

It's My Job to Judge

Big Idea: It's not my job to judge people, because only God can judge

Read the Bible:
Matthew 7: 1-6

STUDY

*** Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. ***

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



Matthew 7:1-6

“Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or 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? ⁵You 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.



Summary

There is a certain temptation that Christians are prone to fall into when they realize God's call for believers is to live holy lives. The temptation is to believe that we are called to be the judge and jury over people who are not responding to God's call for holiness.

This temptation plays out in two ways. First, we look on those we worship alongside in the church, and we judge their apparent sin and lack of pursuit of holiness. Second, we look out at the lost world around us and marvel at just how sinful they are.

While this temptation to judge is understandable, it's also inexcusable. That is Jesus' message as he closes out his Sermon on the Mount. Jesus reminds his disciples that kingdom people need to look on the world around them and understand, it's not their job to judge other people in their sin. That's God's job.

Jesus offers a couple of very clear reminders here:

First, we have to remember that only God is the true judge. That is Jesus' point in saying, "with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged." In other words, don't think you are the final arbiter on a matter. Judge all you want, but ultimately there is a judgement coming for you as well.

Second, we are to remember our own sinful state. It's easy to look at everyone else's sin and really hard to look at your own. Jesus doesn't let us take the easy way out. When we are tempted to judge, we must remember that first we need to deal with our own sin before we try to deal with others.

Third, we have to remember that as Christians we are not meant to bring the hammer down on people. Instead, we are meant to be a hand up to people in sin. Jesus says that after we have handled our own sin, we are supposed to help other people in sin. Help, not judge.

So, as you go through the Christian life, remember your job is not to judge. Only God can do that, and thankfully for us, He is a kind judge.



Leading Your Group

Community Time

Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

Bible Study

***Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. ***

Start Group by Reading Matthew 7:1-6

Major Points

Point No. 1: Christians are called to help, not judge.

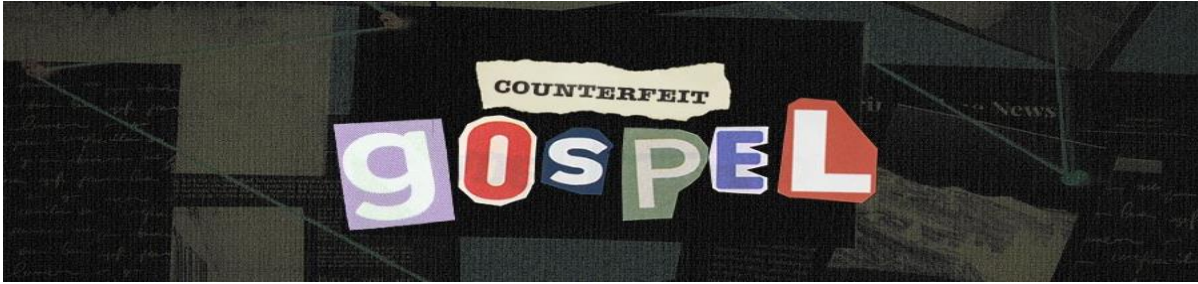
This has always been a favorite verse for people to throw up in defense of their sinful lifestyle and say, “Hey, Judge not.” Despite a bad motive, the people who use this verse to combat judgmental and condemning Christians use it somewhat rightly.

Jesus here is very interested in Christians knowing that they are not called to judge, or condemn, other people. The reason is simple: when we judge other people, we are putting ourselves in the place of God. Only God is meant to sit on a seat where someone can be forgiven or condemned. We don’t have the power, and we shouldn’t try to reach for it.

Nevertheless, Christians are being called to something here. Christians, after they have understood their own sinfulness (log in the eye) are meant to be a helping hand to other people found battered by sin. Christians are called to help people in sin by bringing them to Jesus.

As Paul says in Galatians.

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.



So, it's important to see, while we are called not to judge, Jesus does not relieve us of our duties when it comes to those caught in sin, especially fellow believers. We are to go to them and bring them back to Jesus.

