

The Gospel of Matthew

SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

If you were standing before a court with your fate resting in the hands of a judge, how would you like to be judged? Would you value the qualities of equity, impartiality, and mercy? Chances are these virtues would take on a new importance to you. In the first six verses of Matthew chapter seven, Jesus reveals that this scenario is more than an illustration. In fact, your behavior today is directly tied to the quality of judgment you receive.

Remember the audience in this sermon; Jesus was speaking to disciples heavily influenced by the dominant religious leaders of the day, namely Pharisees. Jesus already demonstrated that the Pharisees embraced the wrong standards by exalting their traditions above God's Word (see Matthew 5:20-48). He also uncovered their hypocrisy in prayer, giving, and fasting (see Matthew 6:1-18). He is now correcting a judgmental attitude that was common among the legalistic Pharisees. The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is explaining the characteristics of true worship versus the flaws of false religion.

The concepts of this passage need to be understood because they are often abused by those who are seeking to escape God's standard of truth. Amazingly, the type of judgment God wants us to practice is often avoided today and the judgment He condemns is practiced frequently.

Judge Not (7:1)

Let's begin our study by defining the word, "judge". If we understand the intention of this word, we will unlock many of the principles of this passage. The Greek word translated as "judge" in the KJV is *krino*. This word is used 98 times in the New Testament and is translated with various shades of meaning. Read the following passages and write the word into which *krino* was translated.

John 3:17		Acts 21:25	
Acts 3:13		Romans 14:5	
Acts 15:19		1 Corinthians 7:37	
Acts 16:4		2 Thessalonians 2:12	

Using some of the insight you just gained from this study, write a definition for "judge" below.

Judge –

To be sure, we are taught to judge justly in Scripture. Read Matthew 7:15-20, spoken by Jesus just a few short verses after He instructs us to "judge not". What are we instructed to do?

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While at first there appears to be contradiction, we will find that there is a distinction between righteous judgment and the type of judgment condemned by Christ. It is absolutely essential for us to scripturally define and understand the difference between the two. The distinction is found in two areas: 1) what we judge, and 2) how we judge. In verse one, we will focus on studying what we are not to judge. Verses two through six speak to how we must judge.

What are the limitations of our judgment? Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 and Romans 12:18-21.

What is the danger to those assuming the role of judge? Read Romans 1:28-2:11, James 3:1 & 4:11-12.

The judging Jesus condemns is the type that is beyond our role and capability. We are not called to pass judgment upon the hearts and minds of others, neither has God invested us with the ability to do so. With that said, we are to exercise good judgment over the areas God has placed in our realm of responsibility.

We already studied one example of the type of judging Jesus condemns in the Sermon on the Mount. Review Matthew 5:21-22 and discuss how calling a brother Raca or a fool is an act of unjust judging.

How do we walk this line? There is actually a fabulous example in Scripture of one who clearly addressed sin without crossing the line and judging the heart of another. Read Job 2:7-10 and describe how he spoke to his wife. What can you learn from this?

Motives and Standards (7:2)

In verse one we established that there are certain areas God alone can judge. We are not equipped for or charged with that task. Yet, we can't walk away from this passage and assume that Jesus condemns

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all types of judging. As I already stated, Jesus is addressing both what men judge and how we judge. Verses two through five focus on how we should judge (or not judge).

Verse two warns us that we will be judged in the same way we judge and by the same standard we apply to others. Imagine standing before a judge with a hatred for Christians. Do you believe he would be impartial if he knew you were a Christian? What if you stood before an American judge who decided to impose laws and punishments from a foreign Islamic country? Would you be concerned about the standard they would be using to decide your fate? This is exactly the point Jesus makes.

Describe a judgmental spirit –

Let's first discuss a judgmental spirit. Read Luke 18:1-5, the parable of the unjust judge. Describe his temperament.

Now let's read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, the most complete description of Biblical love. Which qualities listed counter the judgmental spirit condemned by Christ?

This is the goal: to be reproved by one who truly loves you and desires what is best for you.

If we want to be judged in this manner by others, we must lead in this type of judgment.

We also need to talk about the haste, or quick judgment often accompanying a judgmental spirit. Read the following passages and explain the instruction given to us.

