
**“Jesus' Take on Judging and Hypocrisy”
(Matthew 7:1-6)
Pastor Peter Yi
March 8th, 2009**

Introduction:

When Christ came to earth he came to set us free. When he died on the cross and rose again, he came to set us free from the consequences and effects of sin on our lives. One of the things sin does is it keeps us from being authentic, genuine, sincere and honest with ourselves and others. Sin makes us hypocritical. The definition of hypocrite is “actor”. An actor is putting on a show. An actor is acting a part. He is not really the character he or she is portraying. The actor is always seeking the praise of the audience. And so you can see where we get the whole idea of a hypocrite. When we are hypocritical we are acting a part. We are not being sincere and real and honest with ourselves and others. Hypocrisy is the basis of fake religion and fake spirituality. Hypocrisy is all about show. Hypocrisy is all about other appearances, but it lacks substance. True religion or authentic faith is a matter of the heart, all the time.

Hypocrisy often leads to a judgmental spirit and that's the subject we'll be looking at today. Remember that the Sermon on the Mount, the teachings of Jesus that's recorded in Matthew 5-7 are teachings that are directed toward Christians. These are the commands of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is a description of what a normal Christian should look like from the inside, out. There may not be any other passage in scripture that so deeply penetrates the flaws in our character, our attitudes, our spirituality than these three chapters. Let's take another look.

TNIV 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 someone else's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say, '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 the other person'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 then turn and tear you to pieces.

The whole subject of judging might be one of the most misunderstood teachings for Christians. And the reason we have misunderstood this subject is because we do not include all the bible passages that speak about judging. Instead we take this one passage and base our whole understanding of the subject on it. And of course this verse has been used so many times, usually out of context, and that just adds to the confusion. We throw out statements like, “Well, I shouldn't judge.” “Who am I to judge?” “Judge not, lest you be judged.” “I don't want to be judgmental.” “Who are you to judge me?” “That church, those people are so judging.” Many people leave the church for that reason.

And many people use this verse to avoid having anyone ever addressing anything about their lives. If someone comes a little too close or probes a bit too much, we say, “don't judge me.” And so Christian who are like that can't grow, because there is no one to lovingly tell you what you might be doing wrong.

And for many Christians, because of misunderstanding this verse, they have lost the courage and love to confront our fellow church members, who might be living in sin or going down the wrong path. So I hope we can all begin to see why we need to have a more thorough understanding of this subject.

First of all, it doesn't mean that Christians are to never exercise judgment. They think that only God has a right to judge. We humans, because we are flawed, or because we too are guilty, should never judge someone else. But that type of position really does come from a gross misunderstanding of the bible's teaching on judging.

For example, there are many instances where we are to exercise judgment upon people. We are to exercise judgment in the area of church discipline. If a person is living in sin and that person is causing a stink in the church, at an individual level and at a corporate level we are to make a careful judgment and exercise it with love. Matthew 18 is a perfect example of this. When a brother sins against us, what do we do? Well we're to confront this brother. But we can't confront the brother until we've made a judgment. The judgment might be, that that person gossiped about me. Gossip is sin. You make a judgment and then you lovingly confront the person.

And related to that church leaders are put in place to not only care for, but also to protect the flock. We protect them from false teaching. We protect them from divisive members. And those leaders have the responsibility to carefully confront members who are teaching the wrong stuff. They are there to rebuke members who are trying to play politics and divide and split the church. And that cannot be done without judging.

We have to exercise judgment as citizens or as servants of the state. Political leaders, judges, and citizens all have to make judgments that are in the best interest of society. We judge our politicians and if they do not hold to values that we view are important we try to vote them out of office. So that's another area where Christians should be exercising wise and godly judgment.

Related to that, every single believer must exercise judgment in matters related to doctrine. I love truth. I love doctrine. That's why I am enjoying teaching the Theology for Dummies class. And whenever I listen to a teacher, preacher, on the radio, podcast, or in person, I am always, always, putter the words of that teacher through my biblical/theological filter. One of the foundations, premises that we laid in our Dummies class is the assumption that the Bible is, in fact, the Word of God, and is true. And over and over in that class we ask and we read and we discuss, "What does the bible say about...such and such a subject?" So every Christian needs to know their stuff. You need to be able to sniff out a heresy, a false teaching, a quack. That's an area we all must exercise judgment.

Finally, the bible tells us that we are to judge our fellow believers, but we are not to judge non-believers. Most of us think the opposite. We think that we're to judge those sinners, the ungodly pagan world, but all us within the walls of this church, we should never judge. We should never say a harsh word or confront. But listen to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. It's written in the context of carrying out church discipline because a man in the church was sleeping w/ his mother or step-mother.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

So we're told not to issue a judgment on people that are not in Christ. You might come across a bunch of street kids downtown, smoking dope in the park. And your reaction might be. "Losers. Stupid kids. Get a stinkin' job. Go to school!" Our reaction should be, "they need Jesus. They need to meet God. So it's not our job to judge them. But if among those kids, is the youth group president, or praise leader. And she's smoking up too, then you step in and speak a word of truth and rebuke to her.

Now that we've established what it doesn't mean, and we've looked at instances where we must exercise judgment, in what circumstance or in what way must we avoid judging? Let's look at this passage one more time.

TNIV 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 someone else's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say, '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 the other person'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 then turn and tear you to pieces.

Here's how commentator Leon Morris says it,

Judging refers to the passing of harsh, adverse verdicts on the conduct of our fellows: it does not forbid the use of our best critical thinking.

"Don't judge" does not mean "don't think."

