

- **\*Read Matthew 7:1-5/Prayer\*** Unfortunately, I must concede that far too many individuals within my generation are just flat out soft. Too often I get on social media or turn on the TV and I see individuals around my age simply acting like children when they don't get their way or when they are rebuked or corrected in some sort of manner. Honestly, it just makes me sad to see so many individuals not have the ability to have logical conversations to discuss issues or problems, but instead throw tantrums, harm others or their property, or resort to verbal violence of some sort.
- One of the most common reactions that can be heard from a person who is questioned concerning his or her actions or lifestyle is that of "you can't judge me!" Basically, they are saying that you can't tell them that they are wrong or something they are doing is wrong. There is no right or wrong in their minds. If that individual knows they are talking to a professed Christian then the rebuttal is thrown with even more venom because after all, Jesus said in the Bible that we are not allowed to judge other people in any way shape or form. Right behind **John 3:16** has got to be **Matthew 7:1** in regards to the number of times it is quoted on a day to day basis. Unfortunately, this often quoted verse is also a very often misused and abused verse. This difficult saying of Jesus is often used by people in the world and even some professed Christians as a means of getting someone off their back in regards to something they have done or are continuing to do in their lives, but I wonder if this is a proper use of this text. Judge Not?? is the question we want to examine this evening. Is Jesus saying that we ought never judge the actions of others? Or is there something else at play in this text? Let's see if we can come to understand this passage of Scripture a little better this evening.

**I. DIFFICULTY OF THE SAYING: We can easily hold others to standards we are not willing to live up to ourselves.**

- A. As a means of a bit of spoiler alert, let me suggest that more than anything hypocrisy is at the heart of this particular teaching of Jesus. Hypocrisy can take shape in different forms, but two particular ones come to mind in regard to this text.
- B. So many people want to focus on just **Matthew 7:1**, but the context of Jesus's teachings go beyond just that verse. In fact, I think the teachings in the following 4 verses are of the utmost importance to understanding what Jesus is meaning when He says what He does in verse 1. If we don't have the rest of these verses then the common usage of **Matthew 7:1** might not be so inappropriate.
- C. Notice **v.2** Jesus clarifies **v.1** by stating that \*when\* we judge that we will be judged by the same standard. If we tell someone that they ought to be doing 1, 2, & 3 then we ought to turn around and only be doing 1. That is hypocritical and holding others to a standard that we ourselves are not willing to give the effort to live up to. This type of judging is condemned by Jesus.

**II. DIFFICULTY OF THE SAYING: We can just as easily focus on the issues of others while ignoring our own issues.**

- A. Similar to our first point, but really the other way around is the fact that we ought not focus on the mistakes or shortcomings of others without first doing everything we can to take care of the issues in our own lives.
- B. Now, I sadly have to clarify that this doesn't mean that we can't have ever made a mistake in our lives. If this is the case then Jesus Christ is literally the only person who ever walked this earth that could address the problems of others. But what this does mean is that we cannot ignore our current issues and deflect attention from them by focusing on others'.
- C. Especially, when the problems facing others are so small compared to what we ought to be focusing on within ourselves. The illustration that Jesus gives must make it obviously clear that Jesus wants us to give attention to our own issues before we are going to give energy on trying to clear up the issues of others. These temptations are real and present and Jesus makes this painfully obvious in this teaching and they are a couple of the reasons that this teaching can be so difficult. Few things can ruin the credibility in the minds of those of the world in regards to a Christian than to have us fall into one of these temptations and find ourselves guilty of them.

**III. This teaching does not unequivocally prohibit the judging of the actions of others.**

- A. Those who desire to not have anyone question them, rebuke them, or be accountable to anyone will try to take anything they can to show that they ought not be questioned. They will take this verse and twist it to mean that nothing can ever be said to them about anything they do. Some would do this because they equate judgment with condemnation. They would try to say that any judgment might as well equate to condemnation.
- B. Sure, some people might try to elevate themselves to the place of God and cast not just judgments but actual condemnations on other individuals. However, we must recognize that judgments do not automatically equate condemnation. Just calling something good or bad isn't stepping all the way to condemnation. If we recognize that we do not sit in the place of ultimate judgment then we can judge without overstepping to the place of God as the true Judge. (**James 4:11,12**)

- C. Also, this teaching cannot mean a complete prohibition of the judging of the actions of others because then Jesus would be guilty of breaking this own command along with other inspired writers. Think about Jesus's strong rebukes of the Scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew 23**. We'll look at this again here in a minute. Think also of the first great sermon in **Acts 2** delivered by Peter. He judged the actions of the Jews in their killing of Jesus. Think of many of Paul's writings. Maybe especially the **first letter to the Corinthians**. He made some strong judgments in those cases. You might even think about what Aquila and Priscilla. They judged the teachings of Apollos to not be completely accurate and spoke with him about it. (**Acts 18:24-28**)
- D. All of these examples must show us that not all judging is inappropriate, but it is at times absolutely necessary.

