

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 2)

The New People of God

Study 14 – Don't Judge!

Introduction

'Judgmental'- a strong word and an unpleasant one, especially if we are on the receiving end of it. "You Christians are so judgemental" someone may say, and we feel the force of that criticism, because sometimes believers are judgmental and sadly sometimes we are as well. And yet, surely there is a time when we are to exercise our own judgement and to evaluate what we hear and what we observe, both in our own conduct and in the conduct of others. Surely when Jesus says "Do not judge", He is not expecting us to have no discernment and simply to overlook or worse still accept things that are wrong. So what are we to make of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-6? How are we to apply them in our own lives and in our dealings with others?

As we have already seen with other parts of the Sermon on the Mount, the starting point in trying to understand Jesus' words is to ask about the context in which they were spoken. And here we are helped at once by noting that in this passage Jesus is clearly dealing with personal relationships between individuals, rather than with matters that require formal judicial resolution. Therefore when Jesus says "do not judge" he is not speaking against due legal process or forbidding those who have judicial authority from doing their work.

Second, we are helped by noting Jesus' use of the word 'hypocrite' in verse 5. This ties what Jesus is saying here in with one of his central concerns in the Sermon on the Mount namely that his disciples should not follow the attitudes or actions of those who are in reality something very different from what they appear to be. And here, *judgmentalism* is commonplace, for it is sadly typical of hypocrites that they not only view themselves as better than they are, but that they view others as worse than themselves.

With this in mind then we turn to Jesus' firm and wise warning.



Read Matthew 7:1-6

1. How can we know from this passage that Jesus is dealing with our personal relationships and not with formal judicial matters when He says “Do not judge”?
2. What does Jesus’ exaggerated example of the ‘speck’ and the ‘plank’ tell us about the kind of attitude and action that He is forbidding among his people?
3. In what way is the judgment that Jesus is condemning ‘hypocritical’?
4. If we are to judge anyone, who should we judge?
5. According to Jesus why is it not wise for us to be judgmental of others?
6. What point is Jesus making when he tells his disciples not to “give dogs what is sacred or to throw pearls to pigs”?



1. In what way has this passage challenged you?
2. What if anything do you need to say to God in the light of this passage?
3. In what way will you be different in your dealings with other Christians as a result of what you have learnt?
4. In what way will you be different in your dealings with people who are not Christians as a result of what you have learnt?
5. How would you use this passage to commend Christianity to someone who is not yet a believer?