

# Sermon on the Mount: Judgmental Spirit (Matt 7:1-6)



## A. To Judge or Not to Judge

1. **To judge or not to judge?** This is a very important subject! We grow up learning to judge between right & wrong, sin & righteousness, etc.
  - a. **'Judge'** – *'Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgement.'* (Jn 7:24; 1 Cor 5:11-13; Rev 2:2, 20-23)  
**'Don't judge'** – *'Judge not, that you be not judged.'* (Matt 7:1, 1 Cor 4:5)
  - b. **Which is right?** Often, we do this wrongly and suffer for it! Misunderstanding this subject leads to much error and confusion - on one hand to gullibility and lack of discernment, on the other hand to self-righteousness and divisiveness.
  - c. **It is easy to be judgmental toward others** when we have a strong commitment to the Lord. We tend to draw the 'standard of righteousness' on 'my level of righteousness', and categorise people into 'the remnant vs the rest' and 'the bride vs the lukewarm', etc.
2. **Definition:** In English, the word 'to judge' has both positive (discern, evaluate and correct) and negative (condemn) meanings. The context determines the meaning. **'To rightly judge'** means to rightly discern, evaluate & correct what is out of alignment with God's standard.  
**'Judge not'** means not to be judgmental toward others or 'condemn others' based on the insufficient information I have. Jesus warns us, that the more we judge (condemn) others with a judgmental spirit, the more judgment (condemnation) will come back upon us, and we will become what we hate in others.
3. **This is one of those few cases where Jesus uses humour to get His point across.**
  - a. 'log eye' – the more we enjoy pointing out other people's faults, the bigger our blind spot will become – until we convince ourselves there is a speck in somebody else's eye when it is just the reflection of the log in our eye. When we take the log out of our eye, often the speck will just come out by the other person's eyes through their tears.
  - b. Jesus warns us to be aware of the 'pigs' & 'dogs' around us. Do not offer valuable correction to people who are not prepared to receive it, but will take it as an insult and a cause for personal revenge. That would be throwing pearls before swine. *'Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.'* (Prov 9:8 NLT)

## B. THREE General Principles of Judgment

1. **We do not pronounce judgment on somebody's final character:** *'I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.'* (1 Cor. 4:3-5)
  - a. **Who is the Judge?** There is only one Judge and it is the Lord. And one day I will be judged by the Lord. My judgment (opinion) about events and people is completely meaningless in itself. The reason why I need to use my judgment TODAY – is because, on THAT FINAL DAY, I will stand before Christ's judgment seat to be judged by Him. That is why Apostle Paul tells believers to judge themselves.
  - b. **Why not judge before time?** Because God is still at work in us. God is not finished with us yet. We are all a work in progress. Therefore, we do not pass a final judgment (opinion) of someone's character and write him off. That is a very presumptuous thing to do. It is an offensive act to take the judge's seat, even before the court is seated (Ps 1:1).
2. **We are not called on to judge the 'hidden motives' of others.** *Then what do we judge? We judge the 'fruit of someone's life.* We are to judge (correctly discern) the concrete actions of a 'righteous' or a 'sinful lifestyle.' We are also called to judge (discern) 'false teaching.'

Why are we not to judge the hidden motives of other people?

- a. We don't have the full knowledge of somebody's inner motives.
- b. Our judgment is easily impaired by personal feelings. When we carry offense in our hearts, we tend to 'impute' evil motives to other people's actions.

Our judgment is influenced by the '*condition of our heart*'. We need to be aware that our knowledge is limited, and we are easily influenced by what we already 'feel' inside. '*He [Jesus] shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness, He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...*' (Is 11:3) The first sin of mankind was committed in the Garden of Eden because Adam imputed an evil motive to God when God does not have any. He had the 'gift of suspicion', not 'the gift of discernment.'

3. **We are not to judge what is outside of our responsibility.** We are to judge [discern & correct] what is under our responsibility. We are to 'discern' & 'assess' everything, but not assume a 'correcting & judging role' on what is beyond our responsibility.
  - a. '**We are to judge ourselves**' – '*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*' (1 Cor 11:31-32). Very few people take the time to judge themselves. It is one mark of spiritual maturity to be able to judge ourselves. Often those who are experts in judging others tend to be least objective about themselves.
  - b. **We are to judge within the sphere of God-given responsibility** - parents in a family, managers at the workplace, leaders in a local church, etc. Each local church must carry out corrective judgment over the affairs of their own congregation. As a principle, we do not meddle in the affairs of another church.

**Christian Witch-hunters?** '*God has given me the ministry to expose all the hidden sins in the church?*' someone claimed once. 'Really? I thought that was the devil's job, the Accuser of the brethren,' (Rev 12:10).

**People who are eager to throw stones** (John 8:1-5). What is the payoff? Cutting down other people makes me feel taller. No, the opposite is the truth. '*For with what judgment you judge, you judge, you will be judged. And with what measure you use it will be measured back to you.*' (7:2) *We only condemn ourselves when we judge others harshly.*

**Could Christians live under a 'curse'** because we pass unrighteous judgment on other Christians? Jesus said we must give an account of every 'idle word' on that day (Matt 12:38).

## C. How to Judge Righteously

1. **Right information** – Accurately. *We must acknowledge that we only have partial information at best.* Hence adopt a humble attitude and listen carefully when there is more than one side of the story. '*He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him ... The first one to plead his cause seems right until his neighbour comes and examines him.*' (Prov. 18:13, 17). **Do not allow backbiting & personal attacks to continue behind somebody's back.** Do not share in the guilt of slander against a brother before God. E.g. '*I am not interested in hearing these stories...*'
2. **Right process** – Confidentiality and one-on-one first (Matt 18:15-17). Not behind someone's back, not one against five, but one on one. Don't spread it around. If they repent, then forgive, and the offence is dealt with.
3. **Right spirit**
  - a. **Humbly**: knowing that I am just as weak. '*Brethren if 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). **First remove the log from our eyes before offering to help with the speck in another's eye.** If you are obsessed with a spec in somebody's eye, be very careful – it might be the log in your own eyes.
  - b. **Gently**: Make sure you don't do it out of personal offense. Who wants to offer their eye to someone eager to take out a speck with a spanner? Do I have love for that person?
  - c. **Patiently**: Give it time rather than demanding an immediate & full repentance.

4. **Dogs and pigs?** Jesus had nothing to say to Herod. Some are utterly unprepared to hear correction, but ready to turn on you to trample on you. There is a time to move on. (*Prov 9:8*)
5. **Heart of Wisdom:** We thank God for giving us His righteousness as a gift. And we are to live mercifully toward others. The heart of wisdom for God's redeemed people is to live in the awareness of the ultimate reality - the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:9-10, Ps 90:12).

#### **D. Questions**

1. The Scriptures teach us 'not to judge' and 'to judge rightly.' How do we resolve this apparent contradiction? What are we NOT to judge as Christians?
2. What are we called to judge? What are the principles we need to follow so that we can judge rightly?
3. How do you know that you will not come to the ultimate judgment for hell? Why then will the believers stand before God for judgment? Is the judgment seat of Christ real to you?