

Matthew 7:1-12 - “How To Treat Others”

So many people these days are just outright judgmental. And I can tell who they are just by looking at them! 😊

Sadly, we live in a world where judgment is being cast at one another with increased measure. You're quick to be labeled or categorized just based off the clothes you wear, or where you grew up, or what you like on Instagram. Somebody might judge you just because you 'ran a few red lights' or failed to 'drive the speed limit'. 😊

In our society today we are seeing people being called out, cancelled, judged. Often times this is very unwarranted. We can get very judgmental over people's judgment.

But as we'll see today, I think we'd be surprised how often we judge others. What is the Lord's Word to us on this area of judging? Let's take a look...

And as we go through this section we're going to look at:

1. Our Responsibility To Believers – 7:1-2
2. Our Responsibility To Ourselves – 7:3-5
3. Our Responsibility To Unbelievers – 7:6
4. Our Responsibility To The Lord – 7:7-11
5. Our Responsibility To The World – 7:12

1. Our Responsibilities To Believers - 7:1-2

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

This is probably one of the most quoted verses by people that don't really know the Bible. They however know this verse well because they use it as a way of saying, *don't condemn me*. It's kind of like it validates them to keep living the way they want to, which is usually in sin.

Now we're going to see in our passage today that there are times to judge and times not to judge.

This word in verse 1 for **judge** is the Greek word *krinō*. It means to judge as guilty; to discriminate. We get our word critic from this Greek word. And we can

be so critical and condemning of others, but this is not the way for citizens of the kingdom to act.

Here's some problems when we're quick to judge:

a. When we judge, we too will be judged: ***with what judgment you judge, you will be judged...***

- If we're walking around complaining, judging, scanning and critiquing others, we're going to come across as critical and harsh. We become the unloving, holier than thou person that people love to judge back in return.
- Not only will others judge us, but there is coming a time when we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ ourselves.
- **Romans 14:10–13**, *"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."*
- **1 Corinthians 4:5**, *"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."*

So be careful. The severity with which you condemn, or are critical, will be what you have come back to you. It's the principle of reaping what you sow.

- I've learned that the more I walk in grace with people, the more I'm likely to receive grace. The more I walk with judgment, the more I'll be judged.
- It reminds me of a very critical, negative barber who never had a good thing to say about anyone or anything. A salesman came into his shop one day and told him he was going on a business trip to Rome. The barber asked, "What airline will you be taking and what hotel will you be staying at?" When the salesman told him the barber criticized the airline for being undependable and the hotel for having horrible service.

"You'd be better off to stay at home," he advised.

"But I expect to close a really big business deal and then I'm hoping to see the Pope."

The barber continued, "Don't count on seeing the Pope. He only sees important people."

Several weeks later the salesman returned and stopped by the barber shop.

“How was your trip?” asked the barber.

“It was wonderful,” the salesman said. “The airline was great, the hotel was excellent.”

“Did you see the Pope?”

The salesman said, “Oh yes! I even bent down and kissed his ring.”

“No kidding. What did he say?” asked the barber?

“Well, he placed his hand on my head and said to me, “My son, who gave you get this lousy haircut?”

Here’s another reason not to judge:

b. Our judgment is off because we’re off.

2. Our Responsibility To Ourselves – 7:3-5

7:3-5 - “*And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 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? 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.*”

Here’s the problem of the human heart – we tend to think of ourselves so much better than we are. We tend to overlook sin in our lives but be drawn to sin in other people like flies are drawn to a carcass. In other words, what place do we have to put other people in place when we’re so out of place ourselves!?

And so, Jesus gives this well known, and humorous example of what’s it’s like when we’re fault finding and critical of others. It’s like we’re trying to remove a little bit of sawdust from someone else’s eye when we’re clubbing them over the head with the 2x4 in our own eye.

How we need to look honestly at ourselves first. Otherwise we’re just being hypocritical. And I think we sometimes don’t even realize it.

- We’re very good at pointing out the flaws of others and yet for some reason we have no problem kind of overlooking our own flaws. Often times the things we find ourselves getting upset at in others are the same things we ourselves struggle with.
- David was a good example of this. You remember how he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah sent to the front lines of combat where he was killed. Nathan the prophet came to him and said, “*There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ² “The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³ “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. ⁴ *"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."* ⁵ *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! (2 Samuel 12:1-5).*

- He conveniently overlooked the plank in his own eye to deal harshly with the speck in another's eye.
- Remember, the sawdust and the plank are made from the same material. The things we struggle with are a common struggle.

Understand that we're flawed and in need of self-examination before we jump on others for their shortcomings.

