

Session 18 To Judge or Not to Judge? (Mt. 7:1-6)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Seeking to walk out the kingdom lifestyle as described in Matthew 5-6 creates challenges that result in new relational dynamics. Some will be positive and some negative. New relationships will be established and some older ones changed (sometimes improved and other times not). Some draw back from their wholehearted pursuit of God out of fear of being judged or criticized.
³³Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness... (Mt 6:33)
- B. We must avoid being hindered by the spirit of judgment, in our pursuit of the 8 Beatitudes. This occurs in two ways: first, by judging others who pursue God with less intensity than us (7:1-5) and second, by being judged by others who are against the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle (Mt. 7:6). We are tempted by both situations even in close relationships and we must respond rightly.
¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged... ⁵First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁶Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they...turn and tear you in pieces... ¹⁵Beware of false prophets... (Mt. 7:1-6, 15)
- C. Jesus taught us how to evaluate and respond to those with values that differ from us (Mt. 7:1-20). In Matthew 7:1-6, He highlighted two types of people that we may differ from—brothers who are close enough that we can take the speck from their eye (7:3-5) and those who oppose us (7:6).
- D. ***Judge:*** The word *judge* means to evaluate so as to approve or correct in seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33). Some misinterpret this passage to say that we must never point out anything or any person that is wrong. They believe that we are to avoid all judgment (evaluation). Jesus called us to avoid judgment without going through the right process, with the right information, and in the right spirit. In this very context, Jesus called us to remove the speck from a brother (v. 5), and recognize “dogs and pigs” (v. 6) and false prophets (v. 15).
²⁴Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (Jn. 7:24)
- E. We can judge or evaluate what is right without having a judgmental spirit. We only judge “fruit” (actions or words) in someone’s life and not motives (Mt. 7:16-20).
- F. The Scripture is clear about the responsibility to bring scandalous sin or error into the light that is not repented of (Mt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-11; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thes. 5:14, 21; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:10-13; 2:15; 3:10-11; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20). Leaders who fail to do this according to the biblical process are displeasing to the Lord.

- G. We are not to be critical of others who seem to pursue God with less intensity or clarity (7:1-5). With the standard of judgment that we use on others, we will receive it from God and man (Mt. 7:2). We determine part of the standard of our judgments at the judgment seat of Christ.

¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. (Mt 7:1-2)

- H. Jesus taught us how to respond to faults in others—especially in those close to us (Mt. 7:3-5).

³And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Mt. 7:3-5)

1. ***Look at the speck:*** We must not look at a speck in our brother's eye without focusing on the plank (or bigger problem) in our eye. To look at a speck in our brother's eyes means to focus on a small area in their life that blurs their ability to see and thus act rightly. We lack the full information about our brother's life that results in the speck being in his eye.
2. ***Consider the plank:*** To consider a plank in our eye is to think long and deep about the larger areas in our life that blur our ability to see and thus act rightly. These large areas include our pride, selfish motives, and compromises that are often unknown to others. We have much more information about our heart (we do not act on) than our brother's.
3. ***Hypocrite:*** Jesus pointed out the lack of sincerity for godliness that has zeal to address a small area in a brother's life without addressing the larger issues in our life.
4. ***First:*** We are to first take time to address the plank or bigger area in our life. This will give us insight, tenderness, and sensitivity to help remove a speck from our brother's eye. Embracing the long and detailed process of settling large issues in our life provides us with the ability to see clearly to help our brother far more effectively and with patience.

- I. Jesus exhorted us to give advice about truth to those who are unreceptive (Mt. 7:6). We do not force-feed the truth to people. There is a time to move on as Paul did (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19:9).

⁶Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. (Mt. 7:6)

1. ***Pearls:*** This speaks of that truths that are both holy and very valuable.
2. ***Dogs and swine:*** This speaks of people who do not value holy things (pearls). Initially, they will trample on the truths (pearls) and eventually turn on you and seek to tear your reputation and/or life to pieces. Pigs trample and wild dogs (scavengers) tear apart.
3. Dogs and pigs stood for pagan Gentiles to Jewish people. Dogs persecuted the righteous (Ps. 22:16). However, in the early church they speak of hostile "non-disciples" and false believers (Mt. 5:47; 6:7, 32; 18:17; Lk. 12:30; Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22; Rev. 22:15).

