

Are you Judgemental?

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[0 : 00] Well, judge not lest you be judged. I'm sure we've all heard that quote many times before. We may even have said that ourselves.

! And usually when people say, judge not lest ye be judged, it comes up when somebody is judging somebody else. And the person who's being judged doesn't like being judged by the person who's judging them.

And so they say, judge not lest ye be judged. Now, the saying is a command of Jesus. In our version, it says, do not judge or you too will be judged.

So what does Jesus mean when he says this? Because judging is actually something I think our society really struggles with today. Because it seems like we can't live with judging others, and yet we can't live without judging others either.

So on the one hand, there is the pressure not to judge anyone for anything. And all judgment is seen as a bad thing. And so because of that, we are uneasy about saying anything that might sound anything like we're judging somebody else.

[1 : 11] And not because we don't want to judge people. Of course, we do want to judge people. But we fear the social consequences for making a judgment. So we fear being accused of hate speech or of getting cancelled in some way or of being branded some kind of narrow fundamentalist bigot.

Because that's what you risk being called if you pronounce any kind of judgment. And so we balk at casting our judgment on anyone. That's why we hear these phrases each to their own or you do you.

Because we're so hypersensitive when it comes to any kind of judging whatsoever. And so on the one hand, we struggle to live with judging other people. And yet on the other hand, we can't live without judging.

Why? Well, because we know we have got to form judgments. This is the exam season. Sorry to remind you if you're sitting exams.

But as a young person, you're judged on your knowledge and understanding of various subjects at school. Just a couple of weeks ago, the Supreme Court made a judgment, didn't it?

[2 : 23] It was an unambiguous judgment that the term woman refers to a biological woman. And so we need judgments. We welcome judgments we want.

Judgments. And yet there's still this tension in society. We don't like the notion of judging. But at the same time, we're actually really glad when judgments are made.

And now Jesus here speaks to the very tension of judging others in his Sermon on the Mount. And he does it in a clear and concise way in Matthew chapter 7 verse 1 to 6.

So he gives a countercultural approach which proves to be a better way to help us navigate the challenges of judging others in our society today.

Because where the culture gets it wrong and where we often get it wrong, Jesus gets it right. And so it's not that we shouldn't judge others.

[3 : 25] We should. But we should do it Jesus' way. So what is Jesus' way? Well, we see that it's a way that prevents us being judgmental and hypocritical but encourages us to be discerning.

So Jesus' way prevents us from being judgmental, prevents us from being hypocritical, and it enables us to be discerning. So those are the three points that we're going to look at this afternoon. First, don't be judgmental. Second, don't be hypocritical. And third, do be discerning. So first of all, don't be judgmental in verse 1 and 2.

Look at verse 1. Do not judge or you too will be judged. So this is a warning from Jesus. Because while this is one of the most popular sayings of Jesus that people love to quote, it is also one of the

most misunderstood and misapplied sayings of Jesus.

Because when somebody says, do not judge lest you be judged, his words are generally taken to mean you should never judge anyone on anything.

[4 : 37] But Jesus is not saying never make a judgment on someone. He's not saying that there are no moral standards. And this isn't the abandoning of all judgment by Jesus.

For example, what do we do when it comes to injustice or to evil like murder, exploitation, adultery, lying, bullying, and so on? Are we just supposed to keep our mouths shut for fear of making some kind of judgment at injustice and evil?

Well, no. Because when Jesus says, do not judge, we see from the context that he doesn't mean this at all. So just a bit later in the sermon, if you glance down, chapter 7, verse 15 and 16, Jesus tells us to watch out for false prophets.

There you go. Jesus has judged some people as being false prophets. Jesus says that they are ferocious wolves in sheep's clothing and by their fruit you will recognize them.

So it's clear that Jesus is not saying you shouldn't be forming a judgment about these people. He's saying, well, you will recognize them by the things they do and you will have to judge them as being false prophets.

[5 : 54] But just a few sentences later, closer in to where we are in verse 6, the Jesus who says, do not judge in verse 1, speaks about dogs and pigs to describe people.

