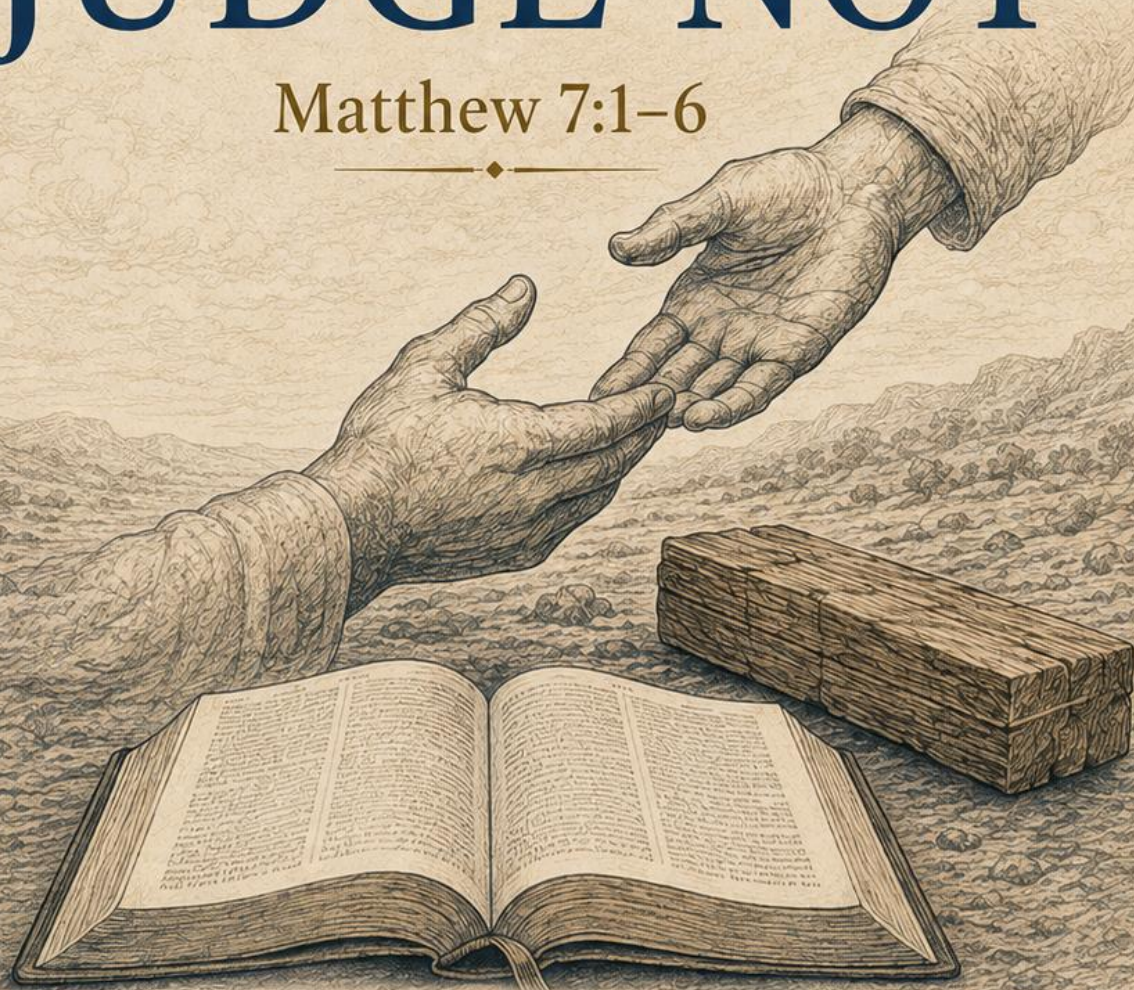




REASON TOGETHER
— CHURCH —

JUDGE NOT

Matthew 7:1–6



— Sermon & Pastor's Commentary —

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

— Pastor & Teacher —

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

JUDGE NOT

Matthew 7:1–6

MAIN STUDY QUESTION

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“Judge not”?*

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REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

JUDGE NOT

Matthew 7:1–6

“What did Jesus mean when He said, ‘Judge not’?”

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Aloha, and welcome everyone.

My name is Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley.

I have been in the ministry for over thirty years.

Whether you have been here many times...

or this is your very first visit...

we are honored that you are here.

I pray that from the moment you walked through the doors you felt welcomed...

accepted...

and at home.

Here at Reason Together Church we have a very simple invitation.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

And let's reason together through the Word of God.

Would you join me in prayer?

Our gracious Heavenly Father,

As we open Your Word today,

we ask that You would quiet our hearts.

We ask that You would help us set aside the distractions that have followed us into this room.

We ask that You would help us lay aside our assumptions...

our traditions...

our opinions...

and anything that would keep us from simply hearing what You have said.

Father,

we are not asking merely for more information.

We are asking for understanding.

We ask that Your Holy Spirit would guide us into truth.

We ask that You would help us understand not only what Your Word says...
but why You said it.

If there is someone here today who has never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior,
I ask that today would be the day You draw them to Yourself.

For those who are hurting,
we ask that You would bring comfort.

For those who are discouraged,
we ask that You would bring hope.

For those who are searching,
we ask that You would bring answers.

And for all of us,
we ask that You would help us leave this place knowing Jesus Christ more clearly than when we
arrived.

