

34. Judge not, really?

June 12, 2016

Just about everyone of you, including unbelievers, knows the tragic story of king David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, but not as many know the story that followed. Rather than confessing his moral failure to God, David attempted to cover it up in a typical fashion of big shot politicians. He called Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, from the battlefield and sent him home in hopes that he would sleep with his wife and thus everybody would think that he had been the one to get her pregnant. But the plan backfired. Uriah's loyalty as a soldier kept him from finding pleasure in the arms of his wife while the battle still raged. So to cover his adulterous tracks, David arranged for Uriah's murder. One full year afterward, it seemed he had gotten away with that crime. Until the prophet Nathan confronted the king with a parable:

2 Samuel 12:1-4 Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

With the sin of adultery, murder, and deception hidden behind his ever-seemed-righteous indignation, David passed judgment with fervor and conviction. But God put David in the exact place where He wants him to be. It is time to draw the net:

2 Samuel 12:5-7a So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

Nathan pointed his long index finger to David's breast bone and declared him guilty.

We are about to study one of the most misunderstood and abused verses in the Bible. Many carnal Christians, as well as unbelievers, somehow memorized only the first two words of the verse and use them whenever the Holy Spirit convicts them through other mature Christians. Instead of repenting, they excuse themselves by reciting this portion. Let's do an in-depth study of this portion in context so that we understand what the Lord wants us to know.

A. UNDERSTANDING THE COMMAND

Matthew 7:1 "Judge not

This is the portion I was talking about. I am sure that many of you might have had the same experience like me with the carnal Christians or even the people who are sympathetic to them quoting this verse completely out of context. Somehow they think that Christians are supposed to love others no matter what they did and not pass any judgment at all.

The word 'judge' is from the Greek word "krino," which means "'to distinguish" or "to decide." To be able to judge truth from error is a mark of maturity and it is not what Jesus is prohibiting. For proof of this, take a look at what He says in verse 6:

Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

If you want more proofs, skip down to v15, you'll see that Jesus also tells us to use discernment in exposing false prophets. The Lord also demands that we make right judgments in another place in the Gospel. And if we turn to Paul's letters, we'll find that he, too, exhorts us to use discernment.

John 7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Some judging, therefore, is not only acceptable, but it is mandated for correction of others who are in sin. We are never expected to suspend our cautious spiritual evaluation capabilities or turn a blind eye to errors and heresies.

Listen, as the Bible teaches us that the Christian is called to unconditionally love others. But the Christian is not called to give unconditional approval to everything that others do. We really can still love people who do things that should not be approved of.

Then what does Jesus mean in v1? Quite simply, He wants us to not be highly critical for the sake of criticism; to not conduct our lives with a judgmental or negative attitude; to not assess others suspiciously; to not find petty faults or seek out periodic failures or differences in personal preferences. Simply, we are not to go around as sin sniffers or a self-appointed death squad of the Holy Spirit.

People with prejudice and legalism are the perfect candidate as sin sniffers who think that it is their God-given authority and job to go around and criticize how the people around them are living. In most cases, they cannot even live up to their own standards.

If we think that we are better than other people, because we know more Bible verses than others; or are in better shapes physically; have higher education; or are better financially, then we are sadly mistaken in our stupidity. Because God is not impressed with what we know, or how we look, or what we have. As a matter of fact, He is not impressed with any one of us at all.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." KJV

The more impressed we are with ourselves, the more judgmental we are of others and the more judgment we bring to ourselves.

When Jesus spoke like this, being the Master Communicator that He is, He was using words and ideas which were quite familiar and popular with the Jews. Many times the ancient Jewish Rabbis warned people against judging others by saying: "He who judges his neighbor favorably, will be judged favorably by God."

B. WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND

Matthew 7:1-2 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

As we put the first portion of the verse in context, we can understand what the Lord Jesus wants us to know. If we are harsh in dishing out judgment to others, judgment will be harshly dished out to us in return if we get into the same kind of situation. If, however, we are gracious and forgiving, we can expect to be treated that way ourselves.

