

Rules for Relating

When I was younger I enjoyed my pastor and determined that one day I would become a minister. Many years later I began doing the work of ministry and just as I had envisioned I loved being a pastor. Only two things have challenged my earlier career choice, my own imperfections, and the church critics. Today we come to a special text that addresses the subject of 'Career Critics.' Those who make it their calling to criticize others in the local church.

¹Do not judge so that you will not be judged,

²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

⁶ do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

¹²In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This section of the Sermon on the Mount seems on the surface to be disconnected with the other sections. Beginning with Jesus' beatitudes and teachings on character, many moral issues were covered such as having a righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Then in Chapter six Jesus encourages us to have a right perspective on materialism and speaks to us on our tendency to worry. Chapter seven begins with a section on how we relate to other people.

John Stott, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, writes concerning this section:

“The connecting thread which runs through the chapter, however loosely, is that of relationships. It would seem quite logical that , having described a

Christian's character, influence, righteousness, piety and ambition, Jesus should concentrate finally on his relationships."¹

The chapter then addresses how we deal with other people.

A topical review shows what our attitudes should be:

1. with brothers
2. with fools who reject the things of God (pigs and dogs)
3. with all men
4. with the heavenly Father
5. with fellow believers on the narrow path of salvation
6. with false prophets and teachers
7. with Jesus Christ as the final Judge of all humanity.

Today we shall look into the first listed in our text – Matt 7:1-6, & 12.

Christians are reminded of these verses whenever they take a stand on moral issues.

"Who are you to say something is wrong. It isn't up to you to judge."

"Judge not, lest you be judged..."

People are guilty enough and resent being reminded.

Is it wrong to judge? Are there any instances where we are allowed to judge?

1. A Command not to judge

¹Do not judge so that you will not be judged,

²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

I have always felt that the way I treated others would determine how others treated me. On the opposite side of the spectrum of judging is to treat people the way you want them to treat you. [verse 12]

Some people's criticism is a result of their expectations, that people in the church should be better than this... The reality is that Christ's church will never be perfect.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 174.

Someone has said, “If you’re looking for the perfect church, be sure not to join it when you find it...for it will cease to be perfect.”

On the contrary Jesus anticipated imperfections and even sins. **The better question** is “How should we behave toward a fellow Christian who misbehaves?”

The first answer is simply: “*Do not judge!*”

Does this mean that we turn a blind eye to faults (pretending not to notice)? Should we “refuse to discern between truth and error, goodness and evil”? It wouldn’t be honest to do this, because we care. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount is all about love of integrity and hatred of hypocrisy.

I remember a family who brought their puppy to the church. He cried and distracted all through the service. He was cute but inappropriate. I really enjoyed someone who brought a lamb to Sunday School. He was a sweater on four legs – cute, appropriate and very fun for the little ones. Then he took him away.

We are made in God’s image and make value-judgments as a result. The verses following the section on judging involve not giving what is holy to dogs and casting our pearls before swine. This, in itself, involves judging whether someone is a dog or a pig in their ability to receive spiritual things.

Then we must also discern who is a false teacher, and avoid them. Judging is a part of many things we do.

What is Jesus talking about here when He says not to judge?

It’s one thing to be discerning in assessing people, and another to judge them harshly.

Someone has said that if the devil can’t “destroy a Christian’s witness by making him apathetic, he will try to do it by making him a fanatic.”

Stott writes,

“The censorious critic is a fault-finder who is negative and destructive towards other people and enjoys actively seeking out their failings. He puts the worst possible construction on their motives, pours cold water on their schemes and is ungenerous towards their mistakes. (He has) ...set himself

up as a censor, and so to claim the competence and authority to sit in judgment upon one's fellow men."²

Paul speaks to the Romans applying this truth,

“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”
(Rom. 14:4)

Applying the same truth to himself Paul is surrounded by hostile detractors:

“It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes who will bring to light the things now hidden in the darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.”
(1 Cor. 4:4-5)

Because we are not God no human being is qualified to judge fellow humans. We can only see the surface, being severely limited reading minds, motives, and understanding someone's emotional makeup. In fact, we should avoid playing God by judging another's life, since to do so is to incur judgment ourselves.

²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

The judgment you pronounce you will be judged,
and the measure you give will be the measure you get.

In writing to the Romans Paul concluded that all men were sinful.

In chapter one all who were without the Law (pagans) were in sin.

In chapter two all who had the Law (religious Jews) were sinners, despite their religious knowledge and prestige as God's chosen people.

In chapter 3 Paul summarized the sinfulness of all men,

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)

Notice how he convicts the self-righteous religious of their sinfulness:

“Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, you will escape the judgment of God?” (Rom. 2:1-3)

² Stott, p. 176.

Knowing that when we pass judgment on others we will incur a stricter judgment. Therefore, the command to *judge not* is not a requirement to close your eyes to the problems of others but to be generous with them. Give them grace.

The next part says that a follower of Christ must not be a hypocrite

2. No Hypocrisy

³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

Earlier in this sermon the hypocrites were practicing their piety before men to be seen by them. Here Jesus exposes hypocrisy in relation to others, while failing to deal with their own problems. In our fallen state we are disqualified from being judges.

The ridiculous idea of someone trying to remove a speck from someone's eye with a board stuck in theirs is a picture of someone who is a critical, fault-finding individual.

Jesus is pointing out that there is a general human tendency to see the faults of our neighbors while blithely overlooking our own.

Stott writes,

“We have a fatal tendency to exaggerate the faults of others and minimize the gravity of our own...Indeed, what we are often doing is seeing our own faults in others and judging them vicariously that way, we experience the pleasure of self-righteousness without the pain of penitence.”³

3. Our responsibility to an erring brother

⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Speck – tiny dust or piece of chaff

Log – structural beam or like a steel girder

We first correct ourselves then we help others.

³ Stott, P. 178.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

A spiritual man will seek to restore an erring brother.

An unspiritual man will seek only to expose his sin.

A spiritual man will seek to restore someone with a spirit of gentleness

Restore – used in antiquity for setting a broken *bone*. *Katartizo*. Therefore, the implication is that the restoring should be done gently and with kindness.

We speak the truth in love. Let everything we do be done in love.

Dr. Barnhouse writes in his booklet, *First Things First*,

“Does such criticism arise because there is profound grief over sin? Is the critic moved by the fact that God is outraged and that great wrong is done? He answers that too often the critic has no sensitivity for sin at all. If his accusations of his neighbor are discovered to be false, and the neighbor is innocent, the critic looks for something else to criticize. Nor is it because of a great love for the neighbor that the critic makes his accusations and carries his tales. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love doesn't expose sin. Since we see that there are no positive motives for the criticism, and since the Lord says that the critic is a hypocrite, it follows that the critic is moved by envy, jealousy, selfishness, and all other evil motives that put the poison sac of the asp under the human tongue.” (see Rom. 3:13)⁴

Restoration is done in such a way that as we would want to be restored.

¹²In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

⁴ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *First Things First* (Philadelphia: The Evangelical Foundation, 1961), pp. 37-38.