#### **IV. We must have ability to judge whether or not something is good or bad.**

- A. The whole point of studying God's Word and growing in knowledge of it is to learn what is good and acceptable in the eyes of God and what is not. (**II Tim. 2:15**) While many would love to convince us that there is not true standard of right and wrong, our God is mighty clear that there are some things that are good and some things that are bad. There are some things that show our standing in the way of God and there are some things that show that we are walking in the way of Satan. (**Gal. 5:16-25**)
- B. In coming to recognize that some things are good and some things are wrong then there will be times when people will be rubbed the wrong way by us not participating in or do certain things that we might have opportunity to do in this life. It might be that we are convicted based upon God's Word that something is flat out sinful and therefore we don't participate. If this is the case then it's logical that we wouldn't condone, promote, or participate in such a thing.
- C. However, it might be that we just personally don't feel comfortable being involved in a particular thing. Maybe it isn't something that we can concretely show is sinful, but it still isn't something that we can do in faith so therefore we don't participate in it based upon what we see in **Romans 14**. Some would take our decision to not participate as a judgment, but it might just be that we cannot be involved but still recognize the right of others to be involved in whatever the thing might be.
- D. Each of us must be able to know what we can and cannot do in regards to our faith. It might be that we get in a situation where we must share that conviction with someone else because we see them either participating, approving, or condoning in something we see as being sinful. If we truly believe it to be against the will of God then I don't see how we can but share that with them. Again, it isn't to tell them that they are condemned to hell, but it is to lovingly show them that we are concerned with their current behavior and we desire for them to do what is right.

#### **V. When we render judgments, we must be sure that we are judging fairly and consistently.**

- A. When we take the opportunity to speak with someone about something we deem as being wrong then we must be sure to approach that situation and conversation as wisely as possible. To begin with, we must make sure that our judgments are fair. This means that what we see is actually what is going on. Sometimes our perception of a situation might just not be accurate. This means we must have a willingness to accept that we just saw things wrongly. It also means that our judgments are based upon objective truth and not just our own opinions. Going back to **Romans 14**, we ought not judge our brother who eats meat or observes the day simply because we can't do so in faith.
- B. We must also make sure that we are judging consistently. This means that we are judging by the same standard we hold ourselves to and we are not focusing on others while ignoring our own willful shortcomings. I think one of the greatest examples of fair and consistent judgment of sinful actions is done by Jesus in **Matthew 23** in regards to the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees.
- C. In **Matthew 23** we find Jesus calling out the Pharisees for a variety of sinful actions, but one of them is their hypocrisy which is really the focus of Jesus's teachings with this saying. He first rebukes them in **vv.3,4** for holding others to a standard they themselves are not willing to live up to. Jesus continues on by rebuking them for arrogance and adding to God's commands, but then He gets back to their hypocrisy by referring to them as whitewashed tombs. These people were especially hard on Jesus by trying to hand some sort of fault on Him, but Jesus here says that they put on as if they are something great, but in reality they were full of sin. They tried to find a speck in Jesus's eye while ignoring their own sin.
- D. Jesus first made sure that He was doing what He ought to do, and then He was fair and consistent when He pointed out what was truly sin on the part of the people who should have been the godliest of the Jews.

So...are we not to ever judge the actions of others and call that which is sin sin? I just don't think that this is the point of Jesus's teaching here in **Matthew 7**. Instead, He qualifies for us how it is that we ought to carry out our judgments of those who are around us. No one likes to be told that what they are doing is wrong or unwise, but sometimes we need that. It's also not fun to be the one who has to speak with someone about something we think is amiss, but may God help us to do that the right way when and if that situation arises in our lives. May God help us to handle His Word rightly and know what is right or wrong, and may we love souls enough to help show them the way of God when they stray.