

To Judge or Not to Judge

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 7:1-5

A person once said, *“If the devil is not able to destroy a Christian’s witness by making him apathetic, he will try to do it by making him a fanatic.”*

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.”*

I. The Principle Stated (Matthew 7:1-2)

A. What does Jesus mean?

1. We know it is a present, imperative command:
 - a) Stop judging now! Stop an action you are already doing.
 - b) Do not judge in the future! Do not restart the action in the future.
2. Questions that arise:
 - a) Does He mean all judging is forbidden and without any qualification?
 - b) Does Jesus mean Christians are to form no opinions about our neighbor?
 - c) Should I assume a position of “Don’t judge me!” or give in to it?
 - d) Should a church not discipline members in the case of flagrant, willful sin?
 - e) Should a country eliminate its court system to fulfill this command?
3. If we take that position, then we must deal with many other passages to the contrary
 - a) **John 7:24**, *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*
 - b) **1 Corinthians 5:12 (KJV 1900)** — **12** For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?
 - c) **1 Corinthians 5:11-13 esp. vs. 12**, *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*
 - d) **1 Corinthians 6:1-5**, Saints to judge grievances between believers.
 - e) **Galatians 1:8, 9**, Judge the soundness of the Gospel message
 - f) **Philippians 3:2**, **1 Thess. 2:14, 15**; **1 Tim. 1:6, 7**; **Titus 3:2, 10**; **1 John 4:1**; **2 John 10**; **3 John 9**

B. So, what does Jesus mean?

1. The commentator William Hendriksen states, *“He means (see verses 3–5) that it is wrong for anyone to concentrate his attention on the speck in his brother’s eye and, while thus occupied, to ignore the beam in his own eye. The Lord is here condemning the spirit of censoriousness, judging harshly, self-righteously, without mercy, without love, as also the parallel passage (Luke 6:36, 37) clearly indicates.”*¹
2. **Luke 6:36–37**, *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. 37 “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; Luke 6:38, give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”*
3. Being judgmental means you attempt to play God when you are not...
 - a) Strictly speaking, verse one applies to declaring final judgment on someone
 - b) The danger is “Judge not, that you be not judged (by God).
 - c) God and God alone can judge righteously (**Jer 11:20**, **1 Sam 16:7**, **Psa 7:9**)

C. The Principle & Examples (**Lev 24:17-20**)

1. Upon Adoni-Bezek by Judah (**Judges 1:3-7, esp. vs. 7**)
2. Upon Agag by Samuel (**1 Samuel 15:33**)

¹ Hendriksen, William, and Simon J. Kistemaker. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. Vol. 9. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001. (357)

II. The Principle Explained (Matthew 7:3-4)

- A. The Beam (Matt 18:23-27)
- B. The Speck (Matt 18:28-30)
- C. The Hypocrisy (Matt 18:31-34)
- D. The Result (Matt 18:35)
 - 1. As a reminder, if you are a Christian, a believer in the death, burial, and resurrection in payment for your sin, you are a recipient of debt-forgiveness for a debt you had no way to pay for, ever.

III. The Principle Applied (Matthew 7:5)

- A. The Hypocrite's request. (**Matthew 7:5a**)
 - 1. *'Let me take the speck out of your eye,'* (**Matthew 7:4**)
- B. The Hypocrite's charge.
 - 1. *'first take the log out of your own eye'* (**Matthew 7:5b**)
 - 2. A log or beam was a heavy piece of timber used as a rafter or joist in a building.
 - a) We are useless in God's kingdom until we remove the beam.
 - b) The picture of hypocrites (**John 8:7**, *And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."*)
- C. The hypocrite's result
 - 1. *'then you will see clearly'* (**Matthew 7:5c**)
 - 2. *'to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.'* (**Matthew 7:5d**)

IV. Final Thoughts

- A. Passing judgment is bound in the heart and sinful nature of a person (**Romans 2:1-3**)
 - 1. Judging without dealing with our sins makes us hard-hearted and unrepentant.
 - 2. If this is a lifestyle and our constant spirit, we risk being Pharisaical. (**Matthew 6:2, 5**)
 - a) The focus is on us and not the one Who forgave us
 - b) **Luke 18:9-10**, *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.*
- B. No one is immune from passing blind judgment
 - 1. David felt the sting of this truth as Nathan, the prophet, calls out David and his justification for sin.
 - 2. **2 Samuel 12:5-7**, *Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." 7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.*
- C. Guard rails to prevent false judgment.
 - 1. We should avoid saying what is untrue (**Exodus 23:1**, *"You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness."*) We cannot judge things when we do not have clarity on all the facts. To do so runs the risk of bearing false witness or providing false testimony.
 - 2. We should avoid saying what is unnecessary (**Proverbs 11:13**, *Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.*). Some things are NOT necessary to make public.
 - 3. We should avoid saying what is unkind (**Proverbs 18:8**, *The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.*)
- D. Our prayer
 - 1. **Psalms 139:23-24**, *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*
 - 2. Ask God to judge you, reveal your sin, and lead you to righteousness.