May everything that is said...
everything that is learned...
and every decision that is made...
bring glory to You.

For we ask these things
in the wonderful name of our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ.

Amen.

If you have your Bible this morning,
would you open it with me to Matthew chapter seven.

This morning our question is one that almost everyone thinks they already know how to answer.

Are Christians forbidden to judge other people?

That question comes from one of the most familiar statements Jesus ever made.

Even people who know very little about the Bible often know these words.

“Judge not.”

Those words appear in conversations between family members.

They appear at work.

They appear on television.

They appear across social media.

Sometimes they are offered as a sincere warning against harshness.

Sometimes they are used as a shield against any moral question.

Someone says that an action is wrong.

Someone else responds,

“You are not supposed to judge.”

And the conversation ends.

But today we are not going to begin with the way our culture uses the words.

We are not even going to begin with the way churches have used them.

We are going to begin where every Biblical investigation should begin.

We are going to listen to Jesus.

And we are going to allow Him to finish what He was saying.

Matthew chapter seven, beginning in verse one.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

Let us stop there.

Now I want to ask you to do something that sounds easy but is often difficult.

For a few minutes, set aside the answer you expected to hear.

Look at the passage as though you were seeing it for the first time.

What do you notice?

Jesus begins with a command.

He follows the command with a warning.

Then He gives us a picture.

Then He establishes an order.

And then He gives another command that requires His listeners to recognize a dangerous response to something holy.

This is not a two-word slogan.

It is a complete lesson.

Imagine that someone you love writes you a letter.

The first sentence says something that surprises you.

You stop reading.

You fold the letter and put it away.

Years later, you confidently tell everyone what the writer meant.

Would that be fair to the writer?

Of course not.

You cannot understand the opening sentence while refusing to read the explanation that follows it.

Yet that is what people often do with Matthew chapter seven.

They hear,

“Judge not.”

But they do not hear,

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”

They do not hear about the beam and the speck.

They do not hear the word “first.”

They do not hear that Jesus still speaks of removing the speck.

They do not hear the command about holy things and pearls.

They stop before Jesus has finished speaking.

So let us keep listening.

Jesus says,

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

The warning is not merely that other people may criticize us in return.

That certainly happens.

The person who measures everyone else harshly usually discovers that people begin examining him just as closely.

But Jesus is saying something more serious than that.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about living before the eyes of our Father in Heaven.

Our Father sees what is done in secret.

Our Father knows what we need.

Our Father knows the heart beneath the outward appearance.

So when Jesus says,

“Ye shall be judged,”

the ultimate Judge is God.

That changes the way we hear the warning.

Jesus is not simply offering advice for getting along with difficult people.

He is reminding us that every judgment we pronounce is spoken by someone who will also stand before God.

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”

Think about the standard you expect God to use when He examines you.

Do you want Him to be patient?

Do you want Him to know the entire story?

Do you want Him to distinguish weakness from rebellion?

Do you want Him to see the repentance no one else has seen?

Do you want Him to remember that you are dust?

Do you want mercy?

Of course you do.

So do I.

Then Jesus tells us not to demand mercy for ourselves while refusing mercy to everyone else.

He tells us not to create one measure for our neighbor and another measure for ourselves.

Have you ever noticed how easily we do that?

When someone else speaks sharply, we call them cruel.

When we speak sharply, we explain that we were tired.

When someone else arrives late, we call them inconsiderate.

When we arrive late, we explain the traffic.

When someone else repeats a story that was not theirs to tell, we call it gossip.

When we do it, we call it sharing a concern.

When another person refuses to change, we call it stubbornness.

When we refuse to change, we call it conviction.

We know the circumstances behind our own failures.

We often know only the visible portion of someone else's.

Yet we give ourselves the benefit of every explanation and give them the burden of every suspicion.

Jesus says,

Be careful with the measure.

The measure in your hand is not hidden from God.

Then Jesus gives us one of the most unforgettable pictures in the Bible.

A man sees a speck in his brother's eye.

The speck is small.

The eye is sensitive.

And the man wants to help.

But there is a problem.

He has a beam in his own eye.

Not another speck.

A beam.

Jesus deliberately makes the picture absurd.

Imagine walking into an eye doctor's office.

The doctor leans toward you and says,

“I believe I see a grain of dust in your eye.”

Then you notice a fence post extending from his own face.

Would you want him near your eye?

No.

The problem is not that dust should remain in your eye.

The problem is that this doctor cannot see clearly enough to help you.

Jesus asks,

“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

Notice the two verbs.

You behold his speck.

You study it.

You notice it quickly.

But you do not consider your beam.

You do not examine it.

You do not sit before God and ask what it has done to your vision.

You have become an expert in his eye and a stranger to your own.

That is the hypocrisy Jesus exposes.

Hypocrisy is not simply being imperfect.

If failure alone made someone a hypocrite, every Christian would be one at every moment.

The hypocrite in Jesus' picture demands from another person what he refuses to face in himself.

He applies the Word outward but resists it inward.

He enjoys the authority of correction without accepting the humiliation of repentance.

And Jesus says to him,

“Thou hypocrite.”

Those are strong words.

But the next word is filled with hope.

“First.”

“First cast out the beam out of thine own eye.”

Jesus does not say,

“Because you have a beam, you can never help anyone.”