In Matthew 5, we learned about leaving revenge in the hands of our God. Again, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is one of those misunderstood verses. It is known as "Lex Talionis" which means the law of retaliation – giving proper punishment by the judges, not by vigilantes. It applies here as well.

Matthew 7:3-4 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?

The Greek word for 'speck' is "karphos." It refers to a little, irritating particle, so tiny it almost cannot be seen. On the other hand, the Greek word for 'plank' is "dokos," referring to a beam or timber. I am sure that this Jesus' humorous illustration brought a good laugh from the listeners who had been judged by the Pharisees mercilessly.

Jesus doesn't say that it's wrong to help a brother or sister get a speck out of his or her spiritual eye. However, He does say that it is inappropriate to attempt to do so when there's a plank stuck in our own.

Jesus calls that person a hypocrite, a rebuke so strong that He used it in denouncing the character of the Pharisees.

C. APPLYING THE REPROOF

Whom was Jesus speaking to? Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and lawyers and those who hid behind their religious masks and condemned others in their measurement that they didn't even follow.

Matthew 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Many have erroneously concluded from this verse that we're not to interfere in other people's lives, that we're to mind our own business, to live and let live and leave the specks alone. God tells us differently.

As the pastor of this church, I sometimes have to use God-given authority and judgment to correct those who are in sin. If I don't judge, I am not doing what I am called to do. So when I judge others, I am setting myself up to the position where I will be judged according to what I do to others, if I commit the same kind of sins like they did. That's why James wrote in his letter not to be quick to become Bible teachers:

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Notice the words 'first' and 'then' in Matthew 7:5. We have to get rid of our own on-going sins in our life before we are qualified to judge others' sins. This idea is supported by Paul in Galatians 6:1:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

The word 'restore' comes from the Greek word "katartizo." It means "put back in what's missing." The word is used for "setting a broken bone."

Paul is saying, "you who are spiritual" who have removed the planks from your own eyes first – you are the ones to be the agents of healing; you are the ones to set the broken bones with utmost tenderness and compassion."

As we reach into that person's eye to remove the speck, let's remember several things:

- 1) **Be sure our own hands and heart are clean.**
- 2) **Eyes with specks in them are tender, so let's be sensitive and careful.**
- 3) **We are dealing with a family member, a brother or sister in Christ.**

How do I know if I am judging that is condemning them? If I choose not to get involved with the lives of those who are sinning and help them to be restored into Christ, but just passing my opinion. Then I am judging them with condemnation. Additionally, if we pass our judgmental opinion to others, we are committing a sin of gossip. Let's not even go there.

However, before we restore that person who has sinned, he must truly repent of his sins, not remorse which is nothing more than feeling bad that he got caught.

D. APPLICATIONS

Playing the "Let's Judge" game is very addictive and destructive, both to the person who gets judged and to the person who does the judging. Let me remind you that Jesus is not telling us not to judge, but do it carefully. If we're not careful, judging can become so much a part of us that we're hardly aware that we're doing it. Eventually, it becomes so distasteful that people will begin to distance themselves from us.

Here is how we can overcome this judging attitude:

- 1) **Let's examine ourselves before ever examining anyone else.**

Let's be more thorough with ourselves than we are with others.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

- 2) **Let's understand that person's struggles and be gentle in confronting.**

That's what Paul means in Galatians 6:1 when he says to restore "in a spirit of gentleness."

3) Let's be careful, because with the measure we use, we will be measured.

Let's learn to be discreet in our conversations about our confrontations with others. Don't broadcast to the public what's been confessed to us in private.

4) Let's remember that the goal is restoration, not probation.

The goal is not to prolong the pain of brokenness, but to set the bone so that it will heal as soon as possible. That's the only way it will ever be useful again to the body of Christ by being healed and restored. And once they are restored, we shouldn't continuously remind them of their failures, nor should we stand looking over their shoulder to make sure that they don't slip and fall again. Instead, we give our affirmation to them, so that they can look to the road ahead.