

The Overlooked Commands of Jesus

#3 Do Not Judge

Matthew 7:1-5

STORY: One day, in a peaceful forest, a fly buzzed over a stream.

In the stream, a salmon was swimming, and it looked up and saw the fly. It thought to itself, "If that fly would drop down about a half an inch, I'd be able to jump up, catch it, and I'd have myself something to eat."

Alongside the stream, a bear was standing. The bear looked at the fly, and thought to itself, "If that fly would drop down about a half an inch, that salmon would jump up to catch it, and I could jump out, snag that salmon, and I'd have myself something to eat."

Across the stream, up a steep slope, a hunter was hidden in the brush. The hunter looked at the fly, and thought to himself, "If that fly would drop down about a half an inch, that salmon would jump up to catch it, the bear would jump up to catch the salmon, and I could shoot the bear."

Hidden in the grass behind the hunter was a mouse. The mouse looked at the fly, and thought to itself, "If that fly would drop down about a half an inch, the salmon would jump up to catch it, the bear would jump out to catch the salmon, the hunter would jump up to shoot the bear, the sandwich in the hunter's pocket would fall out, and I'd have myself something to eat."

A bit higher up the slope, on a jutting rock, sat a cat. The cat looked down at the fly, and thought to itself, "If that fly would drop down about a half an inch, the salmon would jump up to catch it, the bear would jump to catch the salmon, the hunter would shoot the bear, the sandwich in the hunter's pocket would fall out, the mouse would hop over to get the sandwich, and I could leap down on it, and I'd have myself something to eat."

At that moment, the fly dropped down about a half an inch. The salmon leapt up and caught the fly, the bear leapt out and snagged the salmon, the hunter jumped up and shot the bear, the mouse hopped out and started to eat the

hunter's sandwich, and the cat leapt down to catch the mouse...but it missed. It rolled down the slope and fell into the stream.

Moral of the Story: A lot of things must happen for a cat to get wet.

The moral of our story these past few weeks is that when Jesus was resurrected from the dead, everything changed...when Jesus died, His disciples thought that everything died with Him.

But seeing a resurrected savior changed everything. We have the **presence of God** to not be afraid, the **power of God** to not sin, and a **Heavenly perspective** to not worry.

We are going to study what I believe is the most misunderstood, misused, and misapplied verse in all the Bible. In fact, it is probably the world's favorite verse. People who normally scoff at the Bible, and reject its teachings, love to quote this verse at just the right time to shut the mouths of their critics.

The overlooked command of Jesus I'm talking about is **"Judge Not" or "Do not judge;"** meaning: **"you shall not size me up and write me off."**

There is a tendency to go to one of two extremes. There are some people that get up in the morning and put on their judicial robes. They will judge anything and anybody for just about any reason. Their spiritual gift is criticism.

The other extreme, which I believe is the more prevalent today, is people won't judge anything or anybody for any reason. They just want to go along to get along. They are like sergeant Shultz from Hogan's Heroes, "I see nothing." These are people who hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil.

Dr. William Bennett in his book, THE DEATH OF OUTRAGE, makes this tremendous statement: Those who constantly invoke the sentiment of "Who are we to judge?" should consider the anarchy that would ensue if we adhered to this sentiment. What would happen if those sitting on a jury decided to be 'non-judgmental' about rapists, murderers, embezzlers, and tax cheats? We all know that there are times when we will have to judge others when it is both right and necessary.

Allen Wolfe, in his book, ONE NATION AFTER ALL; says that America has added an eleventh commandment. "**Thou shalt not judge.**" In fact, America loves this commandment so much it would have no problem putting it up in every schoolroom, courthouse, and every city hall in America.

Comedian Steve Martin said, "Never judge a man unless you've walked a mile in his shoes. Then you'll be a mile away and you'll have his shoes."

I heard about a little girl that was watching her mother do the dishes one evening and she suddenly noticed that her mother had some white hair mixed in with her red hair. She looked at her mother and said, "Mother, why are some of your hairs turning white?" The mother, thinking this was a teachable moment said, "Honey, that's because every time you do something wrong, one of my hairs turn white." The little girl thought about that for a moment and then she said, "Momma, how come all of grandma's hairs are white?"

