

Believers are not to Judge Motives or be Fault-finders

Matthew 7:1-6

Matthew 7:1-6 - *"Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

⁶ "Do 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."

Background Notes

In the Old Testament book of Micah we read, *"He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8). Micah 6:8 is not intended to describe the way of salvation, or to tell someone how to be saved. It is a message addressed to God's people, and it describes the way of righteous living. In essence, the message of the Sermon on the Mount is the way of righteous living.

The Sermon on the Mount doesn't give us the way of salvation. You will not find the gospel in the Sermon on the Mount. The essential message of the Sermon on the Mount describes the way of righteous living. In the historical context, the Sermon on the Mount was given to the Jews who were preparing for the Kingdom of Heaven. Remember the message of John the Baptist and the message of our Lord at that time: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand..."

So the way of righteous living in the Sermon on the Mount was presented to those who were preparing for the Lord's Kingdom. Sadly, the nation of Israel rejected the kingdom that was offered to them - but as a result, the gospel has gone out to the whole world.

As Christians today, we can draw principles for righteous living from the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount gives us the way of righteous living.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should not judge the motives or conscience of others.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (v1-2).

This Scripture has been greatly misunderstood. The Lord didn't mean that we are never to make judgments about one another in any area. If that were so, we would have to take a stand against courts of justice and against discipline in the home, in schools, in the workplace and in the church!

The Bible certainly indicates that there are areas in which we are to judge others. Look at verse 15: *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits."* And Matthew 18:15: *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone."* The Matthew 8 passage goes on to say that if your brother will not listen to you, then the church leaders should be told, and the church is then to **judge**. 1 Corinthians 5 teaches that churches are to **judge sin** and discipline members accordingly. 1 Corinthians 6 says that Christians should be available to **judge the disputes** of other believers.

Throughout the epistles of the New Testament, we are told to **judge false teaching**. The apostle John clearly taught that believers should judge whether teachings are correct or false. *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him, for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds"* (2 John 7-11). So certainly we are to make proper judgments about teachers and their teachings in the church. We are to **judge false teachers** and their false doctrine about Christ.

And what about 2 Corinthians 6:14? *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"* We need to be able to judge if a person is a believer before we become "yoked" or joined with them in areas of life such as business or marriage. So Christians are **responsible to judge others** in certain areas.

What did the Lord mean when He said, "Judge not" in the Sermon on the Mount? His point was that we're not to judge the **motives** or the **conscience** of others. We're not to judge the motives of others because we can't see or know motives. We can see sinful behavior and judge that - and we're responsible to judge sinful behavior! But we can't see motives, so we shouldn't jump to conclusions and judge wrongly.

For example, if a student of mine cuts one of my classes, it would be wrong for me to immediately jump to the conclusion that this student is lazy, or unspiritual, or doesn't like my teaching! There may be a very good reason (or motive) why the student cut my class that day!

In addition, we are not to judge another person's conscience. Romans 14 teaches us that there are differences of opinion on areas of life that are not in themselves "right" or "wrong." People have different opinions about such things as working on Sunday, or the most proper Christian music, or what clothing is appropriate for church, and so on. Their consciences may differ from yours in certain non-moral, "gray areas." We are not to judge another believer's conscience in these areas.

Verse 2 tells us that if we presume to judge others (that is, judge their motives or their consciences), **we'll be judged ourselves! And we'll be judged by our own standards** - by the standards **we** set up to judge others! The Lord made a very important and serious point here, and we should listen and obey.

Believers should not judge the motives or conscience of others.

2. Believers should not concentrate on the faults of other believers.

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (v3-5).

Here the Lord was using a figure of speech known as "hyperbole." Hyperbole is purposeful exaggeration used to get a point across. "I told you a million times to turn your homework in on time!" – that's hyperbole. It's purposeful exaggeration, because I didn't really say it a **million** times. Hyperbole is not an error, and it is not a lie! It's a figure of speech. The Lord used hyperbole.

What we have in these verses is like a cartoon! One Christian is saying to another, "You have a speck of sawdust in your eye. Let me help you remove it." Meanwhile, the "helpful" Christian has a log or telephone pole sticking out of his own eye! It really is almost cartoon material! How ridiculous for this Christian to think that he can remove a speck from someone else's eye when he has a log blocking his own eye! You see the point of the hyperbole?

In the same way, we tend to notice all the little faults of our fellow believers – but we don't recognize (or we ignore) our own faults - which may be much larger! It's like a very rich Christian who doesn't even tithe rebuking a less affluent Christian for putting only a dollar in the offering. How blind can he be?

Notice that the Lord didn't say that it's wrong to help our fellow believers with their faults. After all, we all have faults that hinder our walk with the Lord. But before we try to help another believer get rid of a small speck-sized fault, we should first get the huge log-sized faults out of our own lives! Only then we will be able see clearly and truly help our fellow believers with their faults. Let's not be hypocrites!

Believers shouldn't concentrate on the faults of fellow believers.

3. Believers should not "cast their pearls before swine."

"Do 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" (v6).

This verse means that believers are not to entrust holy things to unholy people. Under the Mosaic Law, dogs and swine were unclean animals. The use of the terms "dogs" and "swine" here graphically depicts "unclean" people, or determined

unbelievers - that is, unbelievers who are not at all interested in hearing the Word of God. In fact, this type of person isn't just disinterested - this unbeliever wants to tear down the Word of God and undermine the Christian faith.

Just as dogs aren't capable of appreciating what is sacred, and just as pigs can't appreciate the value of pearls, so some unbelievers are incapable of treating divine truth with respect and appreciation. These people are even vicious in their contempt of Christ and the gospel.

Several years ago I shared some truth about the literary and numerical structure of Scripture with co-worker, an unbeliever. These truths were gems of the Bible that I was just discovering myself. But he wasn't interested. It was like throwing pearls to a pig, and the pig trampling the pearls into the mud. This man may even have filed the biblical information away to use later in making fun of the Christian faith.

Believers should not cast their pearls before swine.

Practical Application

Use your sense of humor to serve the Lord.

God has given us our sense of humor! God has a sense of humor, and we human beings, who were created in the image of God, have a sense of humor as well. Obviously, like everything else that God has given us, humans can use our sense of humor against God by making fun of God, and sadly this is what many people do. But on the other hand, we can use our sense of humor to glorify God and to serve the Lord.

In this section of the Sermon, our Lord used humorous hyperbole to get His point across. The picture of someone with a log sticking out of his or her own eye and yet finding fault with a speck of sawdust in someone else's eye is humorous hyperbole. As I said before, it's almost cartoon material!

The Lord used humor for the glory of God, and so we can we. We should follow the model of our Lord. Our sense of humor is God-given. In sermons, in writing, in witnessing, in relationships - there are many ways in which we can use our sense of humor to serve the Lord.