

THE KINGDOM-DRIVEN LIFE #17

The Book of Matthew

Sawdust and Logs

(Standards of Judgment in the Kingdom)

I. Scripture Abuse

A. “Judge Not”

1. We’ve heard of drug abuse and child abuse—but what about scripture abuse?
2. Have you ever had your words misquoted? I wonder how God feels.
3. Today we come to the famous “Judge not, lest you be judged” passage of scripture. This is the one we hear when we try to speak up about sin; this is what the media uses to scold Christians who oppose social sins like homosexuality and abortion on demand.
4. Strong statements of firmly held conviction are generally unwelcome in our pluralistic, anti-Christian culture.

(We live in) an age of appeasement...an age that dislikes strong men because...they always cause a disturbance. The man who is now glorified is the man who can be described as being in the “middle of the road.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

5. We even hear this in the church when we try to correct someone or practice church discipline.

B. So let’s read the text and talk about:

1. What it does NOT mean
2. What it DOES mean
3. Five Principles of Judgment for Christ-Followers

Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck (KJV-“splinter”) in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, “Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,” when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get

rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Matt 7:1-6 NLT

II. Logs and Splinters: Principles of Judgment

A. What It Does NOT Mean

“Do not judge” is open to several interpretations. It certainly does not mean, “Don’t discern’ or “do not think.”

Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*

...there are many who say that ‘judge not’ must be taken simply and literally as it is, meaning that the true Christian should never express an opinion about others. They say that there must be no judging whatsoever, that we must be easy, indulgent and tolerant, and allow almost anything to go on for peace and quiet, and especially unity...but that cannot be...”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*

1. There are several reasons why dispensing with all judgment cannot possibly be the right interpretation:

- In verse 6, Jesus warns His disciples to be wary of giving sacred things to “dogs” and pearls to “pigs”, references to unbelievers who hate the Gospel and are unprepared to receive it. Differentiating between believers and non-believers requires we make a judgment.
- In verse 15, Jesus says to “beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” How can we decide someone is a false prophet without making a judgment?
- In verses 16-20, Jesus tells us to judge the “fruit” of the prophets, and by them we will know what they are. How can we “know them by their fruits” without “judging” their fruit?

If “judge not” literally means to “never use judgment”, how are we to obey the clear commands in the verses that follow? Also consider:

- God has ordained “judges” in the world (Romans 13, etc.) and has appointed the Church to “judge” matters within (1 Corinthians 5) as those who one day “judge angels”! (1 Corinthians 6:3)

2. *Jesus is not commanding an absolute prohibition on judgment.* The English word “judge” translates from the Greek word “krino” which literally means “to condemn.” It’s one thing to decide in our minds if the defendant is guilty based on

the evidence; it's another thing altogether to sit in the seat of judgment and condemn him to death!

3. Jesus is NOT forbidding a proper use of discernment or distinguishing one thing from another (as in Point 1 above) He is warning about passing a final judgment on others, assuming that we can truly know another person's heart or motive and thusly, condemn them.

4. If we consider the context of the passage, we can see that the Lord is still using the Pharisees as an example of how NOT to do our piety; the Pharisees were known for making a religious "show" of their religion (see Matthew 6:1ff) and of passing judgment on others.

B. What It DOES Mean: 5 Principles of Judgment for Christ-Followers

1. We must avoid two extremes, both of which are wrong: on one hand, a critical spirit; on the other, refusing to judge at all.

a. We must ever guard against a "critical spirit", appointing ourselves as judge of the lives and actions of others when we, in our hearts or with our tongues, pronounce a judgment of condemnation on others.

b. The other extreme is to take Jesus' words to mean we are never to say or think anything negative of anything or anyone else; in this case, how can we "test the spirits"?

Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God.