So he's judging people based on how they respond to him. And Jesus also expects his hearers to recognize people as such, as dogs and pigs.

So Jesus is not against exercising judgment on people. The issue is, well, what kind of judgment should we exercise?

Because the original Greek word for judge has a range of meanings according to the context that the word is in. And so given the context here, we see that Jesus clearly wants us to make theological and ethical and moral judgments.

But what Jesus is against in verse 1 and in verse 2 is being judgmental. Because there is a difference, isn't there, between forming a good judgment, which is necessary, and being judgmental.

[7 : 04] Now, being judgmental or judgmentalism is essentially judgment as condemnation about unnecessarily condemning or about being overly harsh in your judgment.

Of being severely critical of someone in what is a negative and destructive way. That's how we'd understand judgmentalism. That's what Jesus is against.

Jesus is against. J.C. Ryle, in an old commentary, puts it well when he says, What our Lord means to condemn is a censorious and fault-finding spirit. A readiness to blame others for trifling offenses or matters of indifference.

A habit of passing rash and hasty judgments. A disposition to magnify the errors and infirmities of our neighbors and make the worst of them.

So that's the kind of judgment that Jesus forbids. Because it's not only destructive when it comes to another person if we act in a judgmental way towards them.

[8 : 11] But what Jesus is saying here is this attitude of judgmentalism is also dangerous for us. Verse 2. He says, For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged.

And with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. So what's Jesus doing? Well, he's warning that the measure of judgment God uses for us will be the measure that we've used on others.

Because when it comes to judgment, there is only one judge. And guess what? We're not him. And yet judgmentalism is basically an attempt to be like God.

To behave in a way that God behaves by him being judge. And we are completely unqualified. Who of us gets judgment right? So often we get it wrong.

And so it is sheer pride, sheer arrogance to think that we can perfectly assess another human being who has been made in God's image.

[9 : 23] God can do a far better job than we can. So we're best leaving it to him. And not only are we not the judge, Jesus reminds us that we are among those who are going to be judged.

And so what he's saying here in verse 2 is that this is like masquerading as an experienced high court judge when the reality is that we are one of the accused.

We just can't do that. And so we shouldn't get too comfy sitting in the judge's seat when one day we'll find ourselves standing in the dock before the ultimate judge.

So being judgmental sets us up for our own condemnation before God. And so Jesus warns us about being very careful when judging others.

And so we should never slip into judgmentalism by looking down on other people in a condescending way, either by dismissing them or by demeaning them or by thinking that we know all the facts, we've got all the evidence, and so our judgment about them is right.

[10:36] Jesus is saying don't do that. And don't be far harsher than you can take yourself.

I'm sure we've all heard the saying, don't give it if you can't take it. It was said to me when I was a wee boy. And it basically means don't give criticism, don't be calling names if you can't take criticism or name calling back.

And so in essence, this is what Jesus is saying here, isn't it, about judging others. Don't give it to others if you're not prepared to take it like that from God.

Francis Schaeffer, the Christian apologist, he once gave a good illustration of how God will judge us one day in one of his books, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century*.

And he said, just imagine this. Imagine every baby who is born anywhere in the world has a tape recorder that is hung around their neck.

[11:38] A bit of a dated illustration. I know nobody uses tape recorders these days. Probably some of you don't know what a tape recorder is. But just say maybe an app on your phone. And the app or the tape recorder, it records only moral judgments which are made, Schaeffer says, by the child.

So as the child grows up, whenever they make a moral judgment, the tape recorder clicks on and records the moral judgment. And so eventually, it comes to the judgment day.

We all stand before the judge and he says, suppose then that God simply touched the tape recorder button and each man heard played out in his own words all those statements by which he had bound other men in moral judgment.

He says, he could hear it going on for years. Thousands and thousands of moral judgments made against other men. And then God would simply say to the man, now where do you stand in the light of your own moral judgments?

And so Schaeffer concludes, God is completely just. A man is judged and found wanting on the same basis on which he has tried to bind others.

