

Can We Judge Others?

Someone once said that the opening verse of this study is now the most quoted passage in the Bible and not John 3:16. The opening verse of our passage is Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.” (NASB). This passage is very popular! It is not unique to just one culture. Let me illustrate. There is a Japanese proverb which states, “Search seven times before you suspect anyone.” Confucius is quoted as saying, “It is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your failure to appreciate them.” The famous Rabbi Hillel of Jesus’ time said, “Judge not your friend until you have stood in his place.” There is an American Sioux proverb that says, “Before I judge my neighbor, let me walk a mile in his moccasins.” An Arabian proverb reads, “Examine what is said, not who speaks,” and Mother Teresa said, “If you judge people, you have not time to love them.” No one likes to be judged. We are all familiar with judgmental people. We are familiar with our own failings in judging people unfairly and harshly. Everyone judges others. It is like drinking water. We all do it.

HARRY IRONSIDE. Dr. H. A. Ironside was a famous preacher. He was a man that Dr. J. Vernon McGee highly respected and desired to be like. Those who knew Dr. Ironside well said that he would tell the following account about himself. Dr. Ironside had decided to travel on a cruise ship from the United States to Europe. When he arrived on board, he discovered that he would be sharing a stateroom with another man. After meeting the man, Dr. Ironside felt uncomfortable about leaving any of his valuables in the room. He did not trust the man. Consequently, he took his valuables to the office onboard the cruise ship and explained to the steward why he wanted to leave his possessions in the ship’s safe. The steward agreed to do that, and then told Dr. Ironside before he left that the other man had been there only minutes before Dr. Ironside arrived and wanted to leave his valuables for the same reason.

Both men had quickly judged the other person and come to the wrong conclusion. But that is usually what we do. We look at someone, hear him, and make a quick evaluation.

LADY AT THE AIRPORT. This is

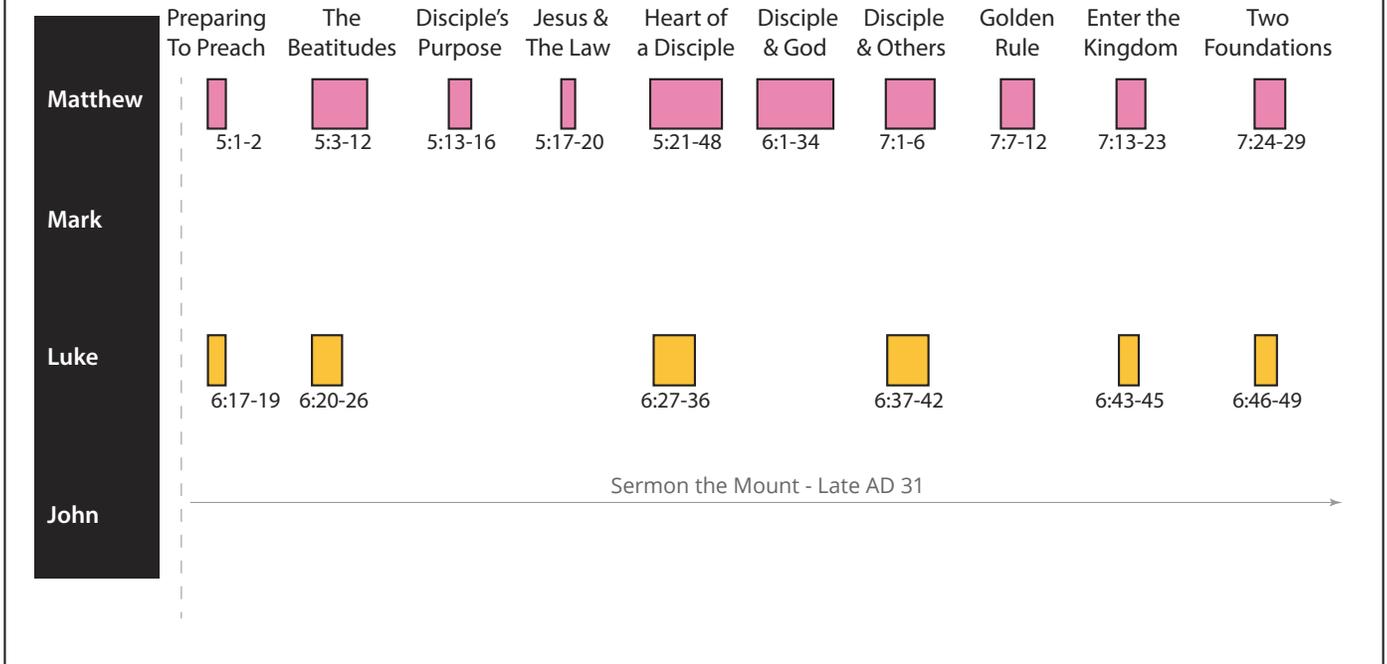
another true story. It is about a woman who went to an airport early to catch her flight. She came with a book and a package of cookies. After she arrived at the gate for her flight, she sat down and settled in to read her book. After a while a man sat down two seats away, leaving one seat between them. After awhile she noticed that the man was fumbling to open a package of cookies. He eventually opened it, took one, and ate it. She was stunned that he would be eating her cookies. So she decided to not say anything and quickly took the next

