



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

DO NOT JUDGE • MATTHEW 7:1-6 • 10/30/2022

MAIN POINT

Only when we are sensitive and broken over the sin in our lives are we able to help others overcome their own.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Did you ever get a splinter as a child? After receiving the splinter, what did you do first? How painful was the process? Did you ultimately remove it on your own, or did someone help you?

What might have happened if you had chosen to leave the splinter where it was? How much more painful would it have been to deal with later on?

If you carried that same splinter today, would you still be able to use that body part to its full capacity?

We can all relate to the feeling of having an eyelash or other irritant in our eye, or a splinter in our hand or foot. This object may be painful to remove, but if not done immediately, it can fester and manifest more deeply—leading to an infection. In the same way, following Jesus requires a self-awareness that identifies and acknowledges the sin in our own lives and works to remove it immediately before it becomes rooted there, spreading to and disabling the rest of us in the process. Only then will we have the humility and grace to spiritually encourage and challenge others—not in judgment, but in love, grace and truth.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ MATTHEW 7:1-5.

As we judge others, what sins may take root in our hearts and minds that merit God’s judgment? What does Jesus’ analogy reveal about the way sin compromises our vision and perspective?

Consider the ever-present discomfort that would result from harboring a plank in your eye. What personal pain and blindness would you have to try and ignore? What could be the danger of doing so?

In the command not to judge, Jesus calls us to question the motivation behind our often misplaced focus. Calling attention to someone else’s sin, be it ever so small, often avoids the task of removing the log from one’s own eye. Verse 5 indicates that we do have a responsibility to help our fellow believers overcome temptation and sin in their lives, but our motive for doing so is important. If the motive is to make ourselves feel more righteous, then we are in no position to speak truth, and are

guilty of replacing God's righteousness with our own. Instead, our motivation should be rooted in humility and a desire to help our brothers and sisters in Christ stay in right relationship with God.

How might removing the sin in our own life enable us to see the struggles of others' lives more clearly? How might it fill us with compassion and grace?

In Jesus' day, individuals likely did not have mirrors of their own. As a result, removing an irritant from their own eyes would require someone else's help—ideally, someone gentle and sensitive who had a genuine desire to see others healed from their pain and restored to sight. In the same way, effectively approaching the sin in the lives of those we love with kindness and gentleness requires that we do so with clear eyes and humble discernment, first taking on the same temptations and sin in our own lives.

How difficult would it be to spot an actual speck of sawdust in another's eye? Would it be possible to do so without intentionally looking for it to begin with?

What stories about Jesus interacting with people do you remember and value most? Did He seem to be judging them?

On the other hand, did He ever compromise truth by sweeping sin under the rug as if it didn't matter? How would doing so actually have been uncompassionate?

When we take it upon ourselves to make critical and disparaging judgments about the moral failure of others, we are not living as true followers of Jesus. This type of judgment is ultimately a form of idolatry, as we put ourselves in the place of God. Jesus goes on to warn that the measure we use in evaluating others' actions is the same measure we should expect to be measured to us. Before we attempt to point out another's sins, we must be aware of our own and remember that only God has the wisdom and authority to judge. When we see ourselves and others as broken

individuals in desperate need of God's grace, His love and compassion become our natural response to others—especially in their sins.

Many of us seem to be better at identifying the sins of others than the sin in our own lives. Why might this be the case? Why does Jesus call us to do the opposite?

Following Jesus includes an undeniable command to acknowledge sin for what it is, clinging unwaveringly to truth. But as we do so, we are first commanded to search for and remove the sin in our own lives before confronting the sins in others. Even then, we are called to be humble, gracious and kind always—never acting out of judgment, but out of love, truth and a genuine desire to free others from the destruction of the enemy, that they too may experience the joyful self-surrender of following Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:6.

How should we speak and act differently when talking to a non-believer about sin?

What are some phrases the church often uses to talk about sin and the gospel that may not register with non-believers?

In Jesus' day, dogs and pigs were often domesticated and received scraps from their owners as a daily source of food. But in the process, dogs and pigs are really only in it for themselves—acting to satisfy their longings out of selfish, human desires. Throwing them pearls, something they could not digest, would not nourish them. Instead, pearls could only be given to those looking for something valuable to treasure—not devour through selfish desires—even if it came at a great personal cost to obtain. In the same way, we must honor the pace at which God is working in others' lives. They may not yet see the truth of the gospel as a treasure worthy of their very lives, but we as we continue to point them to truth—not out of judgment,

but of love—they will see the way we ourselves treasure it above all things, laying down our lives to obtain the only life worth having.

How can we gauge whether someone is open and receptive to hearing gospel truth? Should we ever sacrifice the urgency of our message in the process?

Ultimately, God's Spirit has to be at work in someone before he or she is ready to respond to the gospel, but God invites us to be a part of the Holy Spirit's work. He uses us as His means to reach people by living our lives in accordance with the many kingdom principles required in following Jesus.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Based on how you are currently judging the sin and lifestyle of others, how would you expect God to judge you? How can you view and treat others with the same compassionate yet truth-proclaiming grace through which God sees us?

In seeking to remove a speck of sawdust from another's eye, how might you be acting out of prideful judgment? On the other hand, how might you be acting out of love? What must be different about your heart, attitude and motives in each case?

