

Judge Not
Matthew 7:1-6
Rev. Brian Bill
May 20-21, 2017

I came across some surefire ways to get someone to quote the Bible.

- Share your belief in biblical creationism and dare to call evolution just a theory.
- Speak up by declaring that because life begins at conception, abortion is murder. BTW, I'm pumped about the Baby Bottles for Life Project – please pick up a bottle or two and fill it with change for Pregnancy Resources. Also, I'm thrilled to learn that the largest provider of abortion is closing four clinics in Iowa, one right here in Bettendorf!
- Show that another religion or worldview is in error. I met with a high school senior recently who wrote a paper on the errors of Islam. I can't imagine how much courage this took.
- Share with your friends that Jesus is the only way to heaven.
- State that the Bible forbids the practice of premarital sex, extramarital sex and homosexuality.
- Stand up and say that marriage is between one man and one woman for life.

Sydney McMeekan is in the 8th grade and participated in a school debate this week where she stood up for biblical marriage. I asked her to put her experience into words. Here's what she wrote: *“Before my debate I was feeling very nervous because I felt that people were going to judge me...I walked into that classroom knowing that no matter who voted for me, I had the only person I needed already on my side. When the debate began I was beyond scared. The reality of this set in as I realized that almost all of the students were supporters of gay marriage...After my debate was done and I said all I could, I felt proud for standing up for what I believed in. I knew God was on my side through it all, and through prayer I got through it.”*

If you're still standing after making these Scriptural statements, stick around and you'll often hear a specific Scripture quoted, even by those who know no other verse: **“Judge not, that you be not judged.”** This verse is often used against Christians as a way to intimidate us from speaking the truth.

J.D. Greear, in a sermon on this passage, says that our culture holds to two unshakable assumptions:

- **Religion is private**
- **Morality is relative**

There are different kinds of people when it comes to our topic today:

- **There are those who say, “whatever.”** This person believes anything goes and therefore one should never speak up for what is right or wrong.
- **There are others who whack everyone.** It’s like these people are playing “Whack-a-Mole” at Chuck E. Cheese, just waiting for a sinner to pop up so they can whack away.

I believe there is a third category— those who follow the **Word of God**. The problem is that very few are actually in this category.

Some years ago, researchers with the Barna Organization asked Americans Christians for their views on issues like lying, cheating, the nature of God, and sin. They found that while more than seven out of 10 Americans call themselves Christians, just one out of every 10 were able to answer basic questions about the Bible and the faith. Tragically, only 10% of Americans have a biblical worldview.

In research that was done among 20-somethings for the book, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*, nearly nine out of ten young people view Christians as “judgmental.”

Not surprisingly, in a just-released Gallup poll, Americans today are more permissive on moral matters than ever before. Commenting on this trend, Albert Mohler said this on Tuesday: *“On virtually every issue, especially every single issue related to sex, gender, and sexual morality, Americans have been moving steadily to...a more liberal or permissive direction.”*

We’re continuing with message #5 in our CONTEXT series as we unpack what the Bible says about judging. I’m grateful to Pastor Kyle and Pastor Ed for preaching the past two weeks. Didn’t they do a great job?

I wanted to thank several of you for suggesting some additional sermon topics – we’ve added four more topics in July. Here’s where we’re headed.

May 20-21	Judge Not	Matthew 7:1-6
May 27-28	Forgetting what Lies Behind	Philippians 3:2-14
June 3-4	Plans to Prosper You	Jeremiah 29:1-14
June 10-11	Money is the Root of All Evil	1 Timothy 6:3-10
June 17-18	Be Strong and Courageous	Joshua 1:1-9
June 24-25	No More Than You Can Handle	1 Corinthians
10:1-13		
July 1-2	I Can Do All Things	Philippians 4:10-
13		
July 8-9	All Things Work for Good	Romans 8:18-28
July 15-16	God Wants You to Be Healthy and Wealthy	Isaiah 53:1-
6		
July 22-23	God Helps Those Who Help Themselves	Luke 18:9-14

Our passage is positioned about 2/3 of the way through the Sermon on the Mount, which is found in Matthew 5-7. In chapter 5, Jesus begins with eight blessings available to the obedient Christian. He then challenges us to live as salt and light in a dark and decaying culture. Jesus proclaims himself as the fulfillment of the Law and then identifies several sins to avoid – like anger and lust. This chapter ends with a call to love our enemies. In chapter 6, He teaches us how to give, how to pray and fast and how to seek His kingdom above everything else.

