

Matthew 7:1-6

Judging others

(See also apttoteach.org theology files #308, #803, #110)

Matthew 7

“¹ Do not judge lest you be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ And 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? ⁴ 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? ⁵ 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. ⁶ Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

A. Structure

1. The principle

“¹ Do not judge lest you be judged.

- a. This statement could be understood to prohibit any form of moral discrimination and is often used by those who would promote a libertarian philosophy. But it should be noted that no one actually follows such a principle. Even those who so quickly judge others for judging others are in fact passing judgment.
- b. It is clear that Jesus expects His followers to discern good and evil (Matt.7:6) and to confront sin (Matt.18:15-20).
- c. The significance of this verse is best understood by looking at what follows in verses 2-5.

2. A consequence

² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

- a. “What goes around comes around.” The way we judge others is the way we will be judged by them.
- b. The parallel teaching in Luke 6:37-42 seems to reinforce the fact that the judgment that will come to us is from our fellow man. This is not to say that God will overlook our sin.

3. The explanation

³ And 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? ⁴ 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?

- a. In this verse we get to the heart of the matter. We have a responsibility to love our brother, edify our brother, assist our brother in walking after Christ. But to do this we must first do two things.
 1. Examine our own hearts and correct ourselves. Jn.8:1-11, 1Cor.11:17-34

2. Be careful that we are intent on graciously helping our brother rather than just exposing and condemning him.
- b. Jesus suggests that our own unacknowledged sins will distort our objectivity in dealing with others. We may project upon them our own personal story or we may over (or under) react as a part of our desire to justify our own condition.

4. The application

⁵ 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."

- a. Here we see the context out of which verse 1 should be read. When it comes to dealing with sin in another persons life, be sure that your attempts to confront them are motivated by love and self examination not just exposure and condemnation.

B. Basic facts about human judgment.

1. As Christians we will one day be judges with Christ. I Cor.6:1-3
 - a. We will judge the world. I Cor.6:2
 - b. We will judge angels. I Cor.6:3
2. All believers are to judge themselves. I Cor.11:31
 - a. To see if they are "in the faith." II Cor.13:5
 - b. To evaluate their ministry. Gal.6:4
 - c. To avoid God's discipline. I Cor.11:31-32
 - d. The believer is not to compare his work with others but only with what God is expecting of him. Gal.6:4-5
3. Those in positions of spiritual authority must often pass judgment on others. I Cor.6:1-6
 - a. With respect to the world. I Cor.2:15
 - b. With respect to the church. I Cor.5:3,12; I Tim.1:20
4. Unauthorized judgment by believers is forbidden. Lk.6:37
 - a. Others will judge us by our own standard of judgment. Matt. 7:1-2
 - b. We are in no position to judge when we refuse to subject ourselves to the same moral standards. Jn.8:7 "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."
 - c. We are not to judge the motives of others. I Cor.4:5; Jas.4:11
 - d. We are to be especially patient with younger believers. Rom.14:1
 1. We are not to pass judgment on others in areas of doubtful conduct. Rom.14:3,4,10,13; I Cor.8-10
 2. We are to take initiative in correcting others. Gal.6:1-2 "¹ Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, **restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.** ² Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ."
5. God has authorized the state to exercise judgment in civil matters. Rom.13:1-7