cookie so that he did not eat them all. After a few minutes he took another one, and then she quickly took another. She was irritated but said nothing. This continued until one cookie was left. Then he broke it in half and ate one half. Now she was really upset that he did not leave the last for her. After a while he left. Eventually, she boarded her flight, arrived at her seat, and after sitting down reached into her purse to get a tissue. Then she discovered that her package of cookies was still in her purse. She felt terrible. She realized that she had been too quick to judge the man. She had eaten his cookies and he had kindly and graciously shared his



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cookies, including his last one, without saying a word.

OUR RESPONSE. Dr. H. A. Ironside and the woman at the airport were both judgmental. We identify with both situations. We have judged others unfairly too! We have been judged unfairly also! When we know that we have been judged unfairly, it hurts and we are offended. Our response to our hurts is not unexpected. We may respond by saying unkind words, complaining, or demeaning the person to others. We ignore the following proverb,

He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool. (NASB) Proverb 10:18

According to Proverbs we are fools when we slander the one who offended us. We also speak evil about another person ignoring Titus 3:2.

... malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (NASB) Titus 3:2

Gossip can be a sophisticated form of slander. One can

hide the hatred of the soul by sharing “important information” that others “need to know.” We can pretend to care about someone while we enjoy sharing the bad news. It is difficult to know if someone’s heart is pure or cunning when he or she is speaking about another person. Gossip often occurs when hatred is in the heart. God has said that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), and hurts too!

R. G. LeTourneau, owner of a large earth-moving equipment company, told this story. “We used to have a scraper known as the model ‘G.’ Somebody asked one of our salesmen one day what the ‘G’ stood for. The salesmen, after thinking a few seconds, replied, ‘Well, I guess the ‘G’ stands for gossip, because like gossip, this machine moves a lot of dirt and moves it fast.” [1]

What is gossip? Gossip has been defined as personal or sensational facts that are shared about another person. It is usually hurtful and designed to damage the reputation of another person. The Greek word translated as “gossip” refers to “harmful information about a person.” Sometimes it can refer to “harmful information that is not widely known.”

Sometimes gossip occurs because a person enjoys talking about the sensational, and does not stop to think about the impact of what they are sharing. Anger or hatred can also motivate gossip.

Sometimes we are hurt and as a result our judgment of the offending party is quick and brutal. We are looking for faults, and we become easily offended. Have you ever rejoiced when something bad happened to that party? Recently, I read Proverbs 24:17-18 and discovered something that I had never noticed before. I had read the passage before but never noticed an important truth. Here is the passage,

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; or the LORD will see it and be displeased, and turn His anger away from him. (NASB) Prov. 24:17-18

The passage is amazing. God warns us that if we rejoice because our enemy is hurt, then He will withhold His judgment from that person. God does not want us to be happy when others get hurt. God wants us to love them and pray for them (Matt. 5:43-44). He does not want us to rejoice when trouble falls on them.

JUDGE, JUDGE & JUDGE. Jesus' next statement causes us to stop and think.

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (NASB) Matt. 7:1-2

The actual Greek wording in the second verse is fun. The English word misses Jesus' play on words. The literal Greek reads as follows,

For with the judgment you are judging, you will be judged; and with the measurement you are measuring, you will be measured. Matt. 7:2

Notice that Jesus repeats the idea that the criteria we use to evaluate others will be used to evaluate us. The same idea is repeated in Rom. 2:1-3.

