

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Matthew 7:3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

Matthew 7:4 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?

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.

It's no accident that this section on judging immediately follows the teaching concerning earthly wealth. The connection between these two themes is important. It is easy for the Christian who has forsaken all to criticize wealthy Christians. Conversely, Christians who take seriously their duty to provide for the future needs of their families tend to downplay the sacrificial giving that is commanded and commended by Jesus.

Of course the command to not judge applies in all areas of our Christian walk, not just to material things. But you can see how it immediately applies to my judging you because of your personal lifestyle choices.

This command to not judge others includes the following areas:

1. We should not judge motives; only God knows the heart.
2. We should not judge by appearance (James 2:1-4).
3. We should not judge those who have conscience about matters of Christian liberty (Romans 14:1-5).
4. We should not judge the service of another Christian (1Corinthians 4:1-5).

Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

This must be one of the most often misapplied verses in the Bible. Anytime you have a rebuke or a criticism you're told "Judge not!" Whenever I mention a cult or a person in a critical way there are those who accuse me of judging.

"As Christians we are called to unconditional love but not unconditional approval. We can love those people who do things we must strongly disapprove of" (David Guzik).

We're not to judge, but we are to be discerning. The New Testament has many illustrations of legitimate judgment of the condition, conduct, or teaching of others. In addition, there are several areas in which the Christian is commanded to make a decision, to discriminate between good and bad or between good and best. Some of these include:

1. When disputes arise between believers, they should be settled in the church before members who can decide the matter (1Corinthians 6:1-8).
2. The local church is to judge serious sins of its members and take appropriate action (1Corinthians 5:9-13).
3. Believers are to judge the doctrinal teaching of teachers and preachers by the Word of God (1Corinthians 14:29; 1John 4:1).

We conclude that Jesus was describing judging people in a sinful and condemning way. We might say it this way: Judge when necessary but never become judgmental.

Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Did Jesus mean that this is how God will judge me? No; all my sins and judgment were born by Jesus Christ on my behalf on the Cross.

Did Jesus mean that if I judge others in harsh and condemning ways they will return the favor? That can be true. But it's also true that people who are loving and kind and who do not judge harshly are sometimes themselves the object of judgmental condemnation.

I hear in this verse a hint of the golden rule. Since you don't want others to judge you in a sinful and condemning way then you should treat them likewise. It's not so much about what will come back on me as it is how I should treat others regardless their treatment of me.

Matthew 7:3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

Time to recall that the Lord worked as a carpenter. Sawdust and wood shavings were a constant danger to the naked eyes of the carpenter. *There were no safety goggles! No eyewash stations!*

Jesus must have often gotten sawdust in his eyes. He may have had a shaving or two hit him as He worked with the wood. He exaggerated by saying the entire **plank** you were planning or sawing jumped-up and pierced your eyeball – **but you didn't know it!**

Of course you sense even the smallest irritant in your physical eye. Not so in your mind's eye. You see the faults of others with better than 20/20 vision. Your faults are glaring to me; they flash in neon!

My own faults are somewhat difficult. I always ascribe to myself the best motives and intentions. I tolerate my own sins. I convince myself that I won't do them anymore; or that my temptations are greater than yours so my faults are justifiable.

I might even think that if I judge you for the same sin I am guilty of that it somehow exonerates me.

Matthew 7:4 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?

It's comical – like a slapstick routine. With a **plank** sticking out of your eye, let's say a 2x4, you'd never be able to get close enough to help your brother with his tiny **speck**. In fact you would injure him further in the process. You would do more damage than the **speck** ever could.

That's a key thought: You'd injure him further. Until you deal with your own glaring fault you will only injure other believers you think you are helping. Once you remove the **plank** from your own eye you

can approach them delicately, as you would anyone who needed you to look into their eye for an irritant. You will want to wash them and restore them rather than slam them over the head!

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.

The word Jesus used for **speck** indicates it is of the same exact material as the **plank**. Often I see in others, or I project onto others, the very things I am struggling against. It's why I can see them so clearly!

King David is the Bible's prime example of this. He had sinned heinously by taking Bathsheba to his bed and then arranging for her husband, Uriah, to be killed in battle. It was all to cover-up the fact Bathsheba was pregnant with David's child.

"The prophet Nathan came to him and said, "David, we have a problem. There's a rich man who has all sorts of sheep. Someone came to visit him, and instead of going out to his own herds and taking one of his own lambs, this rich man went to his neighbor who was very poor, grabbed his neighbor's one and only lamb, and killed it to serve his guest."

Outraged, David said, "What? The man who has done this thing shall surely die!" The Old Testament Law never prescribed death as the penalty for this kind of transgression. Yet, with blood vessels bursting and finger pointing, David said, "Kill him!"

Then Nathan said, "David, thou art the man. It's you. You have many wives and concubines, yet you stole Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and you took her into your house. Thou art the man" (Jon Courson).

David's reflections on this are a commentary on the **speck** and **plank** problem:

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalms 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

Then – after I remove the **plank** – can I help others with their **specks**.

It is an attitude adjustment. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Then, with that attitude, you will go to them in love, with grace, showing mercy, ready to forgive, hoping to restore.