1 John 4:1 NLT

2. Our standard of judging others is the standard by which we ourselves shall be judged.

a. People with a critical spirit can't stay happily married, connect long-term with a pastor or a local church, or have close friendships. Their habit of picking others apart turns on them and places them in a position of being judged critically by others, which drives them away.

b. The Golden Rule applies here: If we do not want others to judge us on the basis of one word we say or one thing we do, (judging our whole character forever on the basis of one mistake), we must extend grace to others who offend us when they do something wrong.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Matthew 5:7

**Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Matthew 6:12**

3. Seeking to point out flaws or faults in others is often a sign there are larger flaws lurking in our own lives. Jesus refers to flaws we see in others as “sawdust” compared to the “log” that’s in our own lives!

This grotesque illustration, drawn from the carpenter’s workshop, exposes graphically the hypocrisy of the sort of criticism Jesus is condemning in vv.1-2. The “speck” (Greek “karpnos”, a tiny splinter) is used in secular Greek for something small or minute. The “log” (more literally, a beam or rafter) was used in Hebrew sayings to indicate something large and massive...

R.T. France-Tyndale NT Commentary

a. The Lord’s sense of humor is certainly on display here. His metaphorical comparison of a speck of sawdust in the eye to a log convicts us. When we think we’ve detected a “splinter” in someone else, we have a “rafter beam” in our own life!

b. Just as worry and anxiety indicate the problem of “little faith”, (see previous study), so habitual fault finding in others indicates the presence of a critical or judgmental spirit. If we have a “critical spirit”, judging others quickly, constantly and without applied grace, we cannot see that we ourselves are fatally flawed! We have become as “Pharisees”, a term which literally means, “set apart ones”.

c. Jesus uses the term “hypocrite” here, and remember that He is not speaking to the lost, but to His disciples! It’s possible to be a Christ-follower and a hypocrite at the same time!

Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain might, on strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and it would be unjust to publicly express indignation against your own crime.

Seneca

4. There is a proper way to help others overcome their flaws, but only after we have sufficiently examined and judged our own selves.

a. Observe the proper (Kingdom) order here: first cast the “log” out of your own eye; then go help your brother.

The critical person is quick-sighted to spy a speck in the eye of another, not sensible of the log in their own...There are degrees of sin: some are comparatively

“splinters”, others are beams...Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the same sins in others...

Matthew Henry, *Commentary on Matthew*

b. The eye is the most sensitive of all organs. To try to help others with their flaws should only be attempted after the deepest self-examination, and then handled with all care and sensitivity.

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.

And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

Galatians 6:1-2 NLT

5. Some people need to be left alone.

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.

Matthew 7:6 NASB

a. The use of the terms “dogs” and “swine” to describe people was well known to Jesus’ hearers. Gentiles and heathens (non-believers) were described as dogs or pigs because of their unclean nature.

b. Obviously, to distinguish a person as a dog or pig requires a “judgment” of sort, so this statement alone prevents us from misinterpreting Matthew 7:1 in a wrong way.

c. There are people you cannot help. Ever. To try to do so will only bring an attack upon your own self.

In the case of an unbeliever, we should never present to him anything but the doctrine of justification by faith. We should never discuss any other doctrine with an unbeliever...”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak...combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

Excerpt from 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 NASB

d. We make a huge mistake when we try to discuss the precious doctrines of the Trinity, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, election, predestination, etc. with non-believers!*

***An example of this would be television personality Bill Maher, an outspoken atheist who hates Christianity and has no tolerance for Christians who express their faith. His recent film, *Religulous*, is a blasphemous presentation of anti-Christian sentiment that mocks things we would consider holy. We can “judge” that Bill Maher is a non-believer by his words and deeds. But we cannot “condemn” him, because we are not God, nor do we know what God may do for Bill Maher at some point in the future. The point here is that the ONLY doctrine a Christ-follower should be prepared to present to Bill Maher would be justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ.**

III. The Heart of Humility

- Judgment begins with me.
- Only a daily heart-search and self-judgment gives me any qualification to try to help others.
- Even then, I can be self-deceived, so accountability to the Body of Christ is my only real safeguard.
- Restoration is the heart of the Gospel...Helping others is the mission of the Church...but it all begins with my own heart.

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world. So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other.

I Corinthians 11:27-33a NLT