All of that is context to set up our text found in Matthew 7:1-6. Please stand as we read: *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? 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. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”*

The key to unlocking this passage is to recognize that the word **“judge”** can be used in two different ways in the New Testament.

1. One use refers to criticizing and condemning in a spirit of judgmentalism.
2. The other use means to carefully differentiate, discern, and decide.

I like how one author states it: *“Jesus didn’t say, ‘Judge Not,’ followed by a period or an exclamation point...but rather followed with a clarification of what type of judgments to make and how to make them...read in context, this isn’t a prohibition against judging. It’s a stern warning against judging improperly.”*

Here’s a summary of the sermon in one sentence: *Avoid critical judgmentalism while embracing careful judgment.* This will serve as our outline.

1. Avoid critical judgmentalism. Look at the first two words in verse 1: **“Judge not...”**

This was important because the phony Pharisees categorized people and quickly condemned those who were not part of their religious group. They looked down on people who didn’t jump through the same holy hoops and they castigated those who sinned differently than they did.

J.D. Greear writes: *“You judge someone not when you assess their position, but when you dismiss them as a person.”* When we condemn someone we’re declaring that they have no value or worth. Romans 14:4: **“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?”** Critical judgmentalism is often caustic and quick, harsh and hurtful. Jesus has no tolerance for those who have no tolerance of others. In fact, He states two things that will happen to those who are hypercritical and holier-than-thou.

- **The Boomerang Effect.** The first reason we’re not to judge is found in the second half of verse 1: **“...that you be not judged.”** Jesus uses the singular **“you”** here to personalize this for each one of us. If I judge, then I’ll be judged. He continues in verse 2: **“For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”** The word **“measure”** was used of a measuring rod, like a yardstick in our culture. If we measure people according to our standards, they never measure up, do they? The problem is that we don’t measure up either.

I think of a couple Old Testament examples of the boomerang effect. In Judges 1:7 a ruler named Adoni-Bezek cut off the thumbs and big toes of 70 kings only to have this same thing happen to him when he was captured. In Esther 7:10, Haman erected a gallows on which to hang Mordecai but he’s the one who ends up getting hung on it. Obadiah 1:15 says, **“For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done**

to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.” The standard we use to judge others will be the standard God uses to judge us.

- **The Beam Effect.** Jesus then asks a very penetrating question in verse 3 to get to the other reason we’re to avoid critical judgmentalism – we have a beam problem: *“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”* This is when we maximize the faults of others while minimizing our own.

I experienced this in a personal way on Tuesday at the beginning of our staff team time. We meet in my office and sit around a large conference table every week. As I watched every one take their regular seats, I piped up and said: *“Hey you guys are just like our people in the pews. You all sit in the same spot each week!”* I was pretty impressed with this teachable moment until Pastor Tim leaned forward, pointed to me and exclaimed, *“So do you!”* I’ve never switched seats either. Busted. I got hit with a boomerang because I had a pew stuck in my own eye!

BTW, around 20 people have taken the seating on mission challenge by moving from the 10:45 service to one of our other services. One young couple asked that we not judge them if they fall asleep during the 8:00 service!

This question Jesus asked probably moved the crowds to laughter because the picture is very funny. The word for *“speck”* is splinter or stubble or a piece of chaff. The word for *“log”* is the word for a roof rafter or load-bearing beam. These beams were often 40 feet long and 5 feet around! Notice that this log *“is in your own eye.”* This is not a vague possibility but an actuality. He’s assuming we all have this problem. The word *“eye”* represents the soul in Scripture. When I look at your life and see your faults, I am, in fact, blind to the sin in my own soul. Jesus is saying that the sin of the hypercritical hypocrite is more egregious than the sin of the person being judged!

The image is absurd isn’t it? We walk around with a huge rafter protruding out of our eye and yet we somehow clearly see the small speck of sin in someone else’s eye!

We're critical by nature, aren't we? That reminds me of the man, who whenever he would bring a prospective wife home, his mother would criticize her unmercifully. Feeling exasperated, one of his buddies gave him some advice: *"Find someone just like your mother."* He looked and looked until he found someone like his mom. The young woman looked like her, walked like her, talked like her and even thought like his mother. So he took her home. The next time he saw his buddy, his friend asked how his mother liked the girl. He answered, *"It went great. My mother loved her...but my father couldn't stand her!"*

Jesus goes for the jugular of their judgmentalism when he asks a follow up question in verse 4: ***"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"***

I like what Erwin Lutzer says about the man with a beam in his eye: *"He is incapable of seeing his own plank. Because that plank developed over a period of time, it was little specks of sawdust that were not confessed and attitudes that he's not dealt with. And so they grow and he begins to develop a critical, judgmental spirit."*

Have you ever noticed the text on the side mirrors of your vehicle? It reads this way: *"Objects in mirror are closer than they appear."* This safety warning is required to be engraved on the side mirrors of every vehicle sold in America. We should have something similar imprinted on our souls: *"Your sin is closer than it appears!"* Here's an application. Every time you're driving and you look in the mirror, ask yourself if there's a sin you need to confess.