The Greek word translated as "judge" or "judged" comes from the root word "KRINO." It means "to analyze," or "to evaluate." That is, "judge" does not mean to condemn another person. It refers to the evaluation of another person or thing. So we must ask, does Jesus mean that we cannot evaluate other people? Are we prohibited from evaluating the lives of other people? Jesus answers our questions with three illustrations.

CARPENTER'S ILLUSTRATION. Jesus' first illustration is taken from a carpenter's shop.



Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and behold, the log is in your own eye? 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. (NASB) Matt. 7:3-5

The Greek word translated as "speck" is KARPHEIS. It refers to a "splinter" or "speck," a thin piece of wood that might get stuck into one's finger. Jesus

was a carpenter and this illustration would have been familiar to Him. If a splinter of wood got into someone's eye, such as could happen in a carpenter's shop, the person might need help in order to get it out. But it would be a mistake if someone tried to help who had a log in his own eye that prevented him from seeing clearly.

Did you notice Jesus' words, "see clearly to take the speck out"? That requires an evaluation of the person's eye in order to find the speck and remove it. It requires evaluation, or judgment. Jesus' illustration teaches that we can evaluate or make a judgment. Jesus' statement, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged" was not a prohibition against making judgments about or evaluating people.

The key part of Jesus' carpentry illustration is the logs in our own eyes. In John 7:24, Jesus made this comment to a crowd,

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (NASB) John 7:24

Jesus taught them how to make good judgments. We are not to be like Dr. H. A. Ironside who made a judgment according to appearance. Instead, we are to judge with righteousness. That is, we are to judge fairly. Nicodemus added this in John 7:51,

Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it? (NASB) John 7:51

That is, we must talk with the person to understand his perspective - to obtain all of the facts. The lady at the airport

should have spoken to the man and obtained all of the facts. Then she would have discovered the truth and had a different opinion about the man. The carpenter's illustration about the splinter and log tells us how to judge others. We are to do it with God's righteousness - with holy fairness. The log in the eye represents personal sin.

HELPING A BROTHER OR SISTER. In order to remove the splinter of sin in another person's life, we need the log of sin removed from our own life first. Galatians 6:1 tells us that a person needs to clean up his or her life before he/she can help someone else who is in sin.

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (NASB) Gal. 6:1

First, we need to deal with any sin in our life - the log. Then

Should We Judge Others?

Passage	Meaning of the Passage
Do Not Judge	
Matt. 7:1-2	The standards we use to evaluate others will be used to evaluate us.
Luke 6:37	The standards we use to evaluate others will be used to evaluate us.
Rom. 14:1-3	Jews and Gentiles should not judge one another in the area of Jewish laws.
Col. 2:16	Do not pass judgment on Jewish or non-Jewish practices.
James 4:12	Do not have a critical spirit towards others.
Judge	
Matt. 7:15-20	You shall know false teachers by their fruit.
Matt. 18:15-20	"If you see your brother sin" requires evaluation.
John 7:24	Jesus said that we must judge righteously.
Acts 17:11	The Bereans were praised for evaluating what was taught them.
1 Cor. 5:1-13	The Corinthians were rebuked for ignoring the sexual sin of a member.
1 Cor. 5:12	We must make legal judgments.
1 Cor. 10:15	We must evaluate what we are taught.
Gal. 6:1	"If any man is caught in a trespass" requires evaluation of behavior.
2 Thess 3:6-14	"Keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life" requires judgment.
1 Tim. 3:1-12	We must evaluate the lives of potential elders to determine if they are qualified.
2 Tim. 2:16-18	We must evaluate the conduct of others to see if their conduct is godless.
Titus 1:5-9	We must evaluate the lives of potential elders to determine if they are qualified.
Titus 3:10	"Warn a divisive person" requires judgment.
1 John 4:1	Determination of a false teacher requires evaluation or judgment.
2 John 9-11	We must evaluate or judge false teachers.

we can help someone else who is not dealing with the sin in his or her life - the splinter. Notice that the Holy Spirit says, “. . . you who are spiritual . . .” Anyone who has confessed his or her sins and prayerfully approaches the person with the “splinter in the eye” with the goal of restoration and not

condemnation is qualified.