PRAYER

Pray that we would have a realistic view of our own sin so that we might truly appreciate God's grace and then be able to lead others to do the same.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 7:1-6

7:1-2. What characteristics of great teachers do you admire most? Making you think hard? Using humor? Giving you vivid mental images? All these and more are evident in this passage. Jesus the Master Teacher challenged His followers to guard themselves against judging others in a critical and condemning way. Surely Jesus meant for us to think hard about the implications of His command, "Do not judge." On the surface, Jesus seems to suggest that His followers are to avoid ever evaluating whether the actions of another are right or wrong. Yet this cannot be Jesus' primary meaning. In this very passage, He expected His followers to determine who the dogs and the pigs are! And this, of course, requires some measure of judging.

In context, then, what did Jesus intend? He wanted His followers to beware of the natural tendency to exhibit a harsh, judgmental spirit or to engage in destructive criticism against others. These are what Jesus condemned. Whenever we fall into the trap of petty fault-finding and finger-pointing, we shouldn't be surprised when we are judged by those same people. The measure you use in evaluating others' actions is exactly the same measure you should expect will be measured to you. Thus, as Jesus' disciples, we always must be doubly wary before we criticize others.

The Greek verb *krino* (related to our noun "critic") means "to judge" in the sense of thinking through a situation and reaching a conclusion. In the New Testament, it sometimes applies to judging in a courtroom or legal sense, either human or divine (see John 18:31; Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:13). More often it is used in a general sense. In such cases, it implies a person's selecting, preferring, or deciding for or against someone or something. Paul required believers to judge and condemn immorality

within the church (see 1 Cor. 5:12). Obviously human judgments can be flawed; only God judges perfectly. In Matthew 7:1, Jesus warned believers not to judge others hypocritically or self-righteously.

7:3-5. Jesus now illustrates the foolishness of most judgmentalism with the hyperbole of the speck and the log. He is clearly not concerned about literal pieces of foreign matter in people's eyes but about His followers' moral failures. How often we criticize others when we have far more serious shortcomings in our own lives. Such behavior offers another example of hypocrisy (6:2,5,16), especially when we treat fellow believers this way, whose sins God has already forgiven. The speck can mean a small speck of anything. The repeated reference to your brother refers to fellow disciples (5:1-2), meaning that Jesus had the Christian community primarily in mind. But the principle is also applicable to anyone. Jesus' own familiarity with the carpenter's shop and the frustration of sawdust and small particles in one's eye personalizes the illustration.

Verse 5 makes clear that verses 3-4 do not absolve us of responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather, once we have dealt with our own sins, we are then in a position gently and lovingly to confront and try to restore others who have erred (see Gal. 6:1). Jesus used the term hypocrite to describe a religious fraud. In the ancient Greek theater, a hypocrite was one who wore a mask while playing a part on the stage, imitating the walk, talk, and behavior typical of the character being portrayed. The term easily lent itself to one acting a part in life, pretending to be something one is not.

Generally, a hypocrite is one who intentionally seeks to deceive in order to gain some kind of personal benefit or advantage. In the religious arena, the hypocrite presents a front of being a devout and good person while inwardly being insincere and wicked. In other words, a hypocrite is a religious con man (or woman). Matthew 7:5 and its counterpart, Luke 6:42, are the only instance in which Jesus used hypocrite in relation to His followers. They would be self-deceived or deliberately deceptive hypocrites if they pretended to be without fault while seeking to minister to a stumbling believer.

7:6. Verse 6 seems cryptic and unconnected to the immediate context, but it probably further qualifies the command against judging. One must try to discern whether presenting to others that which is holy will elicit nothing but abuse or profanity. In these instances restraint is required. This warning balances the first

(7:1-5), and attempts to head off another misconception Jesus' listeners might have taken away from the sermon. At first glance, this verse is difficult to interpret because the terms what is sacred, pearls, dogs, and pigs are not explained. But the verse does guard against our tendency to oversimplify the do not judge (7:1) statement, instructing us to be discerning about the character of other people.

Dogs and pigs (wild and unclean) likely refer to people who are not only unbelievers but also active enemies of the gospel (see 15:14; Luke 23:8; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Pet. 2:22). The most likely interpretation is to take what is sacred and pearls to refer to the gospel or truth, and to take pigs and dogs to mean any person who persistently rejects the gospel or truth, whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus was teaching His people to use discernment when sharing the truth with others. To persist in sharing with a resistant person wastes time and energy. It can also destroy a relationship that might prove fruitful later. It could even (in the climate of growing persecution) result in harm to the believer; it could tear you to pieces.

What are the holy and valuable things the dogs and the pigs shouldn't receive? Jesus' point may be applied in a number of ways. For example, Christian discipleship and teaching should be offered to those who value it and who desire to benefit from it. Individuals who resist repenting from obvious sin—who have shown they consider the precious things of the gospel to be worthless—waste our time. When we offer the priceless teachings of the kingdom to those who consider them rubbish, we may end up cheapening the gospel. Furthermore, we might even end up being hurt ourselves if we become involved in offering counsel when it isn't wanted.

Taking care with whom and how we share truth is an important principle for believers to grasp in their evangelistic efforts. When we share with our neighbors, we tend to feel we have failed if they do not accept the Lord on the spot. We need to be patient, giving our own lives a chance to speak as a testimony for Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to take His time to work the truth we have shared into the heart and conscience of the unbeliever (see John 16:8-11). However, we should not be lazy or inattentive to signs that the unbeliever might be ready for more. There is an art to walking the line between pushiness and apathy.