[12:52] Isn't that challenging? If we were to think of all the times we've been judgmental, made a wrong judgment on someone else, God's recorded it and he flips it around to us on the judgment day.

And so the first point, the application is, knowing that God is our ultimate judge should humble us and make us so very careful in how we measure other people.

And then Jesus drills this further home in our second point. So first of all, don't be judgmental.

Secondly, don't be hypocritical. Jesus deals here with this connected problem of hypocrisy.

So let's read those verses again in verse 3 to 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.

[13:59] Now Jesus here illustrates how we can be a hypocrite when it comes to judging other people. And so we're meant to see the comedic value of the guy with the plank sticking out of his eye.

And he doesn't even notice this plank of wood in his eye. And yet he is obsessed by the speck of sawdust in his brother's eye. And it's an illustration that shows us how easy it is to spot the sin in somebody else's life and yet be blind to the far greater sin in our own life.

And so the guy with the plank needs to deal with his bigger issue first before he goes to his brother and deals with his lesser issue. And so the point Jesus is making is, well, we firstly need to deal with our sin before attempting to try and help somebody else with theirs.

So it's not like the plank guy has got a bigger problem than the speck guy. He does, but they both have a problem.

And I think the clue here is that it's the same material. It's a speck of sawdust and it's a plank of wood. So it's wood and wood, sin and sin, and all sin needs to be dealt with.

[15 : 25] And so it's just that the plank guy's got this major problem, whereas the speck guy's got this minor problem. But they've both got a problem and they both need help.

And so the plank guy basically illustrates the danger of hypocrisy by judging someone on their minor sin while overlooking the major sin in our own life.

And you see this happening in public life all the time. I was reminded yesterday of Partygate during COVID. Do you remember that? That don't go out one walk per day.

Don't go and see your relatives who are dying in a nursing home. Just don't go near them. Whilst all the while the conservative government were having parties in number 10, dining street all socializing and mixing.

And we think the sheer hypocrisy of it, that those who are making up these rules, telling us what to do, aren't even obeying those rules themselves.

[16 : 29] Or think of the celebrity preacher who is famous for denouncing sexual sin in the lives of others. And yet, a few years later, he's found out for having an adulterous affair himself.

Sheer hypocrisy. And it makes us angry. And it makes those who say these things, who denounce the sin in others whilst ignoring it in their own lives, it just makes them look utterly pathetic.

Because they've taken the high moral ground and yet been shamefully guilty of what they condemn in other people. But in saying all this, we need to be so careful, don't we?

Because while we may look at the man with a plank in his eye and see his obvious hypocrisy, whilst we may look at politicians and see their obvious hypocrisy, whilst we may look at the celebrity preacher and see his obvious hypocrisy and think, how pathetic.

So God looks on our pathetic condemnation of other people. He looks at our judgmentalism of others when, well, there is sin in our own hearts and in our own lives that we are failing to deal with.

[17 : 49] And so we too can so easily be hypocrites. So quick to direct the spotlight onto somebody else's sin whilst never letting that spotlight turn onto our own.

And that's the hypocrisy that Jesus is so against, isn't it? Where we can be so busy looking down our noses at other people and their sin and yet turn a blind eye to our own.

Well, what is the solution? Well, Jesus outlines this in verse 5 where he says, you hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

So the plank guy, he's got to sort his issue first so he can then better help his brother. In other words, we need to repent of our sin first before trying hypocritically to correct somebody else for their sin.

And I wonder, is that something that you or I need to do is to seek forgiveness for our sin? And then we should and we must. But Jesus is saying, don't just leave it there because we may want to avoid somebody else on their sin for fear of judging them or of offending them, thinking I don't want to go there because they won't like it.

[19 : 17] But Jesus is not saying, don't ever make a judgment on another believer's sin because sin always needs to be confronted. Whatever it is, minor or major, it needs to be confronted and we need our brothers and sisters in Christ to help us confront that sin so that we do deal with it.