If that were His meaning, no Christian could ever counsel another Christian.

No parent could teach a child.

No pastor could preach.

No friend could offer a warning.

Every person God uses is a person who has needed grace.

Jesus says,

“First.”

Repentance first.

Honesty first.

Submission to the same Word first.

The beam must not be decorated.

It must not be renamed.

It must not be defended.

It must be removed.

And then Jesus says,

“Thou shalt see clearly.”

That is the purpose.

Clear sight.

Repentance changes the way we see another person's sin.

Before repentance, I approach as a superior.

After repentance, I approach as someone who also needed rescue.

Before repentance, truth can become a weapon in my hand.

After repentance, truth becomes medicine I have already taken.

Before repentance, I want to win.

After repentance, I want my brother to be restored.

The truth has not changed.

The sin has not become harmless.

But the person carrying the truth has been humbled by it.

That is what makes him safer near his brother's eye.

When the cabin pressure drops on an airplane, the instructions tell you to place your own oxygen mask on first.

That instruction is not selfish.

It prepares you to help the person beside you.

If you lose consciousness, you cannot help anyone.

Jesus is teaching a spiritual order.

Allow God to deal with your heart first.

Then you may be able to help someone else without injuring them.

But we must not overlook the final phrase.

“And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

The speck remains real.

It is still in an eye.

It may still be causing pain.

Love does not look at the suffering brother and say,

“I am too humble to help.”

That may sound humble.

Sometimes it is only indifference wearing humble clothing.

Jesus is not teaching us to ignore one another.

He is teaching us how to help one another.

Now turn with me to Luke chapter six.

Luke records the same teaching but allows us to hear several words that make Jesus' emphasis even clearer.

Beginning in verse thirty-six.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.

For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

What word comes before,

“Judge not”?

Merciful.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

What words come beside it?

“Condemn not.”

“Forgive.”

Now the heart of the teaching becomes impossible to miss.

Jesus is describing people who resemble their Father.

Our Father is perfectly holy.

He never calls evil good.

He never confuses truth with error.

And yet He is merciful.

Mercy does not mean that no judgment was made.

Mercy means that God saw our guilt clearly and provided grace we did not deserve.

So the opposite of a judgmental spirit is not moral blindness.

It is mercy.

It is refusing to sit in God's chair and pronounce the final sentence over another person.

It is refusing to make one failure the whole definition of a human life.

It is refusing to believe that because I can identify someone's sin, I therefore understand everything in that person's heart.

It is remembering how patiently God has dealt with me.

There is a difference between saying,

“This action contradicts the Word of God,”

and saying,

“I know everything about you, I know why you did it and I know there is no hope for you.”

The first may be Biblical discernment.

The second attempts to occupy a throne that belongs to God.

Paul addresses that danger in First Corinthians chapter four.

He tells the church not to judge anything before the time when the Lord will bring hidden things to light and reveal the counsels of the hearts.

There are things we can see.

There are things we cannot.

We can hear words.

We can observe conduct.

We can compare teaching with Scripture.

We can recognize fruit over time.

But we cannot see a human heart completely.

We cannot know every motive.

We cannot know every wound.

We cannot know every private prayer.

We cannot pronounce someone's final standing before God.

That belongs to the Lord.

Now perhaps someone is thinking,

“If that is true, should Christians simply stop making moral judgments?”

Let us allow the rest of the passage to answer.

In Matthew 7:6 Jesus says,

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.”

Whatever interpretive questions we may have about the dogs, the swine and the pearls, one fact is unavoidable.

The command requires discernment.

The disciple must recognize that responses differ.

Later in the same chapter Jesus warns about false prophets who come in sheep's clothing.

He says,

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”

How can we recognize a false prophet without evaluating what he teaches and the fruit his life produces?

We cannot.

Jesus is not creating disciples who never distinguish truth from error.

He is creating disciples whose discernment has been cleansed of pride, hypocrisy and condemnation.

This also helps us understand John chapter seven.

Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath.

His opponents looked at the outward circumstance and condemned what they did not understand.

Jesus told them,

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Notice the contrast.

Not appearance.

Righteous judgment.

Not quick conclusions based on what seems obvious.

Careful judgment submitted to truth.

So Scripture gives us both commands.

Do not judge.

Judge righteous judgment.

They are not contradictory because they are not describing the same thing.

Do not condemn from a heart of pride.

Do not presume to know what belongs to God.

Do not apply a standard to others that you refuse to apply to yourself.

Do not turn personal preferences into divine commandments.

But do discern truth from error.

Do recognize destructive fruit.

Do protect those entrusted to your care.

Do help a brother who has a speck in his eye.

The question is not simply,

“Did I make a judgment?”

The better questions are,

“Whose standard did I use?”

“What did I claim to know?”

“Did I examine myself first?”

“Was mercy present?”

“Was restoration my purpose?”

Let us make those questions practical.

First, whose standard did I use?

Christians are not authorized to transform every opinion into a command from God.

Some matters are clearly addressed in Scripture.

Other matters involve wisdom, conscience or preference.

Romans chapter fourteen describes believers who disagreed about food and special days.

Paul did not tell either group to make its conscience the law for everyone else.

He reminded them that each servant stands before his own Master.

Before correcting another person, ask,

“Can I show this from Scripture?”

