

**Do Not Judge One Another**  
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We are in a sermon series called Stronger Together. We've been preaching on the one-another commands of the Bible. So far, we've taught on how we are members of one another, we must love one another, greet one another, fellowship with one another, show affection to one another, have compassion for one another, comfort one another, carry one another's burdens, wait for one another, forgive one another, honor one another, have the same mind toward one another, assemble with one another, accept one another, encourage one another, admonish one another, pray for one another, and build one another up.

All those one another commands are things we should do. But there are other one another commands telling us things we should not do. For example, the Bible commands us to:

Not grumble or complain against one another  
 Not repay evil for evil  
 Not be prideful  
 Lie to one another

The one I want to speak on today is Do Not Judge One Another. Romans 14:13 says:

*Let us stop passing judgment on one another.*

Of course, the most famous passage about not judging was spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:1-2 says:

*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

This probably one of the most quoted scriptures of all times. It's also one of the most misunderstood and misquoted scriptures of all time.

There are two possible responses to this passage. One response is that no one should ever judge anyone else since we're all sinners. This is a popular opinion in today's culture, which emphasizes "tolerance" as one of the highest virtues.

The second possibility is that we should all change our own behavior and live properly before judging and helping others to do the same. This is what Jesus is actually saying in the Sermon on the Mount.

Many people misinterpret this passage to mean that no one can judge them by pointing out their sin.

They say things like: “Yeah, I cheated on my wife, but who are you to judge? We’re all sinners, right? Like Jesus said, ‘Judge not, lest you be judged.’”

So, this passage is most often misused to condone sinful behavior —frequently by the person having engaged in the behavior in question. What they’re really saying is, “I can do whatever I want and if you correct me or disagree with me you’re being judgmental.”

But “Judge not” does not mean we can never point out someone’s sin. We know this because other verses tell us to call people out on their sin.

Nathan pointed out David’s sin with Bathsheba.

Paul pointed out Peter’s sin of hypocrisy.

Peter pointed out Ananias and Sapphira’s sin.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:15

*If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense.*

Obviously, the command to not judge does not mean to not point out sin. How can we help people overcome sin in their lives if we don’t acknowledge the sin in their lives?

But Jesus is warning us to be very careful about how we judge others. Jesus said, “Judge not lest you be judged,” as a gracious warning. If I start playing judge, jury, and executioner to people, I’m going to find myself on the receiving end of my own standard. That’s a frightening prospect.

What Jesus was addressing in the Sermon on the Mount is hypocrisy. Those who go around pointing out other people’s sin without dealing with their own. For example – an unrepentant adulterer cannot judge other people who commit adultery. That’s why Jesus went on to say in Matthew 7:3-5

*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? 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? 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.*

Notice that we have the responsibility to help others remove the specks from their eyes – speaking of the sins in their lives. The point of this Scripture is not that everyone has issues, so we should just ignore them. The point of this Scripture is to deal with the plank AND the speck.

Many people have misunderstood this and they remove neither the plank nor the speck. But God wants them both removed. So – it’s not judging others to help others deal with sin in their lives. But here’s the problem. Jesus said we disqualify ourselves from being able to help others deal with their sin if we don’t deal with ours first.

It's so easy for us to see someone else's faults yet we're completely oblivious to our own. We tend to justify ourselves but harshly judge others.  
 We're just telling the truth – but when others tell us the truth we judge them for being rude.  
 We're just being firm – others are being controlling.  
 We've just reconsidered – others have lied.  
 We're just explaining – others are gossiping.  
 We're just wore out – others are lazy.

We must first get rid of the plank in our eye before we can see clearly to help our brother with his speck. And here's the thing...we may not see that big old plank sticking out of our eye, but everyone else sees it. Some of us have planks so big that we're knocking people over with them. Why would anyone want you to help them with their speck when you haven't dealt with your plank? They wouldn't. You know what they're thinking? Matthew 7:5 says it like this... "You hypocrite."

The word hypocrite implies an actor under an assumed character or a stage-player. If people see you walking around with a plank sticking out of your eye...acting all spiritual and self-righteous, trying to be something you're not...you're the last person they would trust with the speck in their eye.

Some people think a hypocrite is someone who claims to be a Christian but still does bad things. That's not true. All of us sin and fall short of the glory of God. A hypocrite is someone who acts like they didn't sin when they did. They pretend to be something they are not. Then they judge others for doing the very thing they are pretending they didn't do. That's why Romans 2:1-2 says:

*You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.*

Husbands have you ever been upset with your wives because she loses her keys or can't find her cell phone, or misplaces her wallet? Well, have you ever lost something?

Wives have you ever been upset with your husband because he forgot your birthday or anniversary? Well, have you ever forgotten something important?

It's so easy to judge others and excuse ourselves. And here's one reason why... We judge others by their actions and ourselves by our intentions.

We think it's okay when we mess up because we had good intentions.  
 Well, why not believe the same about others?  
 Why not believe that they had good intentions?  
 Why not give them the benefit of the doubt?

And here's a good reason to do so. Matthew 7:2 says:

*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

The way that you treat others when they mess up, is the same way you are going to be treated when you mess up. The way you judge others has a boomerang effect. Whatever you dish out is what will be dished out to you – good or bad.

Some of us think we're the official speck inspectors of others. But the truth is we really aren't qualified to judge others. When we make a judgment, we do so with limited information. We don't see the whole picture. We don't know what's in their heart. Only God does. I Samuel 16:7 says:

*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*

You see God looks inside at a person's heart when He judges. We are looking outside at how things appear when we judge.

Steven Covey tells a story that happened to him on a subway. The trip was very calm and peaceful until a man and his children boarded the train. The children were loud and yelling, and throwing things but the man just sat down next to him, and did nothing to quiet the children.

