

Sunday September 6, 2026

Sermon Outline

Title: Are we supposed to Judge?

Matthew 7:1-29

1. Judge Ourselves (Matthew 7:1-6)
 - a. Don't be a hypocrite
 - b. Deploying hypocritical judgement condemns us (Romans 2:1).
 2. Judge with Righteous Knowledge (Matthew 7:7-14)
 - a. Seek (pray and be in God's word)
 - b. Treat others as you would want to be treated
 - c. You seek because you must be able to recognize the narrow road to life.
 3. Judge with Discernment (Matthew 7: 15-28)
 - a. Discernment is the process of seeking, understanding the details, and making decisions based on God's word and will.
 - b. Judgement is not untrue, harsh, hypocritical, superficial, or self-righteous!
 4. Judge with Love
 - a. Show Ephesians 4:15
 - b. Live and speak in Truth with Love
 - c. Examine yourself so we are judging as Ambassadors of Christ!
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Dig Deeper Bible Study

Are We Supposed to Judge?

Main Scripture: Matthew 7:1–29

Key Question:

Are Christians supposed to judge other people?

Key Truth:

Jesus does not teach His followers to abandon discernment or ignore sin. He teaches us to examine ourselves first, judge with righteous knowledge and discernment, and speak truth from a position of love rather than hypocrisy, pride, or condemnation.

JUDGE OURSELVES-Matthew 7:1–6

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.” — Matthew 7:1

- Jesus begins this teaching by turning the attention of His listeners **back toward themselves**.
- Matthew 7:1 is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible, but it is often separated from the verses that follow it. Jesus immediately explains what He means by continuing in verses 2–5.
- Jesus warns against the kind of judgment that looks at another person's sin while ignoring our own.
- The illustration Jesus gives is intentionally exaggerated: someone has a **beam, or large piece of wood**, in his own eye while trying to remove a tiny speck from someone else's eye.
- The problem is not that the speck needs attention. The problem is that the person trying to help has not dealt honestly with his own condition.
- Jesus calls this person a **hypocrite**. The issue is not simply being imperfect. The issue is pretending to be qualified to correct someone else while refusing to examine yourself.
- This is where Romans 2:1 connects strongly with Jesus' teaching: when we condemn others for things we are also practicing, we are condemning ourselves.

UNDERSTANDING HYPOCRISY

- Biblical hypocrisy is more than making a mistake. A hypocrite presents one standard for others while allowing himself or herself to live by a different standard.
- Jesus repeatedly confronted religious hypocrisy during His ministry because outward religious behavior can hide an unchanged heart.
- Matthew 23 is one of the strongest examples. Jesus describes religious leaders who appeared righteous outwardly but were spiritually corrupt inwardly.
- The goal of self-examination is not to convince ourselves that we are worthless or that we can never address sin. The goal is to make sure that **our own hearts are surrendered to God before we attempt to help someone else**.

THE BEAM AND THE SPECK

- A speck is small; a beam is large. Jesus uses this contrast to expose how easily we can see someone else's problems while overlooking our own.
- Notice something important in Matthew 7:5: Jesus does not say, “Leave the speck alone.”

- He says, in essence, **deal with your own beam first, and then you will be able to see clearly enough to help your brother with his speck.**

- Biblical correction is therefore not eliminated. It is transformed by humility.

INTERESTING FACT — JESUS DID NOT SAY “NEVER CORRECT ANYONE”

- The final verse of this section, Matthew 7:6, immediately introduces another form of discernment: Jesus tells His disciples not to give what is holy to dogs or cast pearls before swine.

- That means Jesus expects His followers to recognize differences in people's responses, character, and spiritual situations.

- In other words, Matthew 7 is not teaching, “Never make a judgment about anything.”

