



Bible Study, February 22, 2023

Series: The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7

Lesson 7: Understanding Judgement

Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator

Introduction

Do you realize how destructive being judgmental of other people can be as a Christian? Today's lesson by the Lord Jesus Christ aims specifically at the judgmental nature of the religious leaders at that time. The practice of judging people was ongoing, and Jesus cautioned His disciples forbidding them from doing this unless there is hostility towards GOD and His Word. Let us read the central text.

The Scripture Reading | Matthew 7:1-6

¹ "Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

⁴ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

⁶ "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Examining the Text

As we look at this teaching moment, we will see that self-righteousness stands out as the key part of Jesus' teaching on righteousness. Let us see what we can learn.

¹ "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Watch Being Judgmental When Observing Other People

There is nothing so distasteful as being around a person continuously judging other people. It turns you off being with that person. Jesus was constantly under the judgmental eyes of the Pharisees and other religious groups that disliked him. Do you remember in the Scriptures this judgmental assessment of Him in the following verses: *Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."* [Matthew 12:22-24] They judged the Lord as being under the influence of Satan while delivering a person from demonic attack and healing him.

Jesus warned His disciples not to judge or it will result in them being judged. Jesus said there is an equivalent action for casting judgment on other people. Why? Because judgment belongs to GOD alone (CF: James 4:12). Also, it is clear in His teaching that His command to them is a

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challenge not to be like the *Pharisees and hypocrites*. This is a term Jesus often used when addressing the Pharisees (CF: *Matthew 23:13, 15*). The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law exalted themselves before other people. Their practice of condemnation and judgment was a way of reinforcing their self-exaltation. Jesus' caution is not limited to the disciples in His day. It is a caution to the church to be on guard about judgment. The people in the church must avoid judging others who are not knowledgeable and disciplined in spiritual things. We must remember that we were unchurched before we were spiritually converted. Our growth in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding has only happened since our salvation.

The other significant point that Jesus emphasized to His disciples was to be aware that judgment circles back around to a person. He told them if they judge others, then they will be judged too. He goes on to say that the measure they use will be measured against them. What does this mean? GOD is the true Judge and He judges fairly, as well as rightly. When judgment against another person is unloving, unwise, unjust, unmerciful, and fault-finding, GOD will return the judgment by being the same way. So, do not judge another person's heart, do not judge another person with your intentions being bad, and do not judge another person without knowing the facts as to why you are judging. Jesus taught them earlier that the merciful will receive mercy (CF: *Matthew 5:7*). Once more, James held the church accountable when wrote the following verses: *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.* [James 2:12-13] You who have ears, hear what the Spirit is saying.

1. Tell why mercy triumphs over judgment.

³ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Watch Being Self-Righteous About a Fault in Another Person

Jesus shared a great illustration of a self-righteous person looking at the fault of another person. Here is what He shared in the following verses: *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 'I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'* [Luke 18:10-14]



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How openly self-righteous can this person (A Pharisee) be when talking to GOD and criticizing another unjust person? In this part of Jesus' teaching to the disciples, He tells them not to be so quick to find a fault with another person when the fault within them is greater. Thus, the difference between having a speck or splinter in one's eye and having a plank or a log in their eye. Jesus made it clear that the greatest fault is usually within the person judging rather than the other person. It is like the cliché that says, "When you point one finger, three fingers are pointing back." Do not misunderstand Jesus, both people have a major sin problem. However, a person cannot fairly minister if his or her sin is greater than the other person.

Jesus wanted them to know that looking at someone else's sin rather than their own was hypocritical. A good example of this hypocritical nature is illustrated in the following verses: *"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ...Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. [2 Samuel 12:4-7, 9]* King David looked quickly at another rich man's wicked intention and was ready to avenge the poor man for being abused. But when the prophet told him that he was the guilty man. Also, he told the king that GOD had given him everything he needed as king. It was at this point that David saw and recognized how great his sin was before GOD.

To ensure that the disciples did not have any logs in their eyes, they needed to check the sin in their own lives. Also, it would be necessary for them to help each other check his sins and faults. Lastly, it would be helpful if they confessed their sins and prayed for each other so they could be healed. After all the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (CF: James 5:16).

1. Tell of a time in which you looked at someone else's fault and did not consider your fault. How did you get back on track?

⁶ "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.



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Watch Those Who Reject the Kingdom of Heaven by Attacking It

In this part of His teaching, Jesus issues a caution to the disciples. It is still a part of His teaching about judgment. Also, it answers the question about when to judge a person. There have been other occasions in which Jesus used the terms "dogs" and "pearls" as teaching moments for His disciples. Here, we observe Him telling the disciples not to give what is sacred to dogs and not to throw pearls to pigs. Why? Because they will trample the spiritual things of the kingdom and turn to attack them. Let us give some details of the Lord's teaching. To call someone a dog is normally a rebuke to the person that hears it (CF: 1 Samuel 17:42-44). Jesus used this term as a reminder to His disciples that everybody will not receive the good news about the kingdom of heaven. He let them know that there would be times when they will have to withdraw the message and move on elsewhere.

Consider the following verses: *Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ...If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town, and shake the dust off your feet.* [Matthew 10:11, 13-14]

If you recall, Jesus used the term "pearl" in a parable describing the valued cost of seeking the kingdom of heaven. Here is what He said in the following verses: *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.* [Matthew 13:44-46] For some people the kingdom of heaven is worth giving up everything to pursue it. While for others it interferes with their ability to own things, the call to serve, and the freedom to live and do things in this world. It is not a seek first His kingdom of heaven and His righteousness for them (CF: Matthew 6:33).

Peter the Apostle when writing the church late in his ministry showed that He understood the Lord's teaching. He observed false prophets and false teachers who misled believers with their wrong doctrines.

Here is what He said in the following verses: *"These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for 'people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.' If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn their backs on*



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the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud."

[2 Peter 2:17-22] Overall, the disciples understood from this teaching point made by Jesus that there is a time to judge people with wrong intentions concerning the holy kingdom of heaven.

2. Tell of a time when you had to stop sharing the gospel with someone because they were hostile about hearing it.

Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture is taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version®*, NIV®, Copyright©1973, 1978, 1984. 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved worldwide.