Of course Steven was irritated. He couldn't believe that this man could be so rude and let his children run wild like that. It was obvious everyone was being disturbed. So finally, he turned to the man and said, "Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn't control them a little more?" "The man looked at him as though he was suddenly conscious of the situation and said softly, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother just died. I don't know what to think, and I guess they don't either."

Steven says at that moment he had a major paradigm shift. He suddenly saw things differently, he felt differently, he behaved differently. His irritation vanished. His heart was filled with this man's pain. He felt sympathetic and compassionate. He told the man how sorry he was for his loss. He asked him if he wanted to talk about it. His whole perspective changed in an instant.

You see that's what happens when we see what's in a person's heart. Suddenly we're not so quick to judge. We all need a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift is a radical change in our basic assumptions about or approach to something.

That rude waitress – maybe her husband just walked out on her.  
 The stranger that took your parking spot – maybe they didn't see you.  
 Your friend who betrayed you – maybe they felt betrayed by you.  
 The person who rejects you – maybe they are afraid that you will reject them.

not excusing people's behavior. I'm just saying we can't see the whole picture.

If we did we wouldn't be so quick to judge. In John 7:24, Jesus said,

*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*

Righteous judgment means to make a right judgment. Not to make a judgment based on a first impression which usually is based on our prejudices. Instead, believe the best about others as long as you have no proof to the contrary.

Romans 14:4 says it like this:

*Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

You see only God determines who stands and who falls. If judging were up to us we'd make a mess of things. But when we trust God to judge, we can be sure justice will be done. Hebrews 10:30 says:

*It is mine to avenge; I will repay, and again, The Lord will judge His people.*

Jesus was talking about is a critical, unloving, "holier than thou" attitude that acts like a court room judge sentencing others to certain punishments. Jesus is saying we are not the ones who determine someone else's consequences.

The Greek meaning of the word "judge" in Matthew 7 really clarifies this. The biblical word for judge is *krino*; which means to try (as in put on trial), to decide guilt or innocence, to pass a sentence and to execute judgment through punishment. In other words, when you judge, you are putting yourself in the roles of judge, jury and executioner.

This is what Jesus was cautioning against when He said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." This passage is condemning judgmentalism. However it's not condoning being permissive. Some people – for fear of being judgmental - have swung to the opposite extreme of being permissive.

They will never condemn a practice as sin or a doctrine as false because to them that is being judgmental. They accept sin in the name of love and acceptance.

Both judgmentalism and being permissive are extremes. We need to be careful not to become harshly judgmental, but neither are we to overlook sin. We need to be able to recognize sin for what it is. Any attempt to overlook or justify sin is itself sinful.

The command not to judge doesn't mean we don't call sin - sin. It doesn't mean we don't make certain judgments.

In I John 4:1 John tells us not to believe every preacher that comes along but to judge whether they are of God. In I Corinthians 5:11 Paul tells us not to associate with a brother who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a

reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. That requires making a judgment.  
I Corinthians 5:12 Paul says...

*It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning.*

We should not judge unbelievers for thinking and acting like unbelievers! This verse tells us to judge those who are in sin in the Church. Why? So we can help them. Galatians 6:1 says:

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.*

We find this truth in a story people love from John 8:2-11 where some Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery and asked Jesus if she should be stoned like the law commanded.

*Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."*

No one threw a stone, but they all went away.

*When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

People want to quote everything but the last part of that verse. They want the Jesus who does not condemn, but they want to stay in their sin. They want the Jesus who accepts everyone and everything they do. But the real Jesus said He came to call sinners to repentance! To change their ways!

These people wanted to stone a sinner. But Jesus confounded them by saying, "Go ahead and stone her... but, only those who have never sinned can stone her."

Of course, that left no one to stone her. We can point out sin – but we cannot condemn or punish anyone for their sin. Jesus was the only one in the story who was qualified to stone the woman because He was the only one without sin.

But Jesus gave her what she did not deserve: mercy – forgiveness – another chance.

Mercy triumphed over judgment.

And His mercy can do the same for you.

We've all been caught in sin and need God's mercy. No matter how deep your sin, no matter how hopeless things seem. He has tender mercies that will bring you through.

I know your needs to today: grace and mercy.  
 I know what others need from you: grace and mercy.  
 No – they don't deserve it.  
 That's why it's called grace and mercy.

Some of you have had terrible wrongs done to you.  
 Someone may have betrayed you – hurt you – cheated on you – abandoned you –  
 divorced you – abused you – ignored you – rejected you – lied to you.  
 Those things hurt. And you've got a choice today.

You can keep throwing rocks trying to make someone else pay!  
 But I encourage you to show mercy that triumphs over judgment!  
 I encourage you today to put down your rocks!  
 Quit throwing stones and start showing mercy!  
 Give up your anger and hold on to love!  
 Give up your judgment and hold on to grace!  
 Choose to forgive and let mercy triumph in your life and in your family and in  
 your relationships!

Next time you are tempted to judge, remember there's a huge difference between  
 judging arrogantly and judging with humility.

Arrogant judgment says, "What a despicable, vile, weak person."  
 Humble judgment says, "We are all sinners in need of God's grace."

Arrogant judgment says, "I would never do something like that."  
 Humble judgment says, "Though I may not struggle like they do, I sin in 10,000  
 other ways."

Arrogant judgment says, "I'm better than them."  
 Humble judgment says, "We both need Christ."

Remember, Do not judge, or you too will be judged.  
 Remember, to remove the log in your eye and then help your brother remove the  
 speck in his eye.  
 Remember, The same way you judge others, you will be judged.  
 Remember not to judge based on outward appearances.  
 Remember, you have no idea what someone is going through.  
 Remember, God has unlimited knowledge and that is why He alone can judge  
 totally righteously.