David Gelertener, a professor, explains that the word "judgmental" wasn't even in the dictionary as recently as the 1970's. The noun "judgment" was used for centuries in a positive, honorable way. The adjective "judgmental" came into being as something harsh and critical.

People equate the church today with a holier than thou attitude that screams what they are against and whispers what they are for. They hear the criticism, but they don't see the compassion. They hear the condemnation; but don't feel the care.

Some of you might have left a church at one time or have been hurt because of someone's judgmentalism. You have come to the right place because we want to be a place where people come to find grace. Let's look at what Jesus *really* said about the whole matter of judgment. **Turn to Matthew 7:1-5**

1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"

5You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (NIV)

Let's PRAY

"Should you be the judge?" The answer of Jesus was not a definitive **"no"**, as some people think.

The word Jesus uses here is the verb form for the word judge which is **"krino,"** which has twelve different shades of meaning. It can mean to choose, to separate, to determine, to adjudicate. But sometimes it means to condemn in a critical fashion. That is the meaning of the word in this passage.

In this text, it means to decide or pronounce judgment or assume the office of a judge in condemning someone. It can also mean to form an opinion.

So basically, this means; thou shalt not criticize me, compare me, to anyone or anything, or confront me about anything I do. Isn't that what we mean if we tell someone "do not judge me?" Except when Jesus said this, there wasn't a period. This verse says, ***"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."***

Now there is a difference between **confronting** the sin and **condemning** the sinner. Last week, we saw in John chapter 8 a woman who was caught in adultery. The Pharisees condemned the sinner; each one had a rock in his hand to carry out the sentence.

But Jesus confronted the sin, and said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." The Pharisees were guilty of self-righteous judgment, but Jesus exercised righteous judgment.

You can judge what a person does, but you cannot judge why a person does it. You can judge methods and means but you cannot judge minds and motives.

Judgment is wrong when you judge by the wrong standard, and in the wrong spirit. When you judge other people based on your opinions, your feelings, your self-made standards, and you do it in a condemning way that is either unfair or unjustified you are being judgmental.

You are not wrong to judge an action or conduct when God's word plainly says those things are wrong. **It is never wrong to call wrong "wrong" when God calls it "wrong."**

I am not judging anyone when I say that adultery is wrong, fornication is wrong. Lying is wrong. Stealing is wrong. Pride is wrong. Hatred is wrong. Envy is wrong. Racism is wrong. It is not my judgment. These are things that God's word plainly teaches. Those things I don't have to judge because God already has. Jesus listed a lot of those things right here in the Sermon on the Mount.

But judgment can still be wrong even if you use the right standard if you do it in the wrong spirit. The spirit of judgment must be corrective and constructive, not condemning, and critical.

We **cannot** judge other people because we are fallible, flawed, imperfect. It is dangerous to judge a situation when you do not know all the facts, because then you might jump to a hasty conclusion, which is wrong and unjustified.

STORY: I read about an owner of a manufacturing plant who decided to make a surprise tour of the shop. Walking through the warehouse he noticed a young man just lazily leaning up against some packing crates with his hands in his pocket doing nothing. The boss walked up to him and angrily said, "Just how much are you paid a week?" Well, the young man's eyes got rather big, and he said, "Three hundred bucks."

The boss pulled out his wallet, gave him three one-hundred-dollar bills, and said, "Here's a week's pay, get out of here and don't ever come back!"

Without a word the young man stuffed the money into his pocket and took off. The warehouse manager was standing nearby staring in amazement. The boss walked over to him and said, "how long has that guy been working for us?"

The manager said, "He didn't work here, he was the pizza delivery guy."

There is only one who can judge correctly and rightly, because He knows all the facts, and that is God. When you set yourself up as a judge over somebody else, you are playing God, and you have no right to do that.

And then Jesus elaborates in verse 2; ***“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”***

Jesus is saying, “Judge unto others as you would have them judge unto you.”

You’re going to be judged in the same way you judge others and the measure you use to judge will be used to measure you; Which brings us to a really important question as it comes to judgment.

