



THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE
SERMON *on THE* **MOUNT**
SESSION 9: JUDGMENT



LifeGroups
Do Life Together

New Hope Church

THE JOURNEY THROUGH SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

SESSION NINE: JUDGMENT

MATTHEW 7:1-5

FOLLOW ALONG

You _____.

_____ never helps.

4 practical ideas concerning Judging.

It is _____

It is _____

It is _____

It's _____ what _____

INTRODUCTION:

What's the difference between judging others and talking honestly about sin?

When Jesus says "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," what is he cautioning against? What are the potential negative consequences of judging others?

What do these verses reveal about God our Father?

By using the metaphor of the speck and plank in the eye, what point is Jesus making about the issue with judging others?

How does this illustrate the significance of examining our own faults before pointing out those of others?

Does this teaching about judging others mean that Christians are to be tolerant of all behaviors?

What are some principles we can adopt to ensure that we approach these situations with humility and love?

Going Deeper

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:1-4.

According to Jesus, what happens when we apply a standard of judgment to someone else?

If this wasn't a prohibition on judgment, then what was Jesus' intended meaning in this passage?

Why should we avoid condemning judgment against our brothers and sisters?

This passage does not forbid judgment altogether, but rather prohibits condemning judgments. James clarifies this type of judgment by saying, "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge" (James 4:11). Paul also puts it this way: "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

Do you consider Christ's finished work on the cross when assessing the lifestyle of another believer? Do you pray for the Lord to bring repentance to those who sin or do you look down on them with feelings of superiority and contempt? Do you hold yourself accountable to the same measure? Explain your reasoning.

HAVE A VOLUNTER READ MATTHEW 7:5.

What did Jesus mean in teaching His followers to "take the beam of wood out" of their own eyes?

How does the gospel change the way you view the sin of others? How are you more inclined to be merciful and humble with a brother's or sister's sin when you are keenly aware of your own need for forgiveness?

Judging, evaluating, and discerning are necessary for Christians, and this also involves assessing the behavior of fellow believers. Without this, they would not be able to show love, support, or educate each other. Nevertheless, such judgment and evaluation must be carried out with discernment centered on the gospel.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Have you ever noticed the sins of others without acknowledging your own? How can you become more self-aware of your own sins?

How can you avoid condemning others and instead use gospel-based discernment when dealing with them?

In what ways can displaying charity towards each other create opportunities for Christians to share the Gospel with non-believers?

PRAYER

Give joyful praise because Jesus has made the way for you to be right with God. Ask God to teach you to judge rightly, not as though you were God, but with humility and mercy, knowing that you also are in desperate need of correction, forgiveness, and mercy.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 7:1-6.

7:1-5. This is one of the most often misunderstood and misquoted passages in all the Bible. It is important to understand that Jesus was not making a blanket prohibition against all judgment and discernment, but only against that which is done in self-centered pride. A good summary of his meaning is, "Do not judge others until you are prepared to be judged by the same standard. And then, when you exercise judgment toward others, do it with humility."

A primary evidence for this interpretation is in 7:5. Jesus did command his listeners to help their brothers and sisters with the speck in their eye (exercise judgment concerning another person), but only after we have taken the log out of our own eyes. This presumes that we have acknowledged that we have at least as great an offending capacity as our brother or sister, and so have no cause to think of ourselves as better. Matthew 7:6 also denies a sweeping “no judgment whatsoever” interpretation in that it assumes we should have the good judgment to discern a “swine” when we see one. It is impossible to carry out many of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount without exercising humble judgment concerning others (e.g., 5:6,7,9-11,20,39,44; 6:14-15; 7:6,15-20).

It is one thing to exercise judgment, and quite another to have a judgmental attitude. One is an action that might be carried out with right or wrong motives; the other is a negative character quality.

The theme of prideful judgment seems at first glance to be a radical departure from the flow of the sermon. However, when we consider some of the teaching Jesus had been giving his followers, we begin to understand why this warning is important. He had been challenging the people to rise above what had been wrongly considered the ultimate height of righteousness (5:20)—pharisaical self-righteousness. In fact, Jesus challenged them to perfection (5:48).

But Jesus also knew well our human tendency to take truth and use it to feed a new kind of hypocritical supremacy. He did not want the hypocritical followers of the Pharisees to become the hypocritical followers of Jesus. So he stopped and warned them to apply his teaching first to themselves, then to others.

This is the central application of 7:1-5. Our habitual response to Scripture must be to say, “What about me?” rather than, “What about others?”

The Greek word translated judge, condemn, discern is related to the English “critic” and “criticize.”

The command at the beginning of 7:1 is present tense and, therefore, is best rendered as “stop judging.” We are to get rid of a critical spirit, but seek to be a discerning person. (Passages that reinforce Jesus’ teaching here are Rom. 2:1; 14:4,10-13; 1 Cor. 4:5; 5:12; James 4:11-12.)

Verse 2 expands the principle stated in verse 1 with poetic parallelism. Some suggest that measure refers to charitable judgment. So verse 2 begins with a negative statement ("If you judge harshly, God will judge you harshly"), and ends with a positive statement ("If you judge generously, God will judge you generously"). In 7:3-5, the speck can mean a small speck of anything. The repeated reference to your brother refers to fellow disciples (5:1-2), meaning that Jesus had the Christian community primarily in mind. But the principle is also applicable to anyone. Jesus' own familiarity with the carpenter's shop and the frustration of sawdust and small particles in one's eye personalizes the illustration.

7:6. The second of Jesus' four final exhortations is another warning. This warning balances the first (7:1-5), and attempts to head off another misconception Jesus' listeners might have taken away from the sermon. At first glance, this verse is difficult to interpret because the terms what is sacred, pearls, dogs, and pigs are not explained. But the verse does guard against our tendency to oversimplify the do not judge (7:1) statement, instructing us to be discerning about the character of other people.

Dogs and pigs (wild and unclean) likely refer to people who are not only unbelievers but also active enemies of the gospel (15:14; Luke 23:8; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Pet. 2:22). The most likely interpretation is to take what is sacred and pearls to refer to the gospel or truth, and to take pigs and dogs to mean any person who persistently rejects the gospel or truth, whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus was teaching his people to use discernment when sharing the truth with others. To persist in sharing with a resistant person wastes time and energy. It can also destroy a relationship that might prove fruitful later. It could even (in the climate of growing persecution) result in harm to the believer; it could tear you to pieces.

Taking care with whom and how we share truth is an important principle for believers to grasp in their evangelistic efforts. When we share with our neighbors, we tend to feel we have failed if they do not accept the Lord on the spot. We need to be patient, giving our own lives a chance to speak as a testimony for Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to take his time to work the truth we have shared into the heart and conscience of the unbeliever (John 16:8-11). However, we should not be lazy or inattentive to signs that the unbeliever might be ready for more. There is an art to walking the line between pushiness and apathy.



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