This passage is speaking against a person who has a continuous condemning spirit, a hypercritical spirit, a judgmental spirit. It is a part of this person's character. This person makes it a practice of condemning, of being the first to throw the stone in judgment. This person doesn't know what it means when the scripture says that "love covers a multitude of sins." He or she doesn't know how to extend grace.

This person is always critical of church leadership. The leaders of the church can never be good enough. This person criticizes why church money was spent this way and not that way, but he himself doesn't even tithe. This person will always be the first to tell you what is wrong with some thing, some program, or some person. This person is usually critical about things, that to every one else, is okay. They are petty in their criticism. They look for specks. They look for sawdust. This person will always **tell** you how to do it better, but will never show you how to do it better.

This person at the same time will ever talk about his or her own flaws. They do not handle criticism well. They get defensive. And they'll reflect or deflect the criticism back to you or to someone else. Or they'll justify themselves. They'll say, "Well, I'm only human." But to others they expect perfection. People like this, they have very little measure of introspection. They are not very aware of their own brokenness and sinfulness. They don't pray. They don't pursue inner holiness. They focus on appearance rather than inner transformation. They're more concerned about looking dignified than they are about letting it all hang in worship. They are hypocrites. They are fakes.

Now that's pretty harsh, I know. But every single one of us has a measure of this hypocrisy. We all are much better at judging others than we are at judging ourselves. We're all better at being critical with others and pointing out the flaws of others and criticizing a person's behavior or character, than we are with seeing those things within ourselves.

Jesus says that this person cannot see the blaring blind spot. Everyone else sees it, but that person see it. If you were to take the whole plank in the eye literally, it would be noticeable to everyone. But because the person is so focused on sawdust and specks, then cannot notice that they have a two-by-four in their own eye. You all know who this person is. It's the guy at work that everyone thinks is a jerk, but he doesn't see it.

Why shouldn't we judge this way?

The reason is because we too will be judged by God. What does this mean? It doesn't mean we go to hell. It means a couple of things.

1. God will punish us. He disciplines or chastises those he loves. And in order to correct us, he will discipline us. And that can come in many forms.
2. At the believers judgment we will be judged by God based on what we did and did not do. So all Christians make it to heaven, but we will judged by God for our behavior and actions on earth and our rewards or lack there of will be based on how we judged as well as other things.

So as we carry out judgment properly, we have to have the fear and reverence of God. We must never assume the position of God in judgment, where God and only God can be the final judge.

The proper way

Jesus isn't saying to never judge. We already established that we are to judge each other. But first things first.

Step 1: Remove Plank from one's own eye. Stand under the introspection of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Take a hard look at yourself. Listen to your spouse. All of us have two sets of eyes. One to see outwardly. With these eyes we look at nature and scenery. We look at the sky and earth. We look at people and beauty and ugliness. These are our outward eyes. Everyone, except for the blind have these eyes. But everyone also has another set of eyes. These eyes look inward as the bible says our eyes are the window to our hearts. So with these eyes we look at our hearts. We look at our character. We look at our holiness or lack thereof. We look at our attitudes, appetites, and ambitions.

The problem with many Christians is that they have 20/20 vision with their outward eyes, especially when it comes to pointing out specks and dust. But when it comes to our inward eyes, we are incredibly myopic, short sighted, and even blind. We don't look within. We don't sit under the word of God and let it have its way with us. We don't seek accountability. We've allowed our inward eyes to become encrusted and filmed over so we can no longer see our hearts, our flaws. But this is the first step.

You know what...no one likes being corrected by a hypocrite. No one. Because everyone knows he's a fake. Everyone knows he doesn't have your best intentions at heart. Everyone knows he's got a nasty disposition.

But I think all of us are responsive to the criticism of the humble and holy. Isn't that true? If I know this person loves me, I will listen. If I know this person is full of humility I will listen.

So all of us need to make sure we are always removing planks and not allowing any log jams to occur.

Step 2: Now you can see clearly. You receive clear, non-hypocritical perspective. Now it's one sinner to another. One forgiven person to another. It's now, "I used to struggle with that, let me offer to help you." Now that speck that you noticed, might not have even been a speck at all. It was a birthmark. What I was going to criticize about that person is not a sin thing. It's just a personality thing.

And even it is a sin, you can see it crystal clearly. You can diagnose this issue. You know when we criticize and we say things like. "You always do that." "You do everything wrong." And those criticisms are filled with generalities and nothing specific, then you know he's pulling a smoke screen. But once we become better at seeing sin in ourselves, we will become better at lovingly and graciously pointing out sin in others.

Step 3: help your fellow brother or sister remove the speck. And we do this with humility. We do this with brokenness. We do this with care and compassion. We do this not to tear down but to build up. We do this with caution because Paul says in Galatians 6:1,

1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

It'll be, "Hey brother, can I have a word with you? You know I love you as a brother in Christ and I care for you very much. I want to speak to you about your gambling. I know you say you are only doing it for fun, but scripture says...trust in the Lord...that we should work with our hands...that we should be good stewards with our money...that we should set a good example to others...Would you stop gambling, confess, repent, and get right with God on this?"

This is how God wants the community of believers to be. Not a place where no one can be authentic and no one expose their weaknesses and failures for fear of judgment. No. God wants the community of the church to be a place of authenticity, sincerity. A place where brothers and sisters first look at their own hearts, but also have the courage to look at the lives of those around them, knowing that we're all in this together, that if one part suffers, we all suffer.

People of God, in the Kingdom of God there is no place for hypocrisy, not before a God that sees the heart, tests the heart, enters the heart, heals the heart. Let's deal truthfully with ourselves first, and then with each other.