But there's a way to go about it that is neither judgmental nor hypocritical. And so while the primary application is, don't be hypocritical and repent of your own sin first, that doesn't exclude helping a brother or sister repent of their sin.

And so before we go on and before we go pointing out somebody else's sin, well, don't we all need to take a look in the mirror and deal with our own first?

And we need to be careful not to maximize the faults in others in a judgmental way, whilst we minimize our own faults. Don't judgmentally put others down while bigging yourself up.

It's a summary of what Jesus is saying here. And so what's going to help us? Well, what will help us is remembering that God is the judge who sees everything.

[20 : 37] And God has got every reason to condemn you and me, but he shows us mercy in Jesus Christ. Sinclair Ferguson, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, says this, the heart that has tasted the Lord's grace and forgiveness will always be restrained in its judgment of others.

It has seen itself deserving judgment and condemnation before the Lord, and yet, instead of experiencing his burning anger, has tasted his infinite mercy.

And I think it's telling. Our judgmentalism is showing up for what it is if we're so quick to judge. It's an indication that we really haven't tasted the Lord's mercy ourselves, his infinite mercy. And so we know when we deserve judgment and have experienced mercy ourselves, and there's no room for self-righteousness and superiority and looking down our noses at other people because we all stand in need of God's forgiveness for our sin, however great it is. And so we can't be judgmental in harshly condemning others, nor can we be hypocritical in wrongly confronting others.

[22 : 05] But when we've tasted the Lord's mercy, then we'll be humble, and we will want to compassionately care for others. So let's go into our third point.

First, don't be judgmental. Second, don't be hypocritical. But third, do be discerning. Verse six. Having discernment, being discerning, seems to be the point that Jesus is making here in verse six when he says, do not give dogs what is sacred.

Do not throw your perils to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces. So how do we make sense of what Jesus is saying here? Well, I take it that Jesus wants us to have discernment, to discern between people.

And that discernment is a form of judgment. And so discernment is necessary because if you look down, there's a brother in verse three to five, and now there's the dogs and pigs in verse six. And so we might think, well, is Jesus actually calling people dogs and pigs? Well, he is talking about people, isn't he? And whether he's calling them dogs or pigs or not, he is saying that people can behave like dogs and pigs.

[23 : 25] And when you read dog, don't be thinking pet dog here. Don't be thinking a dog like my dog, Poppy, who you let lick your face, who you cuddle, who sits on your lap, who loves being stroked under her chin and who falls asleep on you.

Don't be thinking pet dog. When Jesus says dog, he means wild dogs. He means scavengers who roam the streets and pick through the rubbish for food. And the same for pigs.

We're not thinking nice farmyard pigs that you go and pet with your children in the zoo or the farm rather than the zoo or both. I don't know where pigs are housed because it's farms or zoos or whatever.

But anyway, pigs were unclean for the Jews, weren't they? As well as being filthy and as well as being smelly, they weren't nice animals. And so when Jesus says, do not give dogs what is sacred, he wants his pictures, he wants his hearers to picture something that is sacred, something that is holy, perhaps like food from the temple, food that was offered to God in worship.

And so Jesus is saying, if that food's been offered to God in worship, it's sacred food, then you don't give it to a dog. The dog has no idea of the value of that food.

[24 : 43] And so giving the food to a dog is inappropriate. They've got no idea about how special it is. And so it would not be discerning. It's a wrong judgment.

And when Jesus says, do not throw your perils to pigs, it's obvious that is to his hearers that such an action is a complete lack of discernment.

It's not very discerning to chuck your precious pigs into the pigsty, is it? What a waste of perils. The pigs don't know the value of the precious perils and they'll try to eat them.

And when they spit them out because they can't eat them, then they'll trample over the top of them. And if you try and get your precious perils back from the pigsty, then it might be that the pigs will try and trample you as well because they're unhappy that they haven't been fed.

Either way, it's all going to end in tears. And all because, Jesus is saying, you have failed to exercise discernment. You have not been discerning.