- It is teaching us to **judge rightly, beginning with ourselves.**

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus began His teaching about judgment by telling us to examine ourselves?
2. What is the difference between recognizing sin in our own lives and simply beating ourselves up with guilt?
3. How can we become more aware of our own “beam” before pointing out someone else's “speck”?
4. Have you ever seen someone use “Judge not” as a reason to avoid dealing with something Scripture clearly calls sin? Why can that be dangerous?
5. What makes correction hypocritical rather than helpful?

JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUS KNOWLEDGE-Matthew 7:7-14

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” — Matthew 7:7

- At first glance, Matthew 7:7-11 may seem disconnected from the subject of judgment.

- But notice where Jesus has taken His listeners: first, He tells them to examine themselves; then He tells them to **ask, seek, and knock.**

- Before we make judgments about what is right, wrong, wise, foolish, true, or false, we need to seek God.

- Righteous judgment requires **righteous knowledge.**

- We cannot make biblical judgments based solely on our feelings, assumptions, personal preferences, social media opinions, or what everyone else is saying.
- We need God's Word.
- We need prayer.
- We need the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- We need humility.

SEEKING GOD CHANGES HOW WE SEE PEOPLE

- Jesus says, “Ask,” “seek,” and “knock.”
- These words communicate intentional pursuit. Following God is not passive.
- Prayer helps us bring our desires, assumptions, frustrations, and decisions before God.
- God's Word gives us the standard by which we evaluate what is true.
- The more we understand God's character, the more accurately we can understand what righteous judgment looks like.
- Psalm 119:105 describes God's Word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.
- We should be careful about judging a situation when we have not taken the time to **seek God's perspective on it.**

THE GOLDEN RULE

- Matthew 7:12 says, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”
- Jesus connects righteous judgment with the way we treat other people.
- This is commonly called **the Golden Rule.**
- Notice that Jesus does not simply say, “Don't hurt people.”
- He gives a positive command: **Do for others what you would want them to do for you.**
- This changes the way we approach correction, disagreement, confrontation, and even difficult conversations.
- Before speaking about someone, ask: **Would I want someone to speak about me this way?**
- Before confronting someone, ask: **Would I want to be approached this way?**

- Before making assumptions, ask: **Would I want someone to make this assumption about me without knowing the whole story?**

Discussion Questions

1. Why is prayer important when we are trying to determine what is right or wrong?
2. How can God's Word protect us from making judgments based only on our emotions or personal opinions?
3. What does the Golden Rule look like when you have to confront someone about something difficult?
4. Why do you think Jesus placed the teaching about the narrow road immediately after the Golden Rule?
5. What are some situations where it is especially difficult to balance truth with kindness?

JUDGE WITH DISCERNMENT-Matthew 7:15–29

“Beware of false prophets.” — Matthew 7:15

- Jesus moves from judging ourselves to recognizing truth and error.
- He warns His disciples about **false prophets**.
- This alone shows that Jesus does not expect His followers to accept everything and everyone without evaluation.
- They are commanded to “**beware.**”
- To beware means we must pay attention. We must observe. We must recognize danger.
- Discernment is the process of seeking, understanding the details, and making decisions according to God's Word and will.
- Discernment requires more than looking at appearances.

YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUIT

- Jesus says that false prophets may come looking like harmless sheep while inwardly being “ravening wolves.”
- The warning is about deception.
- A person can look right while being wrong.
- A message can sound spiritual while contradicting Scripture.

- A person can have charisma, popularity, influence, or even religious language without producing godly fruit.
- Jesus tells His followers to examine the **fruit**.
- Fruit refers to what someone's life and teaching ultimately produce.
- Character matters.
- Conduct matters.
- Teaching matters.
- Motives matter.
- The question is not simply, “**Does this person sound good?**”
- The question is, “**Does this person's life and teaching agree with God's truth?**”

DISCERNMENT IS NOT SUSPICION

- Biblical discernment does not mean assuming the worst about everyone.
- Discernment is not being cynical, harsh, suspicious, or constantly looking for something wrong.
- Discernment means being willing to look carefully and evaluate according to God's standard.
- A discerning Christian can say, “I don't know yet. I need to seek God and understand this better.”
- Sometimes the most righteous judgment is to **wait before making a judgment**.

