

## To judge or not to judge

“Do not judge!” “I do not judge!” These phrases and other similar ones are constantly heard nowadays. The fact is that we all make judgments every day. When someone knocks on our gate to ask for something we look at how they’re dressed, how clean they are, listen to what they’re asking for and we make a judgement of whether they can be trusted or not. The same happens at work with colleagues, in society, at church, and so on. Pastors get judged on their preaching all the time. We need to differentiate between making a judgment in the sense of an assessment of someone, or condemnation of someone.

Matthew 7:1-6 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

“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? 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? 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. “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.

### 1) An assessment or a condemnation?

- As stated earlier, we all make judgments all the time.
  - Anyone who says “I don’t judge” has a blind spot
  - We judge people’s appearances, what they say, how they live, how they eat, what they wear, what they do and don’t do, and the list goes on.
- The reason that we think we don’t judge others is because our judgments are often subconscious – we don’t realise that we’re doing it.
  - It’s often unintentional, but it’s part of life.
- In fact, contrary to what we always quote in Matthew chapter 7 Jesus commands us to make righteous judgments
  - John 7:24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.
- What is a right judgment compared to Jesus commanding us not to judge?
- Making right judgments
  - A right judgment is when we judge someone against a set of object criteria and judge accordingly.
  - A judge in a court of law assesses a case against the standard of the law of the country and then makes a judgment accordingly.
  - For example, a person goes to court for stealing. The judge then looks at the law which states that stealing is a crime. He then makes a judgment against the person by matching his crime to the law. It’s not the judge’s personal opinion that matters.
  - If we see someone come to our place wearing old ragged clothes, we can’t immediately think that he is a thief or a drug addict. We need to find out the facts of what’s happening in his life and why he’s in his present condition before making a judgment about him.
  - A right judgment is therefore made against a set of objective criteria. It’s an assessment of someone, not a condemnation of them.
- What is a condemnatory judgment?
  - What Jesus was condemning was the hypocritical opinionated judgments according to our own standards of righteousness.
  - Even if we have made a right assessment of someone and it is still not our job to condemn, but to seek their restoration.
  - If they have broken the law, then we can forgive them on a personal basis, but the consequences of their actions still need to be carried out through the right legal channels.
  - Be careful not to condemn someone to an eternal damnation. Only God can do that. He is the only true and righteous judge.

## 2) Healthy introspection is needed

- Matthew 7:3-5 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? 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? 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.
- We are often so quick to judge others when we ourselves are far from perfect.
- In fact, just on the matter of judging others I hear people who say that they don't judge, judge others constantly.
- Paul puts it clearly in his letter to the church in Rome
  - Romans 2:1-4 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?
- He then fleshes this out in more detail
  - Romans 2:21-23 You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?
- Paul was merely reiterating what Jesus taught when he said that we should first remove the plank from our own eye before trying to remove the speck from someone else's eye,
  - We need to examine our lives first, before judging others, and even then we need to rather have mercy rather than judgment.
  - James 2:12-13 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.
  - God could have judged us and sent us to hell, but he has rather shown us mercy. Let us be like Him.

## 3) A healthy response to judgmentalism

- Matthew 7:6 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.
- Jesus was saying that we need to be care in the way we treat what is precious to Him.
- What is precious to Him?
  - His glory and honour
  - His Word
  - His people
- Judgmentalism puts our opinions above the what God deems precious and so it's the same as hurling them to dogs and pigs.
- If others are judgmental towards you
  - Don't retaliate with judgmentalism
  - Don't take it to heart if it's something that isn't true, or that you're already working through
  - If it's true and you weren't aware of it, take it to the Lord to deal with it. Get help from others as well if necessary
- If you struggle with judgmentalism
  - Check your heart for pride, as that's the root of judgmentalism
  - Before judging someone else ask yourself if there are any things in your life that you have to work through – the plank in your own eye
  - Are you making an objective assessment of someone, or is your judgment merely a condemnation of the person?
  - If it is an assessment be prepared to walk through issues that the person is struggling with, rather than condemn them