[25 : 48] You have made a wrong judgment. Whereas you ought to have exercised some kind of discrimination in what you've been doing. And so if being judgmental is to, at verse one to five, is to fall off one side of the horse, then no judgment is to fall off the other side of the horse.

And so what Jesus is saying here is, just stay in the saddle and be discerning. That's what you need to do. And so we must judge, not in the condemning sense, not in the hypocritical sense, but we should judge in the sense of evaluating and discerning and discriminating.

That's what Jesus wants us to do. Because after all, there is truth and error. There is right and wrong. There is good and evil.

There are some things that please God and there are some things that don't please God. And so we need to exercise judgment through wise discernment, don't we?

But if Jesus wants us to be discerning, then what should we be discerning about? Well, it's generally thought here that Jesus is talking about the people that his disciples would then go to and share the good news of Jesus with.

[27 : 10] And so this is about preaching the kingdom of God and calling people to repent and believe in Jesus. Where verse six is basically about those who are hostile and who are hard-hearted and who deliberately reject the message of Jesus.

And just like the pigs trampling on the perils, so these people show contempt towards the peril of great price, which elsewhere Jesus calls the kingdom of heaven.

And these people savagely turn against those who proclaim the good news of Jesus to them. And so the point is we need to use discernment in sharing the message of Jesus.

Sometimes we shouldn't waste our time sharing the message of Jesus with some people. And that sounds harsh, doesn't it? But it's actually what Jesus did himself.

Remember the story of the rich young ruler. He wanted eternal life and Jesus told him what to do. But what happened to the rich young ruler? Well, he went away sad.

[28 : 24] And what did Jesus do? He left him to go away sad. He didn't chase after him and change the conditions or make it easier for him. Jesus told him what to do.

He didn't want to do it. And Jesus left him. Now, we don't know people's hearts like Jesus does. But we do need to discern how best to deal with certain people.

Whether to keep going with them or whether to stop and withdraw. When to keep speaking. Or perhaps when to be silent. How to speak to someone or how not to speak to someone.

When to push a boundary. I want you to step back and just draw a line. We need to be discerning about what needs to be done in public or what needs to be done in private.

Even discerning who it would be best for us to invest our time in. And who it would be best for us to avoid. And that's not to say that some people are more important than other people or more worthy than other people.

[29 : 34] Not at all. Because if we exercise wise and humble discernment, then we won't relate to anyone in a judgmental way nor in a hypocritical way.

but we will seek to relate to them in a Jesus way. Which is exercising wise discernment. And so as we close, well, Jesus says, do not judge.

Why? Because ultimate judgment belongs to God. who is not just capable of judging perfectly, but one day he will.

And when he judges, no one will be able to argue with his judgment. He will get it right and perfect in every single case with every single person.

Including us. And so the great news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can face the judgment because of what Jesus Christ has done.

[30 : 37] Because when Jesus came, he came to bear God's judgment on the cross. Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.

Even death on a cross. And doesn't that tell us how serious our condition is? That there was no other way for God to deal with my sin and your sin and for him to have to send his son to die on a cross to take the punishment from our sin on himself.

The punishment we deserve, Jesus came to bear. And so when we throw ourselves on the mercy of God by turning from our sin and trusting in Jesus Christ, our guilty sentence is removed.

we no longer stand condemned. Which means every wrong thought, every false word, every misjudgment, every misdeed, all of our condemnation has been taken by Jesus.

Taken on the cross. Which means God will never condemn you or me. And it's only when this sinks in and it sinks deep into our hearts that we realize we've got no right to condemn anyone else, have we?

[32 : 02] Let's be honest. Who am I? Who are we to act as judge? Who do we think we are? Because we're all in need of his forgiveness.

And we can all receive his forgiveness. And if we never have, then we should all go and get his forgiveness. Because what matters is not what we think of other people.

What matters is not what other people think of you. All that matters is what God thinks of us. And when we've truly experienced the joy and blessing of his forgiveness, then it should soften our hearts, shouldn't it?

Making us less judgmental, less hypocritical, and more discerning when it comes to how we treat other people. Let's pray together. Amen.