- ~~Max Lucado said, "We aren't good enough to judge. Can the hungry accuse the beggar? Can the sick mock the ill? Can the blind judge the deaf?" In the same way, can the sinner condemn the sinner? Absolutely not! He goes on to say, "Be careful! The Peter who denies Jesus at tonight's fire may proclaim him with fire at tomorrow's Pentecost. The Samson who is blind and weak today may use his final strength to level the pillars of godlessness. A stuttering shepherd in this generation may be the mighty Moses of the next. Don't call Noah a fool, you may be asking him for a lift."~~

Another reason why we shouldn't judge:

c. We often don't know the whole story.

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

Now as I said earlier, there's times to judge and times not to judge.

But notice what Jesus said in vs. 5, first deal with the big old log hanging out of your own eye, then you will be able to deal rightly with those things in others.

- As we see, these verses are not taking us away from all critical thinking. We just need to be careful that we are not quick to respond harshly.
- We don't respond **discriminately** but **discerningly**. We respond **compassionately**, not **condemningly**.

Our next verse makes this even more apparent...

3. Our Responsibility To Unbelievers – 7:6

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 were to read this verse on its own, you’d be scratching your head wondering what this is talking about. But when you look at it in context of what Jesus is saying, the idea is that we need to be discerning and identify where people are at.

Now dogs in this day were seen as scavengers; dirty, and mangy. They were certainly avoided. Much different than today where we have dogs as pets and even carry them around in little purse like bags as we take them to the dog spa. And pigs of course were unclean animals and avoided by the Jews. So these terms: **dogs** and **swine** represented the outcast and despised in Jewish culture.

But what is giving what is **holy**? And what were the **pearls**? Now many have interpreted this as speaking of the good things of God, mainly the gospel. But this verse says, do not give it to dogs, nor cast it before swine. Nowhere in Scripture are we called to withhold the gospel. We give the gospel out to all and freely. But there are times when we’re told to move on if they don’t want to hear the message, shaking the dust off our feet (Luke 9:5).

But we don’t know who won’t accept the gospel until we first share it with them. So this verse doesn’t seem to be talking about the gospel specifically.

Remember the overarching theme of the Sermon on the Mount: **Matthew 5:20**, *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

- In other words, our righteousness needs to be different than that of the religious leaders. Their righteousness was an outward works-oriented righteousness. They considered themselves good because of what they did. But Jesus shows that our righteousness needs to go beyond that, and it needs to be internal. Our righteousness comes from a change within, the transformation and new birth from the Spirit through faith in Christ.

Jesus has just been talking about how we are not to be judging our brothers and sisters, fellow Christians, regarding matters of righteousness. If they are in Christ, and they must be to a brother, then we're not talking about salvation, we must be dealing with something else. I think it would be fair to say that the holy things and the pearls are this righteousness of God.

- You see, it's so easy to try and reform people's behavior. We try and change outward actions before allowing the gospel to take root and change a person's inward attitudes.

So, the lesson is, don't impose on unbelievers what we are called to as believers. Don't judge them for their sinful actions because they don't know any better.

- Case in point, you know a couple that are not believers and they're living together out of wedlock. If you come to them and start preaching to them that this is wrong, and that they should stop sleeping together and just get married, you're not saying anything wrong. In fact, it's good and pleasing to God, it's in accordance with His word – it's the holy things, the pearls of truth that are meant to enhance our lives. But if these people are not open to the things of God, we're just trying to dress up a pig. The pig needs to be transformed, but it doesn't come from decorating it outwardly. You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig.

And when you're trying to reform a person and get them to follow your convictions, you're just trying to give people an appearance of righteousness without any real power to live righteous.

- This can be a frustrating and demanding thing for people with no hope of change. It could cause them to be angry at you and turn on you for giving a religious requirement with no hope. It's putting the cart before the horse. People need the gospel. It's through seeing what Jesus does that brings us hope. It's through His death and resurrection and our faith in His saving grace that makes us righteous and that gives us the power to live righteous.
- The answer is found in the gospel – it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)!

So now, looking at this in context and seeing how we aren't to judge others, and we're to work on our own obedience; growing in righteousness and not impose that righteousness on others, what kind of solutions are we left with?

We have an incredible treasure with the gospel. To **give what is holy to the dogs** is to give the things of God (ie. the precious truths of God's Word) to those who are completely opposed to those things. Dogs and pigs were despised by the Jew in this day. **Philippians 3:2** tells us to *"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!"*

Now we certainly don't walk around being choosy with who we share the gospel with. But we understand that there will be those that are hard of heart, who are presently enemies of the gospel, and we recognize there may come a moment where we need to draw the line so as to not enter into needless arguments.

- We've been instructed of this very thing elsewhere in Scripture:
- "Let me give some texts. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus said of the Pharisees, *"Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."* In other words, the disciples were to make no attempt to convert them. The apostle John, who is noted for his great emphasis on love, nevertheless said that if a person who does not believe in Christ's divinity and should come preaching a gospel which is therefore not the Christian gospel, the Christian should not even welcome him into his house. He writes, *"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work"* (2 John 10-11)."¹

Now if there are certain situations to judge, and situations where we should speak or be silent, how can we figure it all out? The flow here puts it into perspective. Pray!