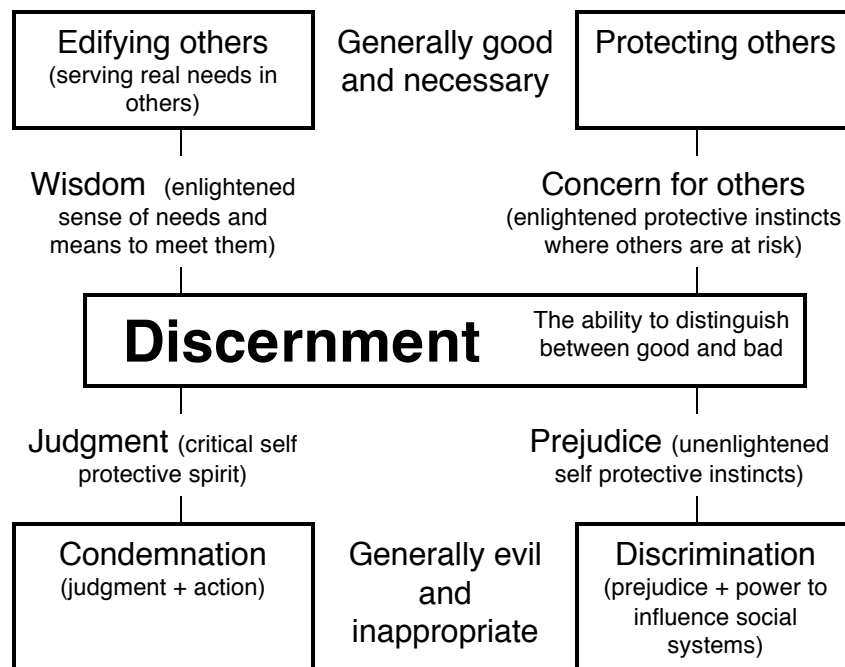
6. Some markers of a judgmental spirit.
 - a. The failure of others makes me feel better about myself and decreases my concern for my own faults.
 - b. The failure of others gives me a desire to see that they suffer.
 - c. I am eager to tell others about the failure of someone else.
 - d. The failure of others prompts me to review their past failures.
 - e. I have trouble forgiving others even when they repent.
7. A judgmental spirit is often related to other problems.
 - a. Prejudice and Discrimination that is irrationally based on superficial characteristics like age, race, gender, etc.
 - b. Slander and Gossip
 - c. Murder and Violence
 - d. Legalism and Pride
8. Common misconceptions related to human judgment
 - a. Jesus loved his enemies and therefore tolerated everything but intolerance.
 - **Jn.5:22** “The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son . . .”
 - **Jn.5:27** “The Father has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man”
 - **Acts 10:42** He was “ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead”
 - **Acts 17:30-31** “now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”
 - b. Evangelical Christians are often seen as too judgmental. Why?
 - People don’t want to be accountable for their behavior to any external authority.
 - Christians don’t understand how to present their values in a pluralistic society. (see notes on Tolerance #110)
 - Christians don’t understand the limits of their responsibility in judging others. (see points #1-5 above)
 - Christians are hypocritical.
 - a. Don’t give reason for offense.
 1. Understand and respect legal / political pluralism.
 2. Humility, confession of sin, and grace silence hard hearts.
 3. Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to react.
 4. Flexibility, forbearance, and fairness do not necessarily reflect a lack of respect for holiness, values, and faith.
 - b. A check list for judging others.

1. Have you audited your own life?
 2. Do you have the right motives (love)?
 3. Do you have the authority, sensitivity, understanding, and relationship to proceed?
 4. Can you respect and protect the privacy of sinners?
 5. Are your objectives realistic?
- c. What can I do about a judgmental spirit?
1. Acknowledge it as sin.
 2. Replace it with thanksgiving, grace, and a commitment to help others.
 3. Ask others to remind you when you speak judgmentally of people.
 4. Pray grace upon those you tend to judge.
 5. Don't take responsibility for things you can't control or for things that are none of your business.
- c. There are no universal moral values only different perspectives. (see notes on Truth #110, and Postmodernism #109)
- "A culture that claims to believe in nothing is committed to believe in anything and everything."
 - Postmodern culture is most offended by social hypocrisy and psychological shame. Both are a gesture of respect for values. Without values, there is no hypocrisy or shame. To eliminate hypocrisy and shame, simply eliminate universal normative values.
- d. The Bible says that we should not judge others. Matt.7:1 (That is not all that it says. See points #1-5 above)
- **Matt.7:1-5** "1 Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 And 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? 4 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? 5 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."
 - a. The context suggests that the proper posture in correcting a sinning brother is in view. The protection of the sinner from premature public exposure is an important emphasis in this passage.
 - b. It is obvious from vs.6 that discerning between good and evil is assumed and valued.
 - **Matt.7:6** "Do not give what is holy to **dogs**, and do not throw your pearls before **swine**, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."
 - **II Thess. 5:21-22** "**Test all things**; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"
 - **Eph. 5:11** ". . . Have no fellowship with the **unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather expose them"

- **I John 4:1** “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”
- **I Cor.6:1-3** “¹ Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ² Or do you not know that the **saints will judge the world**? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent {to constitute} the smallest law courts? ³ Do you not know that **we shall judge angels**? **How much more, matters of this life?**”

C. Discernment is a virtue that can be used for good or evil.

1. Discernment is a virtue that should be sought.
 - **Prov.16:21** “The wise in heart will be called discerning.”
 - **Ps.119:66** “Teach me good discernment and knowledge,”
 - **I Kings 3:9** “So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil.” (Solomon)
 - **Deut.32:28-29** “For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. Would that they were wise that they understood this, That they would discern their future!
 - **Phil.1:9-10** “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. So that you may approve that things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.”
2. The following chart shows the relationship between discernment and both good and bad applications. It should be noted that there are legitimate times for proper authority to express condemnation of certain issues.