So here's a question: *"You're thinking about a judgmental person right now, aren't you?"* Here's a more uncomfortable question: *What's the name of the sin in your mirror?*

Here are some reasons why we must avoid critical judgmentalism.

- **We don't know all the facts.** Proverbs 18:13: ***"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."*** An owner of a warehouse decided to make a surprise tour to make sure all his employees were working hard. He immediately noticed a young guy lazily leaning up against some packing crates with his hands in his pockets, doing nothing. The owner got

angry and asked him, “*How much are you paid in a week?*” The young man’s eyes got really big. He stumbled and stammered and said, “*Three hundred bucks.*”

The owner pulled out his wallet, peeled off three one hundred dollar bills, gave him the cash and said, “*Here’s a week’s pay. Now get out of here and don’t ever come back!*”

Without a word the dude stuffed the money into his pocket and took off. The warehouse manager was standing nearby staring in amazement. The owner walked over to him and said, “*Tell me, how long has that guy been working for us?*” The manager replied, “*He didn’t work here, he was just delivering a pizza.*”

- **We don’t know someone’s motives.** It’s impossible to know another person’s heart, especially when we don’t even know what lurks in our own hearts. 1 Corinthians 4:5 is a powerful corrective: “***Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.***”
- **We must distinguish between biblical issues and personal preferences.** There are some things that are always wrong and there are some things that are always right. But there are other issues where there is freedom, provided we are not causing our brother to stumble. To illustrate this, let’s do a quick poll of the best ice cream in the QCA – how many of you would say Country Style is the best? How many of you would say it’s got to be Whitey’s? The early church had a lot of tension about eating meat sacrificed to idols. Romans 14:3: “***Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.***” Unfortunately it’s often in the realm of freedom that people express their strongest judgments.

About seven years ago I was off on a weekend so we visited a large church with some relatives. I started judging things as soon as we pulled into the parking lot. I liked some things and didn’t like a bunch of other things. When we walked in the auditorium and found our seats, which were very comfortable (which I liked), the band was playing a song I had never heard

before (which I didn't like). The service started and the band played another song I didn't know. I started getting angry and even more judgmental.

As I stumbled around in the valley of pride and frustration I noticed that our ten-year-old niece Mikayla, who had been in a long battle with cancer, was twirling around directly in front of me. She had a scarf and she was flinging it around, as she closed her eyes and expressed her jubilation to Jesus. I was convicted by my smug arrogance and started weeping. I then looked and noticed that our daughter Lydia, who was standing right next to Mikayla, had a very serious and contemplative look on her face. I was rebuked a second time because I found out later that it was during this time of praise that God confirmed to her what it is that she should do with her life! She is now certified as a Child Life Specialist so she can care for kids with cancer – and now her and her husband Jamie have been blessed with Pip, who has a genetic disorder, and needs special care. While I was presumptuously judging, they were praising Jesus.

- **We're all sinners.** Unfortunately, some of us think our sins smell better than other people's sins. It's so easy to gloss over our sins while gossiping about the grossness of someone else's sin. Romans 3:23: ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** Christians are better off, but not better *than* anyone else.
- **We must guard against seeking revenge.** It's easy to get worked up and take things out on people, isn't it? I'm reminded of what James and John ask Jesus to do in Luke 9:54: ***“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”*** They hated the Samaritans and they wanted to wipe them out. We read what Jesus thought of this attitude in verse 55: ***“But He turned and rebuked them.”***
- **We will all face God in judgment.** James 4:12 asks a probing question: ***“There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”*** He's God and we're not. And frankly, He doesn't need our help running the world.

And so, we're to *avoid critical judgmentalism*...Let's look at the second part now...*while embracing careful judgment*.

2. Embrace careful judgment. We're called to be wise and discerning in two ways.

- **Humbly help others.** It's not wrong to see the speck in someone's eye, what's wrong is when we exhibit *hypercritical* and *hypocritical* judgmentalism. Notice what Jesus says in verse 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.***" Before we can remove the beam, we have to recognize that we even have one. I must detect a problem before I can correct the problem. BTW, one way you can tell that you still have some judgmentalism going on is when you become more enraged at someone else's sin than you are embarrassed and convicted by your own sins.