Matthew 18:15-17 provides detailed guidelines. First, we are to go in private to the person who sinned - not telling everyone first. If he or she will not listen, then we must visit again with two or three witnesses. The goal is to speak kind

Biblical Guidelines For Helping A Sinning Christian

Sometimes Called Church Discipline
Matthew 18:15-17

Patterns of sin include:

- Immorality
 - Impurity
 - Sensuality
 - Idolatry
 - Sorcery
 - Enmities
 - Strife
 - Jealousy
 - Outbursts of anger
 - Disputes/Factions
 - Envyings
 - Drunkenness
 - Blasphemy
 - Grumblers
 - Fault Finding
 - Abusive Speech
 - Lies
 - Dissensions
- (1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 1:20; Jude 6)

If person continues to sin.

- Person may not be saved (James 5:19-20)
- Person may be further disciplined by God (1 Cor. 11:30; Heb. 12:6)
- God may take person to heaven (1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:30; James 1:14-15)

START

You were a personal witness of someone's sin.

Step 1 | You must deal with it!

Reveal his/her fault in private. Motivate him/her to change. (Matt. 18:15)

Step 2 | Person continues

Include 2 or 3 people. Motivate person to change. (Matt. 18:16)

Step 3 | Person continues

Reveal person's fault to the church. (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20)

Step 4 | Person continues

Remove person from the fellowship & turn away from him. (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Thess 3:6)

Person continues

You have pleased the Lord. (Ezek. 33:7-9)

Person listens & stops

Stop!
You have restored your brother

Person repents

You have restored your brother
Return him to fellowship with a period of restoration.

Stop and trust God
For what will happen

words and encourage him or her to repent. The purpose is not to condemn, argue, make one feel bad, or speak evil. The goal is to show Christ's love and encourage the person to stop sinning. It is a call to repent. If he or she will not listen, then we must tell the leaders of the church and let them take it from there.

The goal is not to be judgmental. The goal is to listen (John 7:51) and to evaluate the person's actions righteously. The goal is restoration while protecting his or her reputation. The goal is to win him or her.

DOGS & PIGS. Jesus' next two illustrations are about a dog and a pig.

Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. (NASB) Matt. 7:6

Do not give what is holy to dogs! That requires evaluation or judgment in order to determine who is a dog or a pig! Do not throw your pearls before swine, or pigs! That also requires evaluation or judgment! Notice that we cannot fulfill Jesus' commands without passing judgment or making an evaluation of others. Matt. 7:1-6 is about righteous judgment. Jesus never prohibited us from judging someone. But He did tell us to do it righteously - fairly.

Now what did Jesus mean by "dogs" and "pigs"? Today many people have dogs as pets, but the Jews did not like dogs and they did not like pigs. Dogs and pigs were regarded as filthy or unclean animals. The dogs and pigs represent those who are in sin - those who have splinters in their eyes.

What did Jesus mean by "do not give what is holy"? What does He mean by "holy"? What does He mean by "pearls"? There are a variety of opinions. Some say the pearls refer to the Word of God. Some say that the "holy" refers to meat offered on the temple altar. But Jesus does not explain the meaning of these words, and ultimately it really does not matter what the words actually mean. What is clear is that some people do not want the splinter removed. They want the splinter. Then we must stop giving what we consider to be "holy" and what we consider to be "pearls" to dogs and pigs. We must stop giving our best to help someone.

CONCLUSION. Several years ago I was driving near Washington D.C. and listening to a preacher on the radio. He turned to Matt. 7:1 and proceeded to tell the radio audience that Jesus wanted us to stop judging others. He apparently never realized that Jesus' illustrations about the splinter and the log in the eye or the dogs and pigs and the holy things and pearls require that each person evaluate another's life. Jesus was talking about helping people who had problems. Jesus was also talking about righteous or fair judgment. He never explained that Jesus was talking about a righteous evaluation and that at some point one might need to stop, if the person was not interested in being helped.

The recorded words of Jesus are consistent with the words that He had His disciples write throughout the New Testament. He has called us to deal with the logs in our own eyes too! Are there any logs in your eye? Are you confessing your own sins? Are you loving and praying for your enemy or those who irritate you?

What Is Love!

It's silence when your words would hurt.

It's patience when your neighbor's curt.

It's deafness when the scandal flows.

It's thoughtfulness for another's woes.

It's promptness when stern duty calls.

It's courage when misfortune falls. [2]

[1] Hodgin, Michael. 1001 Humorous Illustrations. Zonderan Publishing House. 1994. p. 169.

[2] Green, Michael. Illustrations for Biblical Preaching. Baker Book House. 1989. p. 225.