Now, rest assured, helping is much harder than judging. Judgement is easy work. It requires nothing of you and is quick work. Helping is much harder. It requires time, commitment, and a willingness to look someone struggling with sin in the eye and be there for them.

Will we answer Christ's call to help those caught in sin?

Discuss:

What's the difference between helping and judging?

Why is it so tempting to judge others when we are supposed to help them?

Point No 2. Judgmental people are not gospel people.

This is a point easily deduced from this text. Jesus warns, "With the judgment you use you will be judged."

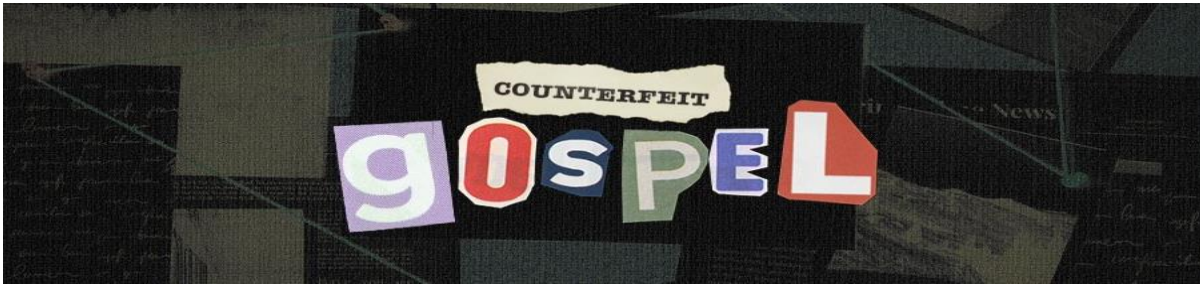
Gospel people, Christians, know that they have received a judgment that is far less than what they deserve. People who have experienced judgment far less than they deserve tend to give out judgment far less than they deserve. Therefore, anyone who makes it a habit out of judging harshly will reap a harsh judgment. This is the complete opposite of the Christian's judgment.

As Christians we need to show our understanding of the gospel of grace by giving out grace as freely as we have received it.

Discuss:

How does a judgmental person reveal their ignorance of the gospel?

How do we fight against being judgmental?



Point No 3: Never forget how sinful you are when dealing with others.

Jesus lays down a principle when it comes to dealing with other people, especially other sinners (i.e., everyone). Don't make it a habit out of noticing their sin without giving proper attention to your own.

You see in every situation we find ourselves in we bring sin into the equation. We are sinful and broken people. Before we can go pointing out anything and everything everyone else does wrong, we first need to strive to understand how great our own sin is.

Most of the problems we encounter relationally would be solved if we kept this principle in mind. The person across from me is not as big a sinner as the person I see in the mirror.

Discuss:

How do we maintain a healthy view of ourselves, one where we understand that we are simultaneously forgiven but sinful?

How does understanding our own sinfulness help us have peace in relationships?



Resources

Expositor's Bible Commentary

6. *Balance and perfection (7:1–12)*

Many argue that these verses have (1) no connection with what precedes, (2) little internal cohesion, and (3) probably find their original context in Luke 6:37–38, 41–42. Only the third assertion is believable.

1. The lack of Greek connectives at vv. 1, 7 is not inherently problematic; similar omissions (e.g., 6:19, 24) do not disturb the flow of thought so much as indicate a new “paragraph” or set off an aphorism. The connection with what precedes is internal. The demand for the superior righteousness of the kingdom, in fulfillment of the OT (5:17–20), has called forth warnings against hypocrisy (6:1–18) and the formulation of kingdom perspectives (6:19–34). But there are other dangers. Demands for perfection can breed judgmentalism (Mt 7:1–5), while demands for love can cause chronic shortage of discernment (v. 6).

2. Thus the internal connection is in part established by dealing with opposing evils. But such great demands on Jesus’ followers must force them to recognize their personal inadequacy and so drive them to prayer (vv. 7–11). The Golden Rule (v. 12) summarizes the body of the sermon (5:17–7:12).