If the way, we judge others is going to come back on us then the question is: **How do you want to be judged?** My answer is I want to be judged...**NOT!** But if you must judge me, I want to be judged mercifully.

When you judge me, I want you to take into account the family I was raised in, how other people have treated me; I want you to take into account all my insecurities, and my entire history, the temptations I struggle with. In other words, if you’re going to judge me, have mercy and consider my entire story. Isn’t that how you want to be judged?

Story: Once a group of young men decided to play a practical joke on a young bachelor executive who worked with them. It was the custom each Thanksgiving for the president of the firm to give free turkeys to all employees. The young friend had indicated his displeasure at the idea since, being a young bachelor, he had no idea what he'd do with a whole turkey and furthermore, he had no desire to cook it. His friends confiscated his turkey and replaced it with one made of paper mache; ...the only part of the original bird was the neck and the tail which protruded from the paper wrappings.

The day before the holidays, the turkeys were handed out, and the young man, unaware of the switch, tucked his bogus bird under his arm and caught the train for home. Since the turkey was an obvious conversation piece, the man sitting next to him asked about the turkey. In the course of time, the young man learned his companion was without a job and down on his luck for some time. Therefore, he had dim prospects for a happy Thanksgiving. He was on his way home with a little bit of food in his coat pocket to be the entire Thanksgiving meal for his family. Our friend had a brilliant idea and gave the man the turkey. The generosity was overwhelming. Of course, you can imagine

the man's thoughts when he removed the wrappings from the turkey and his family crowded around wide-eyed with anticipation.

The young man, when he learned what his friends had done, searched for days for that guy who he had unwittingly cheated but unfortunately, he was never found. The point is obvious. The poor, defrauded man, from his vantage point, would never understand the young man's actions. Yet from the young man's point of view, his motives were pure.

Before someone sizes you up and writes you off, don't you want them to consider all the factors in your life; not just that one bad day, that one slip up or bad decision? Of course, that's how we want it.

Jesus continues...

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye...Now this is the part we like. It confirms that there is something wrong. I mean he is a little off. They’ve got issues...So Jesus confirms it’s ok to notice, make a judgment, but Jesus doesn’t stop there he says, 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye...and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

This is an easy question to answer:

It's easier to look at the speck in someone else's eye because it distracts me from noticing the plank in my own eye. In fact for those moments I see the speck in your eye; it makes me feel better about myself.

The hypocrite has a 2x4 sticking out of his eye, and all he can see is a speck of sawdust in the eye of his brother. Jesus is using sarcasm here...and I imagine everyone laughed when He said it.

We need to start judgment with ourselves...examining ourselves first.

The Bible says, "the heart is deceitfully wicked, and no man can know it."
There is an age-old poem that says it well:

There is so much good in the worst of us
And so much bad in the best of us;

That it hardly behooves any of us

To talk about the rest of us.

The word for speck is the Greek word for splinter. Now a splinter is just a piece of a plank. Generally, when you criticize another person's fault, his fault is just a chip off your block. What you can so clearly see in someone else's life you can easily overlook in your own.

Jesus gets to the heart of the “not” in “judge not,” by asking this question. **4**
How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

And then he punctuates it with two words none of us want to hear; ***You hypocrite...*** Now if you want to know what a hypocrite is by Jesus' definition, this is it. It is somebody who is more fascinated with what's wrong with someone else than what is wrong with them. It's someone who is more preoccupied with fixing others instead of themselves. It's people who see what's wrong with everyone else but refuse to see what's wrong with them.

If you are familiar with the Peanuts cartoon strip, then you are acquainted with Lucy. She is a constant faultfinder and quick to criticize her playmates. One day Linus asks Lucy. "Why are you always so anxious to criticize me? Lucy replies; "I have a knack for seeing other people's faults." Linus says; "What about your own faults?" Lucy replies; "I have a knack for overlooking them".

Every church has splinter specialists. They are part of a secret organization called the "(FBI) - The Fundamentalist Bureau of Investigation". Their spiritual gifts are fault-finding, criticism, and passing judgment. When it comes to your faults, your failures, or your problems, they've got 20/20 vision, but when it comes to theirs, they are blind.