II. THE BIBLICAL COMMAND TO JUDGE

- A. We do not sacrifice truth for love, but we express them together. Truth empowers real love. Many have wrong views of what the Scripture means when calling us to judge one another in a way that gives people the opportunity for deliverance. It is Christ-like to judge. It is parallel to a doctor “judging” cancer while there is time to treat it. It is an expression of God's mercy.
- ¹⁵ *Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head. (Eph. 4:15)*
- B. We are commanded to make loving, righteous judgments in a world that greatly values tolerance. This will dramatically change the social dynamics in a church. Any church that refuses to judge according to biblical standards will come under judgment. The natural by-product of neglecting righteous judgment is a steady increase of compromise in its leaders, members, and families.
- C. Jesus commended those who spoke out against ministries who promoted falsehood and impurity. Paul exposed false teachers instead of allowing them to minister in the body (2 Cor. 11:12-13).
- ² *You tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars. (Rev. 2:2)*
- ²⁰ *I have a few things against you, because you allow [tolerate]...Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality... (Rev. 2:20)*
- D. Paul brought judgment on those who refused to repent of immorality to keep them from greater spiritual harm (1 Cor. 5:5) and he commanded separation from the unrepentant (2 Thes. 3:6-14).
- ¹ *There is sexual immorality among you...⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together...⁵deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Cor. 5:1-5)*
- E. In the Church today, there is radical individualism and the privatization of faith. However, anyone who confesses love for Jesus and is a part of His covenant community (Church) is required to receive His standards of conduct that are commanded in the Scripture. Individual believers are not free to choose any lifestyle they want with the assurance of not being “judged”.
- F. Go to your brother in private to make a godly appeal that he repents of his sin (Mt. 18:15).
- ¹⁵ *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (Mt. 18:15)*
1. **Alone:** We first go to our brother in private to seek to win them back to a right relationship with Jesus, not to show ourselves as superior or get back at them.
 2. **Tell him his fault:** When we meet face to face we feel differently. The Spirit intervenes and we often feel more affection and mercy than when talking about him to others.
 3. Jesus commanded us to rebuke a brother who sins against us.
- ³ *If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. (Lk. 17:3)*

III. JUDGING IN THE RIGHT WAY

- A. We judge in the right way, which includes the **right process**, **right information**, and **right spirit**. We seek to restore people by judging in the right way which requires a “vigorous spirituality” to recognize the real issues, to invest the necessary time, to search our own hearts, and to stand courageously for our brother as we seek his restoration.
- B. **Humbly**: We look to ourselves as we approach others with the sense of humility and mourning over our personal failures. We consider the plank in our own eye. We often discover much about our heart and weakness in the process of preparing to appeal to our brother.
⁵First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly... (Mt. 7:5)
- C. **Accurately**: We take time and effort to get all the available information. Those who are content with partial information have already made up their minds against another.
¹³He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him...¹⁷The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor...examines him. (Prov. 18:13-17)
¹⁹Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. (Jas. 1:19)
- D. **Gently**: We approach our brothers tenderly without harshness hoping for the best in the process. Make appeals to restore with gentleness as we consider our own weakness. We look for their sincere intention to obey Jesus as they declare war on their recent failures.
¹If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)
1. A gentle response diffuses anger in the one you speak to; a harsh tone will stir anger up.
¹A soft answer turns away wrath [anger], but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Prov. 15:1)
2. Mercy received transforms a person faster than judgment.
¹³Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)
- E. **Patiently**: We give people time to understand the gravity of their sin and time to repent without quickly concluding that they refuse to repent. We must not rush through the process too quickly.
²¹I gave her [Jezebel] time to repent of her sexual immorality... (Rev. 2:21)
- F. **Confidentiality**: We only make the information known to those with authority to help in the restoration process. *We do not reveal the past sins of anyone who repents.* The leaders are required to be strictly confidential (unless bringing in leaders over them to help).
¹³A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. (Prov. 11:13)
⁸Above all things have fervent love...for love will cover a multitude of sins. (1 Pet. 4:8)
⁹He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends. (Prov. 17:9)