3. The relationship between 7:1–12 and Luke 6:37–38, 41–42 (part of Luke’s “sermon”) is difficult to assess. After his beatitudes and woes (Luke 6:20–26), Luke adds material (6:27–30) akin to Matthew 5:38–48. He then adds the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31), some material akin to Matthew 5, and then the parallel to Matthew 7:1–5. Thus he omits all of Matthew 6, while Matthew 7:1–5 omits part of what Luke keeps in Luke 6:37–42. One or both of the evangelists have rearranged the order of the material. Both make such good sense in their own context that it seems impossible to decide in favor of either. Though a saying as aphoristic as the Golden Rule may well have been repeated during the course of several days’ teaching, there is no sure way of demonstrating this was or was not the case.

a. *The danger of being judgmental (7:1–5)*

1) *The principle (7:1)*



1 The verb *krinō* (“judge”) has a wide semantic range: “judge” (judicially), “condemn,” “discern.” It cannot here refer to the law courts, any more than 5:33–37 forbids judicial oaths. Still less does this verse forbid all judging of any kind, for the moral distinctions drawn in the Sermon on the Mount require that decisive judgments be made. Jesus himself goes on to speak of some people as dogs and pigs (Mt 7:6) and to warn against false prophets (vv. 15–20). Elsewhere he demands that people “make a right judgment” (John 7:24; cf. 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 1:8–9; Philippians 3:2; 1 John 4:1). All this presupposes that some kinds of “judging” are not only legitimate but mandated.

Jesus’ demand here is for his disciples not to be judgmental and censorious. The verb *krinō* has the same force in Romans 14:10–13 (cf. James 4:11–12). The rigor of the disciples’ commitment to God’s kingdom and the righteousness demanded of them do not authorize them to adopt a judgmental attitude. Those who “judge” like this will in turn be “judged,” not by men (which would be of little consequence), but by God (which fits the solemn tone of the discourse). The disciple who takes it on himself to be the judge of what another does usurps the place of God (Rom 14:10) and therefore becomes answerable to him. The *hina mē* (“in order that ... not”; NIV, “or”) should therefore be given full telic force: “Do not assume the place of God by deciding you have the right to stand in judgment over all—do not do it, I say, in order to avoid being called to account by the God whose place you usurp” (cf. b *Shabbath* 127b; M *Sotah* 1:7; b *Baba Metzia* 59b).

2) *The theological justification* (7:2)

2 The strong play on words in Greek suggests that this is a proverbial saying. Formally it is very close to M *Sotah* 1:7; but the use made of it is in each case rather distinctive (cf. Dalman, pp. 223f.). Indeed, precisely because it is a proverb, Jesus himself elsewhere turns it to another use (cf. Mark 4:24). The point is akin to that already established (Mt 5:7; 6:12, 14–15): the judgmental person by not being forgiving and loving testifies to his own arrogance and impenitence, by which he shuts himself out from God’s forgiveness (cf. Manson, *Sayings*, p. 56).

According to some rabbis, God has two “measures”—mercy and justice (Lev R 29.3). Possibly Jesus used this language, adapting it to his own ends. He who poses as a judge cannot plead ignorance of the law (Rom 2:1; cf. James 3:1); he who insists on unalloyed justice for others is scarcely open to mercy himself (James 2:13; 4:12). The problem returns in 18:23–35; here “the command to *judge not* is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous. Jesus does not tell us to cease to be men (by suspending our critical powers which help to distinguish us from animals) but to renounce the presumptuous ambition to be God (by setting ourselves up as judges)” (Stott, p. 177, emphasis his).