We've all got things wrong with us, so, maybe what Jesus is saying is – “Just mind your own business.”

But Jesus doesn't stop there. In fact, this is so amazing, because this is where Jesus really starts the lesson He is trying to get across.

Verse 5 is the key to understanding this entire passage. Any text without a context is just a pretext. You will never understand verse 1 unless you link it with verse 5. Jesus tells us how to walk the tight rope between confronting the sin and condemning the sinner. Listen to what He says,

5 You hypocrite, first [sounds like he is about to give us a list] *take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly...*

The point in Matthew 7 is to avoid judging with an inappropriate sense of moral superiority over another person because of that person's moral failures.

Jesus says in John 7:24 – ***“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”***

The standard is the unchanging, totally reliable, inspired, and inerrant God-breathed, Word of God, the Bible.

If the Bible condemns it, it is to be condemned. If the Bible commends it, it is to be commended.

The principle to keep in mind is this: when applying God's Word to the issue, WE are not judging. God is. We are merely communicating God's judgment.

Now notice carefully what the Lord does. He **condemns selfish judgment**, but he **condones self judgment**. Because the Lord knows that self examination will eliminate selfish condemnation.

First, I'm to take the plank out of my own eye so that I can clearly see, what's second. Maybe it should end right here because if I get the plank out of my eye, if I take care of my problems; isn't that what it's all about?

Shouldn't that be good enough? It's not. Jesus has something else to say; and if you forget everything else I've said, you need to hear this loud and clear, because it's so easy to miss. This is at the heart of what Christianity is all about.

Look at all that Jesus said, ***"5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly...to remove the speck from your brother's eye.***

Following Jesus never stops with what's in it for you. At the end of the day, it's all about leveraging what Jesus has done for me and in me for the benefit of other people. The greatest commandment that Jesus gave had two parts; love God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength and love others as you love yourself. And to the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus said, ***"A new commandment I give to you, love others as I have loved you."***

It is only when you see your sins ***correctly*** that you can see others' sins ***clearly***. Only the person ***humble*** enough to see his own sin is ***healthy*** enough to see his brother's sin.

After David had been confronted about his sin with Bathsheba, he wrote the 51st Psalm. In that Psalm he said, ***"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit."*** (vv. 10; 12)

But after he had gotten his own sin confessed, he said, ***"Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You."*** (v.13)

It is important to understand that Jesus is not forbidding all judgment. ***In fact, one of the marks that you are a spiritual person is that you know how to judge at the right time, at the right place, in the right way.*** I Corinthians 2:15 says, ***"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing."***

Refusing to confront a person about his sin is just as wrong as a doctor refusing to confront a patient about his sickness. If you want to understand what Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, you must put right beside it what he said in John 7:24, ***"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."***

STORY: There was a lady in an airport who bought a book to read and a package of cookies to eat while she waited for her plane. Well, after she had taken her seat in the terminal and began to read this book, she noticed that

the man sitting one seat away from her was fumbling to open the package of cookies on the seat between them. Well, she could hardly believe her eyes that a stranger would just open her bag of cookies and eat them. He took one and ate it. She reached into the bag and took one and ate it. Well, the man didn't say anything. He just reached over and took another cookie. This woman thought to herself that she wasn't going to let him eat all her cookies, so she took another cookie.

When they finally got down to one cookie, the man reached into the bottom of the bag, broke the cookie in half, ate it, glared at the woman, got up and left. This lady couldn't believe this man's nerve. Soon the announcement came to board the plane. This lady, still hot and bothered at the audacity of this man, sat down, buckled her seat belt, reached into her purse for a tissue, and there was her bag of cookies.

The problem with me or you minding our own business, is that it does nothing for the person whose business needs minding.

Jesus spins the whole thing around from us thinking we have no business to judge others, and no one has a right to judge us, and says that this issue of judging is not simply about leaving others alone or minding your own business; and it's not just about you becoming a better person. **This is all about getting to a place where you can appropriately approach someone else about the sin in their life.**

Jesus commands us to confront our sinfulness, but not for our sake alone. He commands us to take the plank out of our own eye, not just so we can say we don't have a plank, but so that we can see clearly to address the dust in the eyes of others. And that is not judgmental, it is obedience in the fulfillment of Jesus command to "Love one another, as He has loved us".