JUDGMENT SHOULD NOT BE SUPERFICIAL

- Jesus warns against evaluating people merely by appearance.
- 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us that people look at the outward appearance while God looks at the heart.
- We do not have God's ability to see every motive or circumstance.
- That should make us humble.
- We can evaluate actions and teachings according to Scripture without pretending that we know everything happening inside another person's heart.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is discernment necessary for Christians?
2. What is the difference between biblical discernment and simply being suspicious or critical of people?
3. According to Jesus, how can we recognize a person's "fruit"?
4. Why should we be careful about claiming to know another person's motives or heart?
5. What are some ways Christians can test whether a teaching is actually consistent with Scripture?
6. What does the illustration of the two builders teach us about the difference between hearing God's Word and obeying God's Word?

JUDGE WITH LOVE-Ephesians 4:15

"But speaking the truth in love..." — Ephesians 4:15

- If we are going to judge rightly, truth and love must remain together.
- Truth without love can become harsh, arrogant, and destructive.
- Love without truth can become permissive and unwilling to confront what is wrong.
- Biblical love does not mean agreeing with everything someone does.
- Biblical truth does not give us permission to treat people cruelly.
- Christians are called to hold **truth and love together**.

TRUTH WITHOUT LOVE

- We can be technically correct and still be wrong in how we communicate.
- A person can quote Scripture while humiliating another person.
- A person can identify someone's sin while acting as though he or she has never sinned.
- A person can win an argument and lose an opportunity to show Christ.
- Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that a soft answer can turn away wrath.
- Galatians 6:1 tells spiritual believers to restore someone caught in sin with a spirit of gentleness.

LOVE WITHOUT TRUTH

- Love does not mean ignoring sin.
- Love does not mean telling someone whatever they want to hear.

- Love does not mean redefining God's Word so that nobody becomes uncomfortable.
- Hebrews 12:6 teaches that God's love includes correction.
- Jesus Himself corrected people because He loved them.
- Sometimes the loving thing is to speak a difficult truth.

JESUS IS OUR MODEL

- Jesus demonstrated extraordinary compassion toward sinners.
- He ate with people others rejected.
- He showed mercy to the broken.
- He forgave.
- He restored.
- But Jesus also told people the truth.
- He called people to repentance.
- He confronted hypocrisy.
- He warned people about destruction.
- He never separated truth from love.

EXAMINE YOURSELF BEFORE YOU REPRESENT CHRIST

- Christians are called to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- An ambassador represents someone else.
- That means our behavior matters when we speak about God's truth.
- When we confront someone, we are not merely representing ourselves.
- We are representing Christ.
- Before speaking, we should ask:
 - **Am I saying what Scripture says?**
 - **Am I saying it for the right reason?**

- Am I willing to examine myself first?
- Am I speaking with humility?
- Am I seeking restoration rather than humiliation?
- Am I treating this person the way I would want to be treated?
- Does my attitude look like Jesus?

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to “speak the truth in love”?
2. Can you think of a situation where someone was truthful but not loving? What was the result?
3. Can love ever require us to tell someone something they do not want to hear? Why?
4. How does remembering that we are ambassadors for Christ change the way we approach difficult conversations?
5. What should we examine in ourselves before confronting another person's behavior?
6. What is one area where God may be asking you to become more discerning, more humble, or more loving?

THE FOUR QUESTIONS TO REMEMBER

- **Judge Yourself:** Have I examined my own heart first?
- **Judge with Righteous Knowledge:** Have I sought God through prayer and His Word?
- **Judge with Discernment:** Am I evaluating this according to God's truth rather than appearances, assumptions, or personal preference?
- **Judge with Love:** Am I representing Christ through both my words and my attitude?