Proverbs 18:13 –

Deut. 13:12-16 –

The second principle established by Christ in Matthew 7:2 is, “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”. Let's begin our discussion of measures and metes by defining the terms.

Measure –

Metre –

Proper measuring was a significant concern in the ancient world. The fair purchase and sale of goods relied upon the use of accurate scales. God addresses this issue throughout the Old Testament. Read the following passages and summarize their teaching.

Proverbs 11:1 –

Proverbs 20:10 –

Leviticus 19:35-36 –

The application of fair measures goes beyond scales and rulers. It applies to the standards we use to judge or discern. Read John 7:21-24 and Romans 14:1-10 and answer the following questions.

What is the problem Jesus and Paul address in these passages?

What are some contemporary examples of this problem?

There are many church problems that would be resolved if we put this teaching into practice. This is why it is important for each member to learn to rightly discern truth. In fact, Hebrews 5:11-14 makes this point. Those who can only be fed milk are not able to clearly discern or judge between right and wrong. Those who are mature have exercised their senses to be able to judge righteous judgment.

A church full of spiritual babes often results in unnecessary division over matters of no consequence.

Apart from applying the right standard, we must also consider whether we apply it consistently. Favoritism is another malady that destroys the harmony of the church. Read James 2:1-4 and discuss how inconsistency harms a church. What can we do to prevent favoritism?

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There is a boomerang effect to judging. The same critical, hasty, and unmerciful spirit and standard we so quickly cast upon others will return to us. Read Judges 1:7 and Esther 7:7-10 and consider Abonibezek and Haman. How did the spirit and standard of their judgmental attitude return to them?

Logs and Splinters (7:3-5)

Let's take a moment to review. Jesus has just condemned sinful judgment. Remember, He is not condemning all judgment, just the type that tries to judge things we cannot or should not judge (the hearts and motives of others) and improper judgment that is biased, hasty, and faulty. He now illustrates how this "bad judgment" doesn't just affect us, but touches others as well.

Unfortunately, we don't often keep our bad judgments to ourselves. We freely throw in our two cents about the cause of every else's problems and we fail to see our own. That is the purpose of this next illustration: the mote and beam, or perhaps better understood as "the splinter and the plank" in modern English.

What is the focus of this judgmental brother or sister? Read Luke 18:9-14.

It is important to define key terms and in this passage, "considerest not" is a pivotal term.

Considerest not –

How can see others sins so clearly yet not see our own? Read Matthew 15:10-14 and John 9:39-41.

Jesus is declaring that we cannot see clearly enough to pull the mote out of our brother's eye until the beam comes out of our own.

Does Jesus suggest that we should not be concerned about sin in our brother or sister's life?

We see harmony from Scriptures when it comes to this principle. Read the following passages and discuss what is being taught and its harmony with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:3-5.

James 1:19-25 –

Psalms 51:9-13 –

Galatians 6:1-3 –

What happens to the cause of Christ when we possess a wrongfully judgmental attitude and do not first apply God's Word to our own hearts and lives? Read Romans 2:17-24.

Of Dogs and Pigs (7:6)

UNCLEAN ANIMALS

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.

Swine were considered by Jews to be the epitome of uncleanness... 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.”¹

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, pp. 437-438.

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Giving what is holy to a dog seems to refer to giving the remains of a meat offering made to God to a dog. It is just inappropriate. Similarly, giving pearls to a swine may initially incite their interest because they may think it is food but when they realize it is not what they want, they will turn and rend you for it. The gospel of Matthew is the only place where this thought is found. That does not make it untrue, but does limit our ability to see how another gospel writer recorded the same teaching.

The term “dogs” is used elsewhere in Matthew in a similar way. Read Matthew 15:21-28 and discuss the similarities of the passages.

Still considering Matthew 15:21-28 and also the context of Matthew 7:6, what are the differences between the passages?

Knowing that our definition of “dogs and swine” in Matthew 7:6 must harmonize with other Scriptures, review the following passages and discuss how they harmonize.

Proverbs 9:7-8 –

Proverbs 23:9 –

Acts 28:23-29 –

2 Timothy 4:14-15 –

Who are the dogs and swine in Matthew 7:6?

What are the meat and pearls?

How does this passage fit into the context of Matthew 7:1-6?

Can we apply Matthew 7:6 to believers, especially those who are part of our church?