Self-righteousness gets in the way of love, but self awareness to the point of confessing our own sin and dealing with our own issues and getting the log out of our own eye paves the way for love.

Do not judge does not mean – do not care.
Judge not, does not mean -do not act

Judge not, does not imply - do not react

Love forbids me from sizing you up and writing you off.

Love also forbids me from sizing you up and walking away.

Love forbids me from minding my own business, especially when I am walking so close to Jesus, and I can see so clearly that what you are doing and how you are living is leading you on a path of destruction.

“Love covers a multitude of sins.”

F.B. Meyer once said that when we see a brother or sister in sin, there are three things we do not know:

First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin.

Second, we do not know the power of the forces that assailed him or her.

Thirdly we do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances.

STORY: When visiting a remote neighborhood, a pastor stopped at a house and asked the man who lived there to visit his church the next Sunday, mentioning that the man's neighbor went to that church.

On hearing this, the man said he would never go to that church because he wanted nothing to do with a religion that his neighbor would follow. He said that his neighbor was the worst one he'd ever seen.

The pastor, seeing that the man had a piano, asked the man's little girl to play a piece by Beethoven that was lying on the piano. The man said that Beethoven's music was far too advanced for his daughter. But the pastor insisted, and the little girl gave it a try. She almost destroyed the piece.

After the little girl was finished, the pastor said, "Boy, that Beethoven's sure wasn't much of a composer, was he?"

On hearing this, the man suddenly realized that he, too, had been judging the life of the Christian by his actions rather than by God's standards of which he was falling short.

So, let's summarize what Jesus is saying about judging:

Take the plank out of your eye is preparation for removing the speck from your brother's eye. This lesson applies to three different audiences.

1. Those who size people up and write them off.

I hate to say this, but if this is you, you are self-righteousness and are probably glad there is a hell. This is what Jesus despised the most. It is why He had confrontations with the religious leaders all the time. Maybe you're older and don't understand why young people do what they do. Maybe you've been a Christian a long time and wonder why people just don't grow up. Or maybe you've never done anything that bad and you don't get it. Whatever the case, don't dumb down the holiness of God and elevate your own holiness; that's self-righteousness and you'll tend to write others off.

Action: In response to what Jesus said, you need to do one thing, repent of your self-righteousness. Let me say it like this: If the sin of others doesn't break your heart, it's probably because your heart has never been broken over your own sin.

2. Those who size people up and walk away.

You walk away thinking except for the grace of God, there go I. God I'm so grateful I'm not like them. Thank you Lord that you saved me, and changed my life; but their life is none of my business. Jesus teaches that it is your business.

Confronting people about the condition of their soul is not insensitive or judgmental, it is what love requires of you. Because of Jesus **you should see clearly now, the plank is gone.** You can see what sin is doing to her, what that habit is doing to him. And as I'm saying this you all can probably think of are several people you need to walk into their situation with love and not walk away.

This is not only the pastor's job, but also how all of us in the body of Christ are to treat one another.

Action - What you need to do is the hard work of **speaking the truth in love.**

3. There's a third audience. Those who have been sized up, but refuse to listen to the truth.

Someone has come to you about something in your life and you have written them off as being judgmental, but in your heart, you knew they were right. You knew something needed to change. And here's the deal; defensiveness ensures that your past will continue to show up in your future.

And let me just say this; no one confronts others perfectly. I don't care how much you pray and prepare and are led of the spirit. It's almost always not initially received well, and you've used someone's imperfect confrontation to be defensive and demand that they not judge you.

Action - If this is you, your application is to humbly listen to that person who you think is judging you, when in reality, they are loving you in Jesus name.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus spins the whole thing around from us thinking we have no business to judge others, and no one has a right to judge us, and says that this issue of judging is not simply about leaving others alone or minding your own business; and it's not just about you becoming a better person. This is all about getting to a place where you can appropriately approach someone else about the sin in their life.

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