we are better than others, we set ourselves up as their judges and begin to catalog their failings and condemn their actions. As we saw earlier, when we do this we are imitating Satan by trying to play God (vv. 7, 12). Pride can also reveal itself in the inclination to believe that "I alone understand the truth about things." I think that my beliefs, convictions, theology, and doctrines are true, and I look down on anyone who disagrees with me (cf. Gal. 5:26).

Matthew 7:3-5 shows that **self-righteousness** is another root of critical judgments. When we have done something wrong but we do not want to admit it, one of the most natural things we do is to draw attention to and even magnify the failures of others.

**Insecurity**, which is a form of the fear of man, is a related root of this problem. When we lack confidence in our own beliefs and positions, and fear that they might be disproved, we often conclude that the best defense is a good offense. Therefore, we lash out at others' views and judge them before they can judge us.

**Jealousy** can also lead to critical judgments. As we see in Genesis 37:11, Joseph's brothers were jealous of his close relationship with God and his father, and they repeatedly interpreted his motives and actions in the worst possible way. As their jealousy grew, it culminated in their selling him into slavery.

Another cause is **self-pity**. On occasion, many of us find a perverse pleasure in feeling sorry for ourselves. Therefore, we tend to interpret situations in a way that hurts us the most. One of the best ways to do this is to interpret others' actions as a form of betrayal.

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<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, 435.

**Prejudice** is frequently a cause of critical judgments. When we have preconceived, unfavorable opinions about others simply because of their race, religion, gender, or status in life, we will consistently seek to validate our views by interpreting their beliefs and actions negatively.

**Unforgiveness** can also lead us to look for the worst in others. If someone has hurt us, and we do not forgive him, we will look for ways to justify our unforgiveness. Finding more faults in the person who hurt us is a convenient way to conceal the hardness of our own heart.

### **Without Love We are Nothing**

Of course, the ultimate source of critical judgments is a **lack of love**. If I don't have love, all my spiritual wisdom is profitless – Paul concludes: “I am nothing... it profits me nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Where love is deficient, critical judgments will be the norm. Conversely, where love abounds, charitable judgments should abound (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

## **III. Godly judgment is rejected by false teachers (7:6).**

**Matthew 7:5-6**, “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.”

### **Don't Give Hope to False Teachers**

In metaphorical language (without which His words would be more shocking) Jesus is commanding His disciples *not* to share the richest parts of the Gospel with these false teachers. These are those who are persistently vicious, irresponsible, self-centered, and unappreciative.<sup>11</sup> They are rightly compared to wild animals. Animals have no decorum. They cannot discern how to receive a good meal. They just tear everything apart. So it is with false teachers. The rich truths of God's grace, may serve only to enrage them. They cannot perceive the preciousness of the Gospel. Only the humble can.

So Jesus often hid the Gospel from the proud. Listen to what Jesus often says.

**Matthew 11:25**, Jesus prays: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.”

Listen to Peter: **1 Peter 5:5**, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

### **Law to the Proud, Grace to the Humble**

The great evangelist George Whitefield said we ought to give: “Law to the proud and Grace to the humble.” Until a person is humbled by his sin and God's holiness, he is not ready for the good news of God's grace. He is yet unappreciative of the infinite cost of God's grace.

### **Leave False Teachers Alone**

All need to come under that news. But false teachers will not receive it. Jesus concludes by saying, don't waste your time trying to convince false teachers. You need to warn the sheep, but

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<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 112.

leave false teachers to themselves. Matthew 15:14, Jesus says of the Pharisees: “Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

### **Helping Your Brother**

Once you deal before God with the multitude and gravity of your own sins, you can carefully and humbly deal with the sins of others. He doesn't say: Don't worry about your brother. He doesn't say, “You are not your brother's keeper.” In fact you are indeed your brother's keeper! He says: “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” (Mat. 7:5).

Galatians 6 says the same thing. **Galatians 6:1–4**, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

### **How Should We Judge?**

Look at Jesus. He laid His life down for His sheep. With sheep we need to be patient. Sheep bite. Sometimes I bite!

### **Receiving Humble Judgment**

It may take time, but as we grow and change we are more and more ready to receive godly input and rebuke and correction. But we must be careful to understand that those whom Jesus calls “pigs...dogs...wolves” will trample over even godly humble judgment.

We are commanded to speak the truth in love. We are to “always be ready to give an answer to every one that asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect ...” (1 Peter 3:15).

### **Dogs and Pigs Attack**

Listen again to Jesus' words: **Matthew 7:6**, “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.”

Dogs and pigs like to attack. We often pray in evangelism, Lord only allow us to speak to those in whose hearts You are working. We don't want to waste time debating with the devil.

You say where is the love in this verse? Listen, the false teacher and the false convert will waste your time. Dogs and pigs and wolves as he will name them later have a selfish and even a satanic agenda. Be careful how you approach them if they show no signs of brokenness.

Now we ought to be willing to spend great amounts of time with babes in Christ, feeding them the milk of the word – carefully correcting their errors, encouraging their weaknesses, and helping them to grow and change in Christ.

### **Don't Waste Time with False Teachers**

You can rebuke false teachers, but don't worry about their criticism. Don't waste time fretting about what they are saying. In Jesus' context on the Sermon on the Mount, the “pigs and dogs and wolves” were the false teachers – religious leaders of His day – many of whom were Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus had His critics from the **liberals** and the **conservatives**. The legalists and the liberals were against Jesus!

### **Dogs, Pigs, Wolves**

The dogs of Jesus day are not cuddly creatures. Jesus is referring to those hardened by religious hypocrisy.

But we must be discerning and loving enough NOT to waste our time chasing down the critics. We must not take too much worry in answering those who over and over and over again prove themselves to have no real desire to see people grow, but instead want to nitpick and tear people down.

Let us invest our time in the spiritual children God gives us, but be very careful not to be distracted by those who always seem to know more than everybody.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Raising Children is Messy**

Raising Children can be messy. Spend most of your time helping and being patient with God's children. Don't sweat the critics. Children sometimes hit their parents. That's ok. Love them and carefully teach them to grow out of that.

But we must protect our children from the false teachers. Most false teachers are not going to be converted. Don't waste your time worrying about them.

### **God's Still Working On Me**

I take joy in my children. Yes they are messing. Slowly, day by day, with great patience, we grow together. So it is in the church. I have a long way to go! God's still working on me. I love the children's song that says as much:

*He's still working on me  
To make me what I need to be  
It took him just a week to make the moon and stars  
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars  
How loving and patient He must be  
'Cause He's still workin' on me*