

CAN I TELL SOMEONE THEY'RE SINNING WITHOUT JUDGING THEM? - Matthew 7:1-12 - "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. [7] "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. [9] Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? [11] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! [12] "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

In the first part of chapter six Jesus dealt with the danger of distorting religious activities by performing them hypocritically, that is, ***with a desire to look holy in front of others***. In today's passage He deals with another form of corruption that easily turns our relationship with God on its heels.

There are ***three dangers*** listed here. The first two are stated ***negatively***. The last one is stated in a ***positive*** instruction. We are not to be ***judgmental*** (***Matthew 7:1-5***). We are not to be ***undiscerning*** (***Matthew 7:6***). We are to ***persist in our trust in God*** (***Matthew 7:7-11***). These three lessons, taken together, are the foundation for what we today call ***"the golden rule"*** (***7:12***).

1) **THE DANGER OF A JUDGMENTAL HEART**

Matthew 7:1-5 - "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."

These are some of the most misunderstood and misapplied verses in the entire New Testament. What are we to make of this prohibition against judging when, in the very same passage, Jesus ***commands us to judge?*** In ***verse 6*** Jesus calls certain people ***"pigs"*** and ***"dogs"***. How did He come to this conclusion? Certainly ***some*** assessment of their character was needed to prompt those words.

Again, in ***verse 15*** Jesus will warn against following ***"false prophets"*** who are described as ***"wolves in sheep's clothing."*** How did Jesus measure these prophets as ***"false?"*** He must have had some standard by which He measured their ministry. And His clear expectation was that ***we would do the same measuring and come to the same conclusion.***

There is also the instruction Jesus gave in **John 7:24 - "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."** Apparently some judging is not only ***tolerated*** but ***required***. Jesus uttered these words because the Pharisees were angry that He had healed a man on the Sabbath. Jesus did not hesitate to ***judge them to be wrong***. And he did not hesitate to tell them so.

And what about the words of John (the Apostle of love) in **2 John 1:10 - "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting...."** John felt if people denied the gospel of Jesus and were leading others astray, Christians shouldn't even extend words of greeting or ask them into their homes. Certainly some judgment was being exercised in that case.

So what is Jesus teaching in our Matthew 7 text?

- a) **The disciple is not to condemn nor avenge - 1 - "Judge not, that you be not judged."** The word judge can mean either ***"to analyze and evaluate"*** or it can mean ***"to condemn and avenge."*** The former is right and Scriptural. The latter is reserved for God alone. It is this avenging, condemning attitude that Jesus is forbidding.

And there's a reason we need this caution. Judging others is frequently a ***cover*** for not dealing honestly with God's convicting work in my own heart. This is what Jesus is condemning. Judging others can become nothing more than a ***shifting of blame***. Emphasizing the sins of others is frequently a way of avoiding God's call to my own heart to repentance. I ***feel*** less convicted when the sins of others make mine seem smaller in comparison.

You can see what Jesus is cautioning about when you see the same issues dealt with by Paul in **Romans 14:10 - "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...."**

To judge is to ***"despise"*** my brother. It is to ***pass sentence*** on him or her. To judge is to ***assume the role of my brother's judge***. Paul says this is the role of God alone. And this relates to the next point:

- b) **If I assume God's role as judge, I put myself under judgement -2 - "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."** To judge others is to invite judgement - from God, and probably others as well. This ties in with Jesus' previous teaching in **Matthew 6:14-15 - "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, [15] but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."** A condemning stance

toward others shuts God's grace out of my own heart.

- c) **A condemning heart blinds me to my own sin - 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."**

This is the second passage where Jesus deals with the subject of religious hypocrisy (the first is **Matthew 6:5**). The root cause of hypocrisy is the same in each case. In **Matthew 6:5** prayer is offered on the street corner to make the person look holier than he really is. In **Matthew 7:3-4** spiritual judgment and correction is extended to make the judge look righteous and effective. But in each case, God sees the heart and deals with each one accordingly.

Notice carefully. The act of judgment Jesus is describing here is not one that ***desires the repentance of my brother***. That's the last thing the judgmental person wants. That would leave me all alone with my own guilt before God.

Eventually, a judgmental attitude sears my heart to its own guilt. The classic passage on this is **Luke 18:9-14** - "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: [10] "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Listen to this Pharisee as he prays, "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men!" Doesn't that make you gag? The fifty dollar question is, ***how does a person get that sickening and blind?*** The answer is simple. He has exaggerated his own holiness by nailing the sins of those near him. He's not interested in this publican's repentance. Nothing produces spiritual cataracts like a judgmental heart.

- d) **Be particularly careful about judging other's motives - *Fruit*** I can see and measure (we'll study this more in **7:15-20**). ***Motives*** are the private domain of God. We are simply not in a position to assess them. Statements that begin with "***You're just saying that because...***" or "***He's just acting that way because...***" or, "***I think he just feels that...***" should cause great concern to thoughtful Christians. They are ***always*** sinful words. Even if your guess is accurate, you have still stepped into God's role. This is the worst form of idolatry and it happens right in the church. ***Never assign motives to people's actions.*** Leave that with the Lord.

- 2) **THE NEED FOR DISCERNMENT IN MINISTRY - 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."**

These aren't verses primarily relating to our ***evangelism***. They are set in the context of ***helping someone with their spiritual need*** - probably in the context of church ministry. The teaching is direct and simple. Be sensitive to your effectiveness. Know when you're helping and when you're not. Don't let your ***pride*** get in the way of your ***ministry***. Know when to back off and leave people with the Lord.

- 3) **MY MOTIVE FOR A KIND AND GRACIOUS HEART - 7:7-11 - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. [9] Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? [11] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"**

Do you notice how these verses are sandwiched in the middle verses dealing with ***my relationship with others?*** They are more than just a teaching on prayer (though they ***are*** that). They are a reminder. See how God treats us as His children? See how He extends blessings to undeserving people like us? ***He lets His kindness lead us to repentance.*** He never rejoices in our sins. He never pretends they don't exist. But He longs for our softening of heart. He speaks to bring us back to Himself. Holiness and graciousness together.

The conclusion of this study is ***twofold***. First, if I'm more interested in exposing the sin in another's life than in repenting of the sin in my own, I have a deep spiritual problem. I'm only ***using*** my brother's sin to justify my own.

Second, if I'm more concerned with accusing someone else of ***judging*** me than I am grieved by my sin against my redeeming Lord, I have a ***different*** spiritual problem. Let's keep our soul clean and healthy from ***both*** of these sinful attitudes.