3) *An example (7:3–5)*

3–5 The *karphos* (“speck of sawdust”) could be any bit of foreign matter (v. 3). The *dokos* (“plank” or “log”) is obviously colorful hyperbole. Jesus does not say it is wrong to help your brother (for “brother,” see on 5:22; Jesus is apparently referring to the community of his disciples) remove the speck of dust in his eye, but it is wrong for a person with a “plank” in his eye to offer help. That is sheer hypocrisy of the second sort (see on 6:2). 2 Samuel 12:1–12 is a dramatic OT example (cf. also Luke 18:9). It will not do to say that Jesus’ words in this pericope are “meant to exclude all condemnation of others” (Hill, *Matthew*), for to do that requires not taking Mt 7:5 seriously and excluding what Mt 7:6 says. In the brotherhood of Jesus’ disciples, censorious critics are unhelpful. But when a brother in a meek and self-judging spirit (cf. 1 Cor 11:31; Gal 6:1) removes the log in his own eye, he still has the responsibility of helping his brother remove his speck (cf. Mt 18:15–20).¹

Tyndale New Testament Commentary

viii. The disciples’ attitude to one another (7:1–6)

1–2. *Judge* (*krinō*) often carries the connotation ‘condemn’, and it is in that sense that it is used here. The use of our critical faculties in making value-judgments is frequently required in the New Testament, as in vv. 6 and 15–20 of the present chapter. There may be a place for verbal rebuke and even stronger measures: 18:15–17. This passage, however, is concerned with the fault-finding, condemnatory attitude which is too often combined with a blindness to one’s own failings. The least that such an attitude can expect is to *be judged* with equal harshness by other men. But the passive, as often in Matthew, probably conceals God himself as the agent. Just as he will forgive those who forgive (6:14–15), he will condemn those who condemn. The parable of the unforgiving debtor (18:23–35) illustrates the point clearly. Cf. Romans 2:1, 21–23; James 4:11–12. The proverbial saying, *the measure you give will be the measure you get*, occurs in Mark

¹ D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 182–184.



4:24 in a different sense, with reference to care in receiving Jesus' teaching, and in Luke 6:38 with reference probably to generosity in giving. It occurs commonly in Jewish literature to indicate divine retribution (e.g. Mishnah *Sotah* 1:7). Here too it expresses the reciprocal principle in judgment, and so reinforces the previous clause.

3–5. This grotesque illustration, drawn from the carpenter's workshop, exposes graphically the hypocrisy of the sort of criticism condemned in vv. 1–2. The *speck* (*karphos*, a tiny splinter of wood or straw; the word is used in secular Greek metaphorically for something minute) and the *log* (more literally a beam or rafter) in the eye are found also in two Rabbinic sayings, perhaps derived from Jesus' illustration (*Arakhin* 16b; *BB* 15b). *Hypocrite* (see on 6:2) is only here applied to a disciple rather than to Jesus' Jewish opponents. *AB* here translates by 'Casuist!', but the English usage of 'hypocrite' is not far from the sense of inconsistency intended here. Unless v. 5 is to be read as sarcastic (when the beam is removed, the speck will be found to be imaginary), it indicates that there is in fact a fault in the *brother*; the *hypocrite's* error is not in his diagnosis, but in his failure to apply to himself the criticism he so meticulously applies to his brother.

6. This enigmatic saying stands alone, but comes appropriately here in that it qualifies the apparently absolute prohibition of 'judgment' in v. 1. *What is holy* refers probably to consecrated food, which was to be eaten only by the priests and their families (Exod. 29:33–34; Lev. 22:10–16; Num. 18:8–19); to give it to *dogs*, which were regarded as unclean animals to be fed with unclean food (Exod. 22:31), was unthinkable. It is equally unthinkable that something as valuable as *pearls* should be given to *swine*, another unclean animal (cf. 2 Pet. 2:22 for a similar contemptuous linking of dogs and pigs). The use of *dogs* in a racial context in 15:26, although the word is different, has been taken to suggest an overtone of Jewish exclusivism here, but the context does not indicate this. Holy and valuable things (the reference is primarily to teaching, probably) must be given only to those who are able to appreciate them. Cf. Paul's emphasis that only the 'spiritual' can understand spiritual teaching (1 Cor. 2:13–16). God's gifts are not to be laid open to abuse, or his truth to mockery. There is a right discrimination which is different from the censorious judging of vv. 1–2. The early Christian application of this saying to eucharistic discipline (Didache 9:5) is too narrow a definition of a general principle.²

² R. T. France, [Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 1 of *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 146–148.