Not,

“Can I show that my church has always done it this way?”

Not,

“Can I show that people like me prefer it?”

But,

“Has God spoken?”

If Scripture is clear, we must not weaken it.

If Scripture permits liberty, we must not add our chains.

Second, what am I claiming to know?

There is a difference between evaluating conduct and claiming complete knowledge of a heart.

I may know that words were false.

I may not know every fear that led someone to speak them.

I may know that an action was sinful.

I may not know whether the person went home broken and confessed it to God.

I may recognize a pattern that requires a response.

I may not declare that grace can never reach that person.

We speak confidently where God has spoken clearly.

We speak humbly where our knowledge is partial.

Third, did I examine myself first?

Galatians chapter six says,

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

That verse sounds like Matthew chapter seven.

Restore him.

Be meek.

Consider yourself.

The spiritual person is not identified by how quickly he finds fault.

He is identified by how gently he restores and how carefully he watches his own heart.

Before the conversation, pray,

“Lord, is there a beam in me?”

“Am I angry because Your name has been dishonored, or because my pride has been wounded?”

“Do I want this person restored, or do I want to prove that I was right?”

“Am I willing to receive the same correction I am about to give?”

Those questions do not make us weak.

They make us safer.

Fourth, was mercy present?

Mercy affects the timing.

Mercy affects the place.

Mercy affects the tone.

Mercy asks whether a private conversation can accomplish what public embarrassment never will.

In Matthew chapter eighteen, Jesus says that when a brother sins, go and speak with him alone.

The goal is beautifully stated.

“Thou hast gained thy brother.”

Not,

“Thou hast won the argument.”

Not,

“Thou hast gathered an audience.”

“Thou hast gained thy brother.”

That is what mercy wants.

Fifth, was restoration my purpose?

Imagine a physician who discovers a serious disease.

Love does not hide the diagnosis.

But a good physician does not announce it with delight.

He tells the truth because treatment is possible and life matters.

Biblical correction is not the pleasure of finding disease.

It is the hope of healing.

Sometimes restoration requires patience.

Sometimes it requires a firm boundary.

Sometimes it requires church discipline.

Sometimes the other person refuses to listen.

We cannot control every response.

But we can bring a heart that desires redemption rather than destruction.

There is one more distinction we must understand.

First Corinthians chapter five asks,

“For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

But them that are without God judgeth.”

The church has a responsibility toward those who profess Christ.

We belong to one another.

We have entered a covenant community under the lordship of Jesus.

That creates real accountability.

But Paul says that those outside are judged by God.

That does not mean we pretend sin is righteousness.

The Gospel itself calls every person to repentance and faith.

But the church is not commissioned to discipline people who have never claimed to belong to Christ.

Our first message to an unbelieving world is not,

“Make yourself behave like a Christian.”

Our message is,

“Come to Christ.”

We tell the truth about sin because the Gospel makes no sense without it.

But we do not expect spiritual fruit from someone who has never been made spiritually alive.

We proclaim.

We persuade.

We love.

We invite.

And we leave final judgment with God.

Now let us return to the original question.

Are Christians forbidden to judge others?

If by judgment we mean recognizing the difference between truth and error, the answer is no.

If we mean comparing teaching and conduct with the Word of God, the answer is no.

If we mean helping a fellow believer caught in sin, the answer is no.

If we mean protecting the church from false teaching and destructive conduct, the answer is no.

But if by judgment we mean placing ourselves in God's seat, the answer is yes.

We are forbidden.

If we mean condemning another person while excusing the same sin in ourselves, we are forbidden.

If we mean pretending to know every motive and the final condition of another person's soul, we are forbidden.

If we mean using truth to humiliate rather than restore, we are forbidden.

If we mean turning our preferences into God's law, we are forbidden.

Jesus does not abolish discernment.

He brings discernment beneath the searching light of God.

He removes it from the hand of pride.

He washes it in mercy.

He directs it toward restoration.

And He reminds the person holding the measure,

“You will also be measured.”

That is why this passage should make every one of us pause.

It is easy to imagine the person who needs to hear a sermon about judging.

Perhaps a face came to your mind before we finished reading the first verse.

But Jesus turns the mirror toward us.

What measure have I been using?

Where have I demanded understanding for myself while refusing it to another?

Whose speck has occupied my attention?

What beam have I refused to consider?

Have I remained silent when love required courage?

Have I spoken when love required restraint?

Have I confused mercy with approval?

Have I confused conviction with cruelty?

Have I treated an opinion as though it were Scripture?

Have I pronounced a final sentence over someone God is still pursuing?

Those are not questions for the person sitting beside you.

They are questions for you.

They are questions for me.

And if we answer honestly, every one of us discovers that we need mercy.

That brings us to Jesus.

The only Person who ever saw every heart clearly was Jesus.

The only Person who never carried a beam was Jesus.

The only Person qualified to pronounce perfectly righteous judgment was Jesus.

And what did the righteous Judge do?

He came near to sinners.

He spoke truth without compromise.

He called people to repentance.

He confronted hypocrisy.

He welcomed the broken.

And then He went to the cross.

The Judge took the place of the guilty.

The One who could condemn us bore condemnation for us.

He did not pretend our sin was small.

He paid its full price.

He did not save us by lowering the standard.

He fulfilled the standard and offered us His righteousness.