After we do some self-surgery by confessing our own sins, *then* we're called to humbly help others. When I deal severely with my own sin, I'll be more sensitive and careful to help others who are stuck in sin. After David confesses his sin and asks God for a clean heart, he makes this request in Psalm 51:13: "***Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.***" Galatians 6:1: "***Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.***"

It's true that we must not judge a book by its cover by we can judge a book by its contents. John 7:24: "***Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.***" To simply magnify the sin of others is wrong. When we deal with our own sins, we can do the gentle and careful work of helping get something out of someone else's eye. And the person will often be glad for the help because he knows we are not there to condemn but to help.

- **Decide to be discerning.** While we're not to be involved in critical judgmentalism, we must make wise judgments. We see this in verse 6: "***Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.***" Dogs and hogs were unclean animals known for their ferocity when provoked. They symbolize those who scorn and mock truth. Don't think of dogs as domesticated pets but rather like wolves or rats. There's no way someone would take what was left from a holy sacrifice in the temple and feed it to a mangy mutt.

Pigs were the epitome of uncleanness for the Jews. Pearls were invaluable in that culture, even more precious than diamonds. Jesus is saying that we must be careful to not give something priceless to someone who is just out to attack you. 2 Peter 2:22 puts it like this: ***“The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”*** Proverbs 14:7 says, ***“Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.”*** Jesus practiced this when He answered Pilate’s question but stood silent when before Herod.

I wanted to publicly thank Team Edgewood for how you stand up for truth while avoiding critical judgmentalism. One of my pastor friends is Ed Hedding from Pleasant View Baptist in Bettendorf. As a way to live on mission he teaches a class on World Religions at Scott Community College. In one of his assignments he had his class visit different places of worship in the QCA. One of the students visited here on Easter Sunday and Ed received permission from her to pass the paper along to me. I don’t have time to read much of it but will do so Sunday night at our business meeting if you’d like to hear more.

Here’s some of what she wrote: *“...They all seem to be genuinely happy...walking into the building you get a feeling of community and family, even though there were many strangers there with it being Easter Sunday...I think this service was very powerful and moving...it pulled me into the service although I barely knew anything about it...After I was home, I realized I was stunned by my experience. It was the first time I had been to a church and felt welcomed, not awkward because I knew I didn’t belong. They made me feel like I did belong...they provide a comforting, welcoming environment for everyone...I would encourage others to go because it is a place for everyone to feel wanted and accepted for who they are.”*

Here’s what we’ve learned today: *Avoid critical judgmentalism while embracing careful judgment.*

BLESS Our Neighbors

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to judge our neighbors or coworkers or classmates? Proverbs 11:9, 12 says: ***“With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered...Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent.”***

Instead of blasting our neighbors, let's look for ways to bless them this summer. Pastor Tim attended a conference last week and learned a very helpful acronym that I'd like to introduce. It's easy to remember and to apply. Think of the word B.L.E.S.S. as you consider how to live on mission.

Begin with prayer. Simply ask, *"God how do you want me to bless the people in the places you've sent me to?"*

Listen. Take the time to listen to the people around you.

Eat. Look for ways to have a meal or dessert with your neighbors.

Serve. Observe their needs and then respond accordingly.

Story. When the time is right, share the story of how Jesus has changed your life.

Look to the Cross

The only way to get rid of a hypercritical and hypocritical spirit of judgmentalism is to consider the Cross. In order to get rid of the beam, recognize that Jesus took the judgment we deserved when He was nailed to the crossbeam. It is impossible for us to look at the cross and be self-righteous and critical at the same time.

I'm reminded of the scene in John 8 when the religious leaders express their judgmentalism by bringing to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. Jesus first deals with the sin in their own hearts by inviting those without sin to cast the first stone. When they all walk away, Jesus gives her grace when He says in verse 11: ***"Neither do I condemn you."*** But he doesn't stop there, does He? He then speaks truth when He says, ***"Go, and from now on sin no more."***

Tim Keller writes: *"When we define and describe sin to postmodern people, we must do so in a way that challenges not only prostitutes, but also Pharisees, to change."* If you're busted by the boomerang and the beam, believe in and receive Jesus Christ, who took on all the judgment you deserve...and go and sin no more.

Closing Song

"I'm forgiven because you were forsaken
I'm accepted, You were condemned
I'm alive and well, Your spirit is within me
Because You died and rose again..."

New Members