D. Judgment is reserved for those who have the authority to do so.

1. **Human government – Rom.13:4** “for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.”
2. **Church officials – I Cor.6:2-3** “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?”
3. **Parents in a family – I Tim.3:4** “He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.”

E. Truth and Tolerance

1. Tolerance is one of the great virtues of postmodern culture. It has come to mean that we are supposed to accept every belief as true or worthy of respect. It dignifies any and every idea or value as an expression of the human spirit.
2. Some observations with respect to tolerance.
 - a. Three different kinds of tolerance must be distinguished.
 1. **Legal toleration** commits us always to protect people’s political rights to follow any religion or no religion at all.
 2. **Social toleration** advocates charity toward people who think and believe differently from the way we do.
 3. **Intellectual toleration** is the relativistic notion that one system of belief is as true as any other.

NOTE: Intellectual toleration is not necessarily demanded by legal and social toleration.

- a. Pluralism does not demand that we all believe and behave the same way nor does it demand that we believe that any belief system is as good or true as another.

Illustration: Slavery is a part of social systems preferred by many groups throughout history. This does not mean that it is as right or good as other systems that promote human dignity and freedom. Christians believe that their view of truth and the world is not the only view but that it is the correct view. It is worth defending against all contrary views. Christians would argue for the rightness of their own view without fear of disrespecting the freedom of others to disagree.

- b. Pluralism does demand that we practice legal and social toleration.
- c. Evangelicals must embrace legal and social toleration without intellectual toleration.
- d. They must also resist the tendency of their critics to tie intellectual intolerance to legal and social intolerance.

- b. Is it not judgmental to judge those with restrictive moral and ideological beliefs. Does tolerance apply to all but those who have an absolute view of truth?
 - c. We all have certain “common sense” boundaries or limits on our pluralism. Most of us do not feel that Hitler’s views or the views of Muslim terrorists were simply moral preferences that deserve respect and should not be condemned.
 - d. If you define religious belief as a “world and life view” held by faith, then you must label radical pluralism as a religious conviction.
3. Tolerance of legitimate differences is needed in seeking the truth.
- a. “Nietzsche claimed that if men took God seriously, they would still be burning heretics at the stake.” Two types of people agree with this statement.
 - 1. **Ordinary bigots** – “That’s why we should burn heretics.”
 - 2. **Reactionaries** – “That’s why we should suppress the public expression of belief in God.”
 - b. Tolerance cannot be neutral about what is good, for its very purpose is to guard good and avert evils. What is tolerated depends upon what is viewed as the ultimate good or concern.
 - c. Tolerance is a moral virtue between the two vices of:
 - 1. **Soft-headedness** – We stand for little and fall for anything. When radical tolerance is the only virtue, we must dignify every form of human expression no matter how weird, as beautiful and noble.
 - 2. **Narrow mindedness** - We cannot see beyond our own preferences, which we mistakenly assume are also God’s standards.
 - d. Tolerance involves right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means.

ILLUSTRATION: Political conservatives and Liberals often share a common core goal (liberty and justice for all). They however have very different ideas as to how that goal is best reached and preserved. The danger is that the means of reaching the goal can be so closely identified with the goal itself that to challenge the means is to be understood as a challenge to the goal. Those who do not share our means to reach the goal we assume to be motivated by something other than reaching the goal. That “something other” is usually pretty ugly, selfish, and un-American.
 - e. Tolerance needs an ultimate concern as an end. It assumes a certain value system constructed around an ultimate goal.
 - f. Christians are to be legally and socially tolerant for four reasons.
 - 1. God does not want unwilling worship.
 - 2. We see in a glass dimly. I Cor.13:12
 - 3. We are all in process.

4. There is a Biblical precedent for it in **Rom.14:5** “One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.”

F. Doubtful things about which Christians differ.

See apptoteach.org (theology files #308, #802)