Romans chapter eight begins with these words.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

No condemnation.

Not because there was no guilt.

Because Christ bore it.

That is the mercy we have received.

And people who live beneath that mercy should become merciful people.

We still love truth.

We still call sin what God calls sin.

We still protect the vulnerable.

We still test teaching.

We still help one another.

But we do it as people who remember the cross.

We do it without stones in our hands.

We do it without pretending we saved ourselves.

We do it as one rescued sinner speaking to another person who needs the same Savior.

Perhaps today the Lord has shown you a beam.

Do not defend it.

Do not rename it.

Bring it to Christ.

Confess it.

Receive His cleansing.

Allow Him to restore your sight.

Perhaps the Lord has placed someone on your heart who needs a loving conversation.

Do not begin by preparing your speech.

Begin by preparing your heart.

Pray.

Examine yourself.

Open the Bible.

Make sure the standard belongs to God.

Choose mercy.

Seek restoration.

And then, if the Lord opens the door, help your brother.

Help your sister.

Not because you are above them.

Because in Christ you belong to one another.

That is what Jesus meant.

Not moral blindness.

Not silent indifference.

Not proud condemnation.

Clear sight.

Humble discernment.

Mercy received and mercy given.

Truth spoken for another person's good.

May that describe us.

As we prepare to close our time together this morning...

what is God asking you to do with what you have heard today?

Perhaps He has shown you a beam that needs to be confessed.

Perhaps He has reminded you of a conversation that needs to be approached with humility and mercy.

Perhaps He has shown you that you have been silent when love required truth...
or that you have spoken when love required restraint.

Whatever He has shown you...

please do not leave it in this room.

Carry it with you.

Continue praying about it.

And allow the Word of God to continue the work it has begun in your heart.

If today's study raised another question...

I would love to continue that conversation with you after the service.

We reason together because we believe God still speaks through His Word.

Before we close,

let me remind you that today's conversation does not have to end when we leave this room.

The complete package for today's study will be available through the Church Library at
www.ReasonTogether.Church.

It will include the Sermon Transcript...

the Pastor's Commentary...

and questions for continued study.

Take time to read through it.

Open your Bible again.

And continue reasoning through the question at your own pace.

One final reminder before we pray.

If Reason Together Church is your church home,
there is an offering box available at the back of the room.

Giving is one of the ways we worship the Lord together.

If you are visiting with us today,
we are not asking you to give.

Your presence is a blessing enough.

If you are visiting and belong to another congregation,
please continue supporting your own home church faithfully.

If this is your first Sunday with us,
we would love for you to leave your first name and email address on one of our guest cards.
Not because we are building a mailing list.

But because we would simply like the opportunity to thank you for spending part of your day with us.
And after the service...

please stop by the Reason Together Café.

I would love the opportunity to meet you personally.

If you are visiting for the first time,
we have a Reason Together Church coffee mug we would like to give you.
And while you are there...

please enjoy a complimentary cup of locally grown Hawaiian coffee.

The coffee is free.

And so are the refills on conversation.

Would you bow with me as we close in prayer?

Our gracious Heavenly Father,
thank You for speaking to us through Your Word today.

Thank You for reminding us that the measure we use matters to You.

We come asking for Your forgiveness.

We ask that You would forgive us for the measures we have used against others while pleading for
mercy for ourselves.

We ask that You would forgive us for the beams we have ignored.

We ask that You would forgive us for speaking from pride.

We ask that You would forgive us for remaining silent when love required truth.

We ask for clear sight.

We ask that You would help us recognize what You have revealed without pretending to know what belongs only to You.

We ask that You would make us people of conviction without cruelty.

We ask that You would make us people of mercy without compromise.

We ask that You would make us people who restore with meekness and consider ourselves.

Thank You for Jesus.

Thank You that the righteous Judge bore our condemnation.

If there is someone here today who has never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior,
we ask that You would continue speaking to their heart.

We ask that You would draw them to repentance and faith.

For every believer carrying an unconfessed beam,
we ask that You would lead us into the freedom of honest confession.

And when You call us to help another person,
we ask that the grace we have received would shape every word we speak.

We ask these things

in the precious name of our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Thank you for allowing me to spend this time with you today.

If you are visiting with us this morning,
thank you again for honoring us with your presence.

May the Lord bless you.

May He give you wisdom as you examine your own heart.

May He give you courage when love requires you to speak the truth.

May He fill your words with humility and mercy.

And may He remind you that final judgment belongs to Him.

Until we reason together again...

to our church ohana...

Aloha.

And to those who joined us for the very first time today...

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

JUDGE NOT

Matthew 7:1–6

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. **Matthew 7:5***

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Jesus did not forbid every form of judgment. He forbade hypocritical, self-righteous and condemnatory judgment. His followers must examine themselves first, submit to the same Word they apply to others and then practice humble Biblical discernment with mercy and restoration as the goal.

Matthew 7:1 is among the most familiar verses in the Bible and among the most frequently separated from its context. Jesus' words, "Judge not," are often treated as a complete statement that forbids Christians from identifying sin, evaluating teaching or correcting another believer. Yet Jesus did not stop at verse 1. He explained the warning, gave the picture of a speck and a beam, commanded the hypocrite to act first and then directed him to help his brother.

This commentary expands the reasoning behind the sermon. It follows the movement of Matthew 7:1–6, considers the Greek language, compares the passage with Luke 6 and the wider New Testament and develops the distinctions required for faithful pastoral application. The aim is neither to defend harsh criticism nor to protect moral indifference. It is to hear Jesus clearly and allow His warning to shape both the truth we speak and the spirit in which we speak it.

1. Reading the Whole Teaching

Matthew 7 Within the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 7 is the concluding chapter of the Sermon on the Mount. Throughout Matthew 5–7 Jesus moves beyond outward religious appearance to the condition of the heart. He addresses anger beneath murder, lust beneath adultery, the desire for recognition beneath public giving and prayer and anxious self-concern beneath the pursuit of daily needs. The warning about judgment continues the same pattern. Jesus is concerned not only with the conclusion a person reaches, but with the heart, measure and purpose of the person who reaches it.

The immediate flow also matters. Matthew 6 ends with a warning against anxious preoccupation with one's own life. Matthew 7 begins with a warning against preoccupation with the failures of others. After the beam-and-speck illustration, Jesus speaks of holy things, pearls, dogs and swine. He later warns about false prophets who must be known by their fruits. The chapter repeatedly requires evaluation. An interpretation that abolishes every kind of judgment cannot account for the rest of the sermon in which the command appears.

Verse 1 Must Not Be Isolated

Jesus begins, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Verse 2 immediately supplies the reason. Verses 3 and 4 give the illustration. Verse 5 identifies the hypocrite and establishes the proper order. The paragraph is a single teaching. Context does not weaken the command. Context tells us what the command means.

The final sentence of verse 5 is especially important: “and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” Jesus does not command the disciple to call the speck imaginary. He does not tell him that humility requires permanent silence. He commands him first to face his own beam. Clear sight and loving help remain possible after repentance.

CONTROLLING OBSERVATION The passage does not end with “ignore the speck.” It ends with “first” and “then.” Self-examination precedes correction. Correction is not eliminated.

2. What Does “Judge” Mean?

The Range of Krinō

The Greek verb translated “judge” is *krinō*. The word can describe separating, distinguishing, evaluating, deciding, rendering judgment and, in some contexts, condemning. It does not carry one fixed English meaning in every passage. The surrounding argument determines which aspect of judgment is in view.

This semantic range is easy to demonstrate from Jesus’ own words. John 7:24 uses the same verb when He says, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” Jesus can prohibit one manner of judging and command another because the issue is not the mere existence of evaluation. The issue is its basis, character and purpose.

The Negative Present Imperative

The command *mē krinete* is a negative present imperative. Such a construction can naturally prohibit an ongoing practice or settled pattern. That observation fits the warning against a judgmental posture, but the grammar should not be made to prove more than it can prove. The command receives its specific content from the measure, the beam, the charge of hypocrisy and the instruction that follows.

Related Judgment Language

The New Testament also uses related terms. *Krisis* can refer to judgment, decision or judicial process. *Katakrinō* more specifically emphasizes condemnation. *Diakrinō* and related forms can emphasize distinguishing or discerning. These distinctions help the reader recognize that Scripture speaks of several kinds of judgment. They must not become rigid shortcuts that replace attention to context.

NECESSARY CAUTION *Krinō* does not always mean condemn, and it does not always mean discern. Matthew 7 must define its use through the complete paragraph.

3. The Measure and the Judge Who Will Be Judged

Jesus warns, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” The warning certainly describes an ordinary feature of human relationships. A person who examines everyone harshly soon discovers that others examine him with the same severity. Yet the Sermon on the Mount places every disciple beneath the Father’s gaze. God sees what is done in secret, knows what is needed and evaluates the heart beneath appearance. The warning therefore reaches beyond social reciprocity to divine accountability.

The measure exposes the double standard people naturally create. When another person speaks sharply, we may call it cruelty. When we speak sharply, we explain that we were tired. When another person fails to keep a commitment, we call it selfishness. When we fail, we remember every difficulty that stood in our way. We know the context of our own conduct and only the visible portion of another person’s conduct. Jesus asks whether the same standard is being applied in both directions.

This does not mean that mercy denies guilt. It means that the judge remembers his own accountability and need for grace. A Christian does not stand outside the human condition as a neutral observer. The person who speaks truth is also a sinner who will answer to God and who lives only by the mercy found in Jesus Christ.

4. The Speck, the Beam and Hypocrisy

Jesus’ Deliberate Exaggeration

The speck and the beam form one of Jesus’ most memorable images. The Greek terms contrast a small particle with a structural timber. A man focuses on the speck in his brother’s sensitive eye while a beam obstructs his own. The scene is intentionally absurd because hypocrisy produces absurd spiritual confidence. The man believes he is prepared to perform delicate work while his own vision is dangerously distorted.

The speck is not necessarily harmless. Something in an eye can cause pain and damage. Nor is the beam merely evidence that the helper is imperfect. If imperfection permanently disqualified a person from helping anyone else, no parent could teach a child, no friend could offer counsel and no pastor could preach. The beam represents the sin, pride or refusal to repent that makes the would-be helper unable to see clearly.

What Makes the Judge a Hypocrite?

Jesus calls the person a hypocrite because he applies the Word outward while resisting it inward. He studies his brother’s fault but does not consider his own. He enjoys the authority of correction without accepting the humiliation of repentance. His problem is not simply that he has failed. His problem is that he demands from another person what he refuses to face in himself.

The word “first” then establishes the order: “first cast out the beam out of thine own eye.” Repentance changes the posture of correction. Before repentance, truth easily becomes a weapon of superiority. After repentance, truth becomes medicine already received. The standard has not changed, but the person carrying it has been humbled by it.

First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly. **Matthew 7:5**

5. Mercy, Condemnation and Forgiveness

Luke 6:36–42 records the parallel teaching and places it beside three important commands: be merciful, do not condemn and forgive. The sequence brings the heart of Jesus’ warning into focus. The alternative to a judgmental spirit is not the refusal to distinguish good from evil. It is mercy that resembles the Father.

Mercy does not mean that God failed to judge sin. The Gospel announces that God saw human guilt clearly and provided grace that sinners did not deserve. Mercy therefore refuses to make one failure the complete definition of a human life. It refuses to claim that because an action can be identified, every motive and every future possibility are also known.

There is a significant difference between saying, “This action contradicts the Word of God,” and saying, “I know everything in your heart, I know why you did it and I know there is no hope for you.” The first may be faithful discernment. The second attempts to occupy a throne that belongs to God.

First Corinthians 4:1–5 reinforces this boundary. Paul warns against judgment before the time when the Lord will bring hidden things to light and reveal the counsels of hearts. Believers can hear words, observe conduct, compare teaching with Scripture and recognize fruit over time. They cannot see a heart completely or pronounce the final standing of another person before God.

6. Righteous Judgment and Necessary Discernment

Matthew 7 Requires Discernment

Immediately after the beam-and-speck teaching, Jesus says not to give what is holy to dogs or cast pearls before swine. Whatever detailed interpretation is given to the imagery, the command requires the disciple to recognize that responses differ. Later in the chapter Jesus warns of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing and says, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” False teaching cannot be recognized without evaluation.

Matthew 7 therefore does not produce disciples who refuse to distinguish truth from error. It produces disciples whose discernment has been brought beneath God’s examination and cleansed of hypocrisy, pride and condemnation.

John 7:24 and the Character of Judgment

When Jesus says, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment,” He identifies both the error and the duty. His opponents had drawn a conclusion from the visible circumstance of a Sabbath healing without understanding the whole matter. Righteous judgment refuses superficial appearances, partial evidence and personal prejudice. It submits the conclusion to truth.

THE TWO COMMANDS Do not judge from hypocrisy, pride, appearance or presumed knowledge of the heart. Do judge righteously when Scripture requires discernment, correction, protection or restoration.

7. Scripture Interprets Scripture

Romans 2 and the Same Standard

Romans 2:1–3 closely parallels Matthew 7. Paul confronts the person who condemns another while practicing the same things. The problem is not that the conduct has no moral character. The problem is that the judge condemns himself by the standard he applies while refusing that standard in his own life.

Romans 14 and Disputed Matters

Romans 14 adds a distinction that is essential for church life. Believers disagreed about foods and special days. Paul did not permit either group to turn its conscience into God’s law for every other servant. Each person stood before the same Master. Christians must distinguish explicit Biblical commands from matters of wisdom, liberty, maturity and personal conviction.

Galatians 6 and Restoration

Galatians 6:1 joins recognition of sin, correction, meekness and self-examination. The spiritual person is told to restore the one overtaken in a fault while considering himself lest he also be tempted. The verse sounds like Matthew 7 because it preserves the same order and spirit. Sin is recognized. Restoration is attempted. Pride is forbidden.

Matthew 18 and Gaining the Brother

Matthew 18:15–17 begins with a private conversation. If the brother hears, Jesus says, “thou hast gained thy brother.” The purpose is not to win an argument or gather an audience. It is to gain a person. Additional witnesses and church involvement appear only as the process becomes necessary. Mercy affects the setting as well as the tone.

First Corinthians 5 and Church Responsibility

First Corinthians 5 shows that the apostles did not understand “Judge not” as the abolition of church discipline. Paul rebukes the congregation for tolerating open immorality among those who professed Christ. He distinguishes responsibility toward those inside the church from final judgment of those outside. The church cannot discipline people who have never claimed to belong to Christ, but it must take truth and covenant accountability seriously within its own fellowship.

Testing and Maturity

First Thessalonians 5:21–22 commands believers to test all things, hold fast what is good and abstain from evil. Hebrews 5:14 describes maturity as senses trained to discern good and evil. First John 4:1 commands Christians to test spiritual claims. These passages present discernment as obedience and maturity, not as a violation of Jesus’ teaching.

8. Distinctions That Protect Truth and Love

Scripture and Preference

Christians possess no authority to turn every opinion, tradition or cultural expectation into a divine command. Before correcting another person, the first question is not whether a practice is unfamiliar or irritating. The question is whether God has spoken. Where Scripture is clear, the church must not weaken it. Where Scripture permits liberty, the church must not add chains.

Actions and Motives

Observable actions may be evaluated. Words can be compared with truth. Conduct and fruit can be considered over time. Motives require greater humility. Patterns may support cautious conclusions, but only God knows every fear, wound, prayer and inward response. Christians speak confidently where God has spoken clearly and humbly where human knowledge remains partial.

Correction and Condemnation

Correction identifies a problem for the sake of repentance, healing and restoration. Condemnation pronounces a sentence from a position of superiority. Correction may sometimes require a firm boundary or church discipline. It may be rejected by the person receiving it. The response cannot always be controlled, but the purpose and posture of the Christian who speaks can be brought beneath the lordship of Christ.

Courage and Restraint

Love does not always require immediate speech, and it does not always permit silence. Wisdom asks whether this is the proper time, whether this is the proper person, whether a private conversation is possible and whether the words are likely to help. Silence can be mercy when speech would be careless. Silence can also be neglect when another person is moving toward harm and love requires courage.

9. What the Passage Does Not Teach

Matthew 7 does not teach that truth is unloving. It does not teach that identifying a Biblical category of sin is the same as claiming complete knowledge of a person. It does not make correction impossible until the corrector reaches perfection. It does not abolish church discipline, doctrinal testing or the responsibility to protect others from destructive conduct.

The passage also does not authorize a harsh or suspicious spirit. Righteous judgment is not permission to enjoy another person's failure, collect evidence for public humiliation or treat disagreement as proof of rebellion. The command to remove the beam prevents discernment from becoming a religious disguise for pride.

Nor does mercy require redefining sin. Jesus spoke truth, called people to repentance, confronted hypocrisy and welcomed the broken. Grace points toward transformation. Truth without love becomes cruelty, while love without truth becomes sentimentality. The ministry of Jesus joins both.

10. Five Questions Before Correcting Another Person

Whose Standard Did I Use?

Can the concern be shown from Scripture, or has preference been elevated into law? God's Word defines sin. The Christian's task is faithful application, not moral invention.

What Am I Claiming to Know?

Is the conclusion limited to observable words, actions or fruit, or does it claim hidden motives and final standing that belong to God? Certainty should not extend beyond the evidence God has supplied.

Did I Examine Myself First?

Is the same sin present in the one who wants to correct? Is the real injury to God's truth or to personal pride? Would the speaker receive the same correction he is preparing to give? These questions make correction safer because they bring the corrector beneath the same Word.

Was Mercy Present?

Mercy affects timing, privacy, tone, patience and the willingness to hear the whole story. It does not hide the diagnosis. It speaks as a physician who wants healing rather than as an accuser who enjoys discovering disease.

Was Restoration My Purpose?

The Biblical goal is to gain the brother, restore the wandering believer and protect the church. A desire to prove oneself right, punish an enemy or gather an audience is not the purpose Jesus gives.

PASTORAL IMPLICATION Begin by preparing the heart, not the speech. Pray, examine yourself, open the Bible, confirm the standard, choose mercy and seek restoration.

11. The Gospel at the Center

The beam-and-speck teaching finally brings every honest listener to the need for mercy. Jesus is the only Person who ever saw every heart clearly and carried no beam. He is the only Person qualified to pronounce perfectly righteous judgment. Yet the righteous Judge came near to sinners, spoke truth without compromise and went to the cross.

At the cross, the Judge took the place of the guilty. Jesus did not save sinners by pretending that sin was small. He bore its condemnation. Romans 8:1 announces, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The absence of condemnation does not mean the absence of guilt. It means that Christ bore what the believer deserved.

People who live beneath that mercy should become merciful people. They still call sin what God calls sin. They still test teaching, protect the vulnerable and help one another. Yet they do so without pretending that they saved themselves. Biblical correction is one rescued sinner speaking to another person who needs the same Savior.

The church’s first message to an unbelieving world is therefore not “Behave like a Christian.” It is “Come to Christ.” The Gospel tells the truth about sin because the cross cannot be understood without it. The church proclaims, persuades, loves and invites while leaving final judgment with God.

Conclusion: Clear Sight and Humble Discernment

Matthew 7:1–6 does not abolish judgment. It transforms the person who judges. Jesus brings every measure beneath God’s examination. He exposes the beam, commands repentance and promises clear sight. He refuses both proud condemnation and silent indifference.

The Christian is not called to moral blindness. The Christian is called to humble discernment. Truth must come from Scripture. Knowledge must remain within its proper limits. Mercy must shape the manner. Restoration must guide the purpose. Final judgment must remain with God.

Where there is a beam, confess it. Where love requires a conversation, prepare the heart first. Where Scripture is clear, speak truth humbly. Where knowledge is partial, refuse presumption. Where another person is wounded, seek healing rather than victory.

THE FAITHFUL RESPONSE Examine yourself first. Judge by Scripture. Speak with humility. Seek restoration. Leave final judgment to God.

Selected Sources

Primary Scripture

Matthew 5–7, especially 7:1–6 and 7:15–20; Luke 6:36–42; Matthew 18:15–20; John 7:24; Romans 2:1–3; 8:1; 14; 1 Corinthians 2:15; 4:1–5; 5; 11:28–31; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:1; Philippians 1:9–10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22; Hebrews 5:14; James 4:11–12; 5:19–20; 1 John 4:1; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16–17.

Language and Interpretive Resources

The Greek New Testament, Matthew 7:1–5 and John 7:24; standard Greek lexical and grammatical resources for *krinō*, *krisis*, *katakrinō*, *diakrinō*, *hypokritēs*, *karphe* and *dokos*; representative interpretation in Augustine, John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, John Calvin and historic Baptist and evangelical commentary traditions.