4. Our Responsibility To The Lord – 7:7-11

7:7-8 - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

These verses have often been seen and used to say that if we pray hard enough, we will get what we ask for. And so, keep asking, keep seeking, and keep beating that door down and it's all eventually going to go your way.

- But is this what's being said to us here? Is this what the Bible teaches elsewhere?

¹ Boice, J. M. (2002). *The Sermon on the Mount: an expositional commentary* (p. 231). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- Never are we shown in Scripture that prayer is like a blank cheque for the believer that whatever we ask it's going to be done for you. That would be dangerous. We often don't know what we need. That's why we need to trust our Heavenly Father and pray according to His will not our own.
- **1 John 5:14**, *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*

But here's what these verses are teaching us – for us to live the life that Jesus is laying out in the Sermon on the Mount, the Kingdom Way, we need help! If we're going to live a life that's growing in righteousness, walking in obedience, then we need to look to the Lord. We can't force it upon others, and we can't make it happen through our own efforts. But when we're asking the Lord to help us with this, when we're yielding to Him and asking us to make us more like Him, then that's the kind of prayer He can answer! This is in alignment with His will.

And this is all spoken in a way where these words, **ask, seek, knock** are all present active verbs. In other words, this is to be an ongoing daily action where we are coming to the Lord and repeatedly saying, *'I need you! Without you I'm going to fail. The things I need done in my life can only come from You God!'* So keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. We never get to a point where we're able to say, *'Ok God, I think I can take it from here. I'll check in with you in a few months.'*

And as we do this, we are continually abiding in Him. Jesus said unless you abide in Him you will not bear fruit (John 15:4). So, through our daily recognition of our need for Him and to press in to Him, we develop this ongoing relationship with God. We're just regularly communing with Him. That's a good thing!

And He's a good God who desires to bless us...

7:9-11 - "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

As earthly fathers we're flawed. We fail. And yet we still do our best to do good for our kids. If that's our heart, think about the Heavenly Father's heart for us. Do you not think He wants to pour out blessing upon you? He absolutely does!

These verses are meant to fill us with confidence to go to the Father with expectation of finding the help and strength we need to live these lives for Him. What our heavenly Father does is always good. It may not seem like it at the time. It may not be what you asked for. But what He does is always better. Trust Him.

And Luke's gospel adds something to these words that is so fitting with our context. We're talking about being more Christlike. Not judging others, or forcing others into a righteousness that they're not even interested in. And for ourselves, we want to be walking in obedience and growing in maturity. Well thankfully, God has not left us on our own to produce that. He's given us the Holy Spirit to empower us on in righteous living and to reflect Jesus.

- **Luke 11:13**, *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

This is precisely what we need to live this life being shown to us in the Sermon on the Mount. Daily be asking for that fresh and ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit to work in you and through you and produce this radically different life as a citizen of His Kingdom!

5. Our Responsibility To The World – 7:12

7:12 - *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."*

Here's the golden rule. This is a summary of all that we've seen to start this chapter (some believe it's to summarize the Sermon on the Mount as a whole).

Now this was a well-known principle already at this time. The well-known Rabbi Hillel shared this principle even before this time, only he did so in the negative. He said: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow creatures" (cited in Carson, Sermon, 112). Jesus turns the principle around and raises it to a higher and more proactive level."²

² Akin, D. (2019). *Exalting Jesus in the sermon on the mount*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

“Jesus goes beyond passive restraint to active benevolence. Christianity is not simply a matter of abstinence from sin; it is positive goodness.”³

So, the idea here that ***this is the Law and the Prophets*** is a way of saying that this action sums up or fulfills the moral teachings of the Old Testament.

- **Romans 13:9**, *“For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””*
- When you have people seeking the best for others, can you imagine how that would transform society?
- God gave us His best and calls His followers to give their best. To be proactive in living a life that blesses others.
- “In the context of fulfilling the Scriptures, it provides a handy summary of the righteousness to be displayed in the kingdom (cf. 5:20).”⁴

Here’s what we’ve seen today:

1. Our Responsibility To Believers – 7:1-2
 - Don’t judge.
2. Our Responsibility To Ourselves – 7:3-5
 - Recognize your own faults before pointing out everyone else’s.
3. Our Responsibility To Unbelievers – 7:6
 - Use discernment and don’t force righteous living on those that haven’t been changed by the gospel.
4. Our Responsibility To The Lord – 7:7-11
 - Pray and seek Him for wisdom and help in these matters.
5. Our Responsibility To The World – 7:12
 - Be proactive in living out this practical righteousness before others.

Christianity is a life of doing good. Not doing good to be saved, but doing good because we are saved, and we have the example of a good Saviour. Let Him be evident and seen in your life.

³ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1229). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Barker, K. L. (1994). *Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition: New Testament)* (p. 36). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.