

**Matthew 7:1-6 (1984 NIV)**  
***Lord, Deal with Me First***

- 1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged.
- 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
- 3 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?
- 4 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?
- 5 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.
- 6 Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

**Introduction**

When Martin Luther King, Sr. died in 1984, he was eulogized as the father of the civil rights movement in America. One black leader said, "If we started our own country, he would be our George Washington." In his 84 years he endured more than his share of suffering and hatred. During his childhood in Georgia, he witnessed lynching. The first time he tried to register to vote in Atlanta, he found that the registrar's office was on the second floor of City Hall, but the elevator was marked "Whites Only".

He is mostly remembered for the accomplishments of his son, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.—leader of the nonviolent civil rights movement who was killed in 1968 by the bullet fired by a white assassin. One year later, his second son drowned in a backyard swimming pool. The final blow came in 1974 during a church service. As his wife played The Lord's Prayer, a young black man arose in the congregation and began shooting. Mrs. King collapsed in a hail of gunfire as Martin Luther King, Sr. watched in horror from the pulpit where he was preaching.

Near the end of his life, reