

The 'Me-First' Club

by Dick Woodward

The sermon teaches the importance of self-judgment and applying Christ's teachings to oneself before addressing the faults of others.

Duration: 20:27

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 3:13, Luke 6:41-42, John 14:6, Romans 12:2, James 1:22

Topics: "Attitudes"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. He emphasizes the importance of looking inward and examining our own attitudes before judging others. Jesus invites us to come to him and find rest for our souls. The speaker encourages listeners to apply Jesus' teachings to their own lives and become solutions and answers to the problems in the world.

Transcript

Welcome to the Mini-Bible College as we continue in the very practical section of Jesus Christ's teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. What we will learn is that it is very important that we apply Christ's teachings to our own life before we can apply them to others. Now let us join our teacher for today's lesson.

Judge not that you be not judged, for with what judgment you judge you will be judged. And with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me remove the speck out of your eye, and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.

Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. I have read the first six verses of Matthew chapter 7, and as we come to this chapter we are going to come to the conclusion of this teaching we call the Sermon on the Mount. Remember the context in which this teaching was given.

Multitudes of people, thousands of people were on the slopes around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, while ministering to these thousands of people, realized that in the human body even he, the Son of God, could not do all the ministry by himself. And so Mark chapter 3 verse 13 tells us that by personal invitation he asked some of his disciples to join him on a mountaintop or the higher slopes around the Sea of Galilee.

On this upper level he gave all the teaching of Matthews chapter 5, 6, and 7. And the strategy of the teaching, the context of the teaching was this, how would you like to be a part of the solution to all those problems down there in those multitudes of people? At this first Christian retreat, as we have come to call it, Jesus is recruiting solutions and answers to the problems among the multitudes of this world. It still speaks to us today as if it were a retreat. The purpose and strategy are still the same.

Jesus Christ is trying to take those of us who profess to be his followers and turn us into solutions and answers, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, to affect the multitudes of this world. In the first part of the teaching he told us to look inward and he taught about attitudes. Then in the largest part of chapter 5 he told us to look around.

He talked about relationships. Then in chapter 6 he said, Now look up because you will never have the attitudes and the relationships without an upward look. You have to have grace from God or these things will never be in place in your life.

In the second half of Matthew 6, Jesus focused upon the values of the person who is looking upward. In the first half of the chapter he focused on the spiritual disciplines of the upward look, how to have a sustained and structured upward look. That is what you find in the first half of Matthew 6. But in the second half of Matthew 6, which we have finished considering, Jesus was talking about the values of the person who is in this world, moving among the multitudes of this world, but maintaining that sustained upward look.

The challenge in that was, do you have the spiritual disciplines that maintain an upward look? And do you have the spiritual values that result from those spiritual disciplines? As we get to chapter 7, I believe he is summing up. I believe he is bringing the teaching of the first Christian retreat to a conclusion and he is bringing it to a verdict. The idea of giving an invitation starts with Jesus.

Notice the great invitations of Jesus in the scripture, like Matthew 11, the last three verses. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. That is a great invitation issued to the people who are burdened and who are laboring very hard to manage their burdens. The invitation of Jesus is, come to me, not to church or to Bible study, but to me.

And when you come to me, I will give you rest. Then in the invitation, he showed them how to find that rest he will give to those who truly come to him. That is an invitation.

Here as we come to the last chapter of the teaching that we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is summing up and he is doing it in the form of an invitation. You see, at the beginning of this teaching, the challenge was, where are you? Are you at the bottom of the mountain, still part of the problem and always going to be part of the problem? Or are you on the mountaintop with Jesus, being recruited and being trained and disciplined and disciplined to be part of the answer? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? That is what we are faced with as we see the beginning of this teaching. Now as we come down to the final chapter, having been on the mountaintop with Jesus for some time, the question is not whether you are on the bottom of the mountain or on the top of the mountain.

All of this teaching was addressed to those who are on the top of the mountain. So you might say in applying it to us today, it is addressed to those who are part of the church of Jesus Christ, to those who profess to be disciples, his followers. The question as we come to chapter 7 in the conclusion of this retreat is this.

What kind of a solution are you? What kind of an answer are you? What kind of a disciple of Jesus Christ are you? This great passage begins with the two words, judge not. A lot of people put a period there and you would think that all these six verses say, do not judge. When the spiritual searchlight is being flashed into the hearts of people, they are very quick to say, judge not.

That is what the Bible says, judge not. So don't judge me. If you studied the whole passage here, that's not really what the passage is saying.

The passage is saying that we should judge, that we must judge. It says that at least three times. First of all, it says you must judge yourself.

You must get the plank out of your eye in order to see clearly the speck of sawdust or the moat that is in your brother's eye. So this passage is not saying judge not. It's saying, do not judge your brother first.

It says judge yourself first. Then having judged yourself, you should be able to help your brother get the speck of sawdust out of his eye. Then at the end of the passage, there is the part about not giving to dogs what is sacred, or in other words, give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine.

We are told not to cast our pearls before pigs or swine. That also is telling us to be discriminating and to judge. All truth and all spiritual things are not for everybody.

You have to be very sensitive to where people are and to who they are spiritually. The apostle Paul was very gifted at doing this. In his great passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, remember that he said, to the weak, I become as weak.

To the Jew, I become as a Jew. To them that are under the law or legalistic, I become as a legalist. To those who are without law, to the absolutely unscriptural, secular people insofar as I can, I will become like them.

I am made all things to all men, Paul said, that by any means I might save some. I do this for the gospel's sake. Paul was telling us there that he was very discriminating in the way he presented the gospel of Christ to people.

He did not say the same things to everybody. There are people here in verse 6 who are described as dogs and swine. What that means, I believe, is that there are people who are as unspiritual as a dog or a pig.

They are not interested in spiritual things, and so you don't take such precious truths and share them with such people. There is a sense in which the terms dog and swine could refer to unbelievers. This is not saying that you never present the gospel to unbelievers, but it might be suggesting this, the Bible has only one message for the person who is not a believer.

The message is this, repent and believe the gospel and you will be saved. After a person believes and repents and experiences salvation, then God has 66 inspired little books full of things that he wants to say to the man of God who wants to be perfected or matured for everything God wants him to do. But when a

person is not in a state of faith or grace, and they are not even open to spiritual things, you don't share the deep things of God with them.

You should not talk to them about the deep doctrines of scripture when they are not even a believer. The scripture makes it very clear that they will think it is mere foolishness. They cannot understand spiritual things if they are not spiritual people, because spiritual things are only understood spiritually.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that only those with the Holy Spirit can understand spiritual things. This passage, you see, is not saying judge not, do not ever judge. In this great passage, Jesus is asking questions, penetrating questions, profound questions.

What he is saying here in this great passage, I believe Jesus has a sense of humor by the questions he asks, is simply this, why are you going around looking for the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye when all the time you have this plank sticking out of your own eye? Is that not a ridiculous illustration? It shows a sense of humor. Someone has written a book about the humor of Jesus Christ. Jesus showed a lot of humor with such sayings as strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

There are many of his metaphors that I think are very humorous. What he is saying is that human relationships are a two-way street. In verse 2 of this passage, Jesus is saying that whatever standard of measurement you use when you judge others, don't be surprised if they turn around and use that same standard of measurement on you.

In other words, if you look at people under a microscope and criticize every detail of their life, and if you think they're going to look at you through a telescope and only criticize big problems, then you're being very naive. If you put other people under a microscope, you should not be surprised if they put you under a microscope and turn up the power quite a bit. Of course, this is true.

If you look at others through a telescope, they will look at you through a telescope, and you will probably like that a lot better. But if you're always putting everybody else under a microscope, don't be surprised if they don't put you under a microscope. The positive way is this.

Whatever standard of measurement you use in giving to others, they will likely use the same standard of measurement in giving to you. This was a marketplace metaphor because in the marketplace, it was an ethic. It was a standard, a normal, everyday thing.

Let us say that you sold corn in the marketplace and across from you, somebody else was selling oats. If they suspected that your bushel measurement was a bit off, it was an ethic in the marketplace that if they bought corn from you and then you went over to buy oats from them, they would say, go get your bushel measurement, and while you are buying from me, let's use the same standard of measurement you used when I bought from you. That was a marketplace metaphor of that day, but it is still true in human relationships today.

Today we say, what goes around comes around. Whatever standard of measurement you use in giving to people is likely to be used on you, so don't be surprised. Whatever you do in giving to them is what they will do in giving to you.

If you give them with a thimble, they will give to you with a thimble. If you use a bushel in giving to them, they will use a bushel in giving to you. This is a law of life, and Jesus was practical in discussing it.

He taught this in Luke 6, for example. If you give, it will be given to you, full measure, packed down, shaken up together, and running over. Because relationships in life are to be a two-way street.

Whatever goes up the street of human relationships will come down the street of human relationships. Having stated that truth, then Jesus asked these three questions. Since you've got this log jammed in your head, or in your eye, this plank, why do you feel that it's your responsibility, your duty, your calling in life, to find specks of wood dust in other people's eyes? That's a ridiculous metaphor, but it's so realistic.

Every pastor has known people like this in his congregation. All of us, no doubt, know people like this who are so hypercritical. They act as though they feel that God has appointed them to be a judge and a ruler over all of us.

The question was asked of Moses, who appointed you a judge or a ruler over us? And I have often thought of that question when I meet these hypercritical people. Their whole purpose in life is to tell you what is wrong with everybody else. They're experts on that subject.

I've known some people, even pastors and preachers, whose whole message is this. In fact, if there was not so much wrong with everybody else, they would not have a message. But that is not the gospel.

The gospel that we are commissioned to preach is not about what is wrong with everybody else, and it looks so ridiculous because anybody can figure out that a hypercritical person has a real problem. Jesus asked two questions here. Why are you hypercritical? And then he asked this question, how can you expect to be effective? 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? That's the first question found in verse three.

And then in verse four, how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when all the time there's a plank in your own? Then Jesus says, you hypocrite. Here again, you have this order of first and then second. God first.

We said in chapter five, then there was this amazing change of pace when Jesus said that if you want to pray to God and you are not right with your brother or your brother is not right with you, you should first go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and pray to God. That's amazing. First your brother, then God.

Now here, notice the order of priority. If you've got a plank sticking out of your eye and you're going around trying to figure out what's wrong with your brother, Jesus says this first, get that plank out of your eye, solve your problem first. Then you'll be able to see clearly how to get the speck of wood out of your brother's eye.

First your own eye, then your brother's eye. You see, it is saying judge yourself first and then judge your brother. It is not saying judge not.

Everybody has specks of wood dust in their eye and we should help each other remove those specks. But the obvious truth here is why are you so concerned about judging your brother when you don't even judge yourself? In first Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul says that if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But the problem is that we very seldom judge ourselves, but we are experts at judging others.

I remember growing up in a city that had a lot of pollution from coal smoke. The joke was that you could wake up in the morning and hear birds coughing because there was so much smoke in the air. And one

day I got a cinder in my eye.

A cinder is a very small piece of coal dust and when it lands in your eye, it is extremely painful because it scratches the eye. When you've got something in your eye, all you can think about is getting it out. It would never occur to you to try to treat other people's eyes when you've got a problem in your own eye, which is what makes this such a strong illustration.

If that is true on the literal physical level, and you know it is if you've ever had something in your eye, then on the spiritual level, why would you do something so ridiculous as going around being hypercritical when all the while you have this plank sticking out of your eye? The obvious teaching, the obvious application is you hypocrite. Judge yourself first and then you will see clearly to judge your brother in the sense of helping him. We're supposed to confess our sins one to another and pray for one another.

Remember what confession is? Confession is to speak sameness or to agree. So if my brother comes to me and says, what you did was wrong, then I confess when I agree with him and agree you're right. What I did was wrong.

That is confession. We're supposed to help each other with our specs. But you see when a person is going around with a hypercritical mindset, it is obvious to everybody else that the person has a problem.

And Jesus with his metaphor puts that hypocrisy in a ridiculous perspective. In the same sense, I think verse six in this passage shows us that Jesus is not saying do not judge. He is saying to be discerning, to be discriminating in your interaction with people, perhaps especially with the people at the bottom of the mountain.

Everybody is not ready for everything spiritually speaking. Notice in the interviews of Jesus how discriminating he is. He does not treat everybody the same.

Jesus will speak to Pilate, but he will not speak to Herod. Jesus will talk to the woman at the well one way. He will talk to the rich young ruler another way.

He will talk to Nicodemus still another way. And he will mention the new birth. Nicodemus is the only one he ever mentioned the new birth to.

And even the rabbi did not understand it. That is found in John chapter three. And in the next chapter, Jesus speaks to the sinful Samaritan woman.

But he does not talk to her about being born again. Instead, he talks to her about water, because she's thirsty on the physical level. And that is only symbolic of the deeper thirst that she really has within her.

I think what Jesus is saying in verse six is now be discriminating, be discerning in your dealings with people. You don't share everything with everybody. You have to have some idea of where people are spiritually because you minister spiritually to them.

I do think though, that in this first paragraph, Jesus is summing it all up. He has told us to look inward, to look around and to look upward. And now I think in this last chapter, he is saying as he closes the net and brings this teaching to a verdict, make the commitment to look inward.

Do not look around before you look inward. You must look inward before you look around. You must judge yourself first before you can judge anybody else.

Paul told Timothy in his letter, first Timothy four 16, take heed unto yourself and the doctrine and the scripture, continue in them. For if you do this, you will experience salvation for yourself. And then those that hear you will experience salvation.

There's a time when the disciple joins the me first club. The old song says, it's not the preacher or the deacon, but it's meal Lord standing in the need of prayer. When it comes to the need for judgment and spiritual examination, it is you first, you must judge yourself before you judge anybody else.

But you could sum it up all this way. As Jesus brings this teaching to a verdict, he is saying, now I challenge you to look inward. One last time.

I want to challenge you make the commitment that you're going to look inward, apply my teaching to your life first, then you can apply it to others. God bless you. Well, our time is gone again so quickly.

And we thank you for being such a faithful student with us in the mini Bible college. We trust that these lessons are helping you to grow in your faith. As you learn to apply God's word to your daily life.

May our God grant you wisdom as you learn to live in the daily grace of serving our Lord. And as you learn to apply his teaching to your life plan now to join us next time when we will continue studying right here in the mini Bible college.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28307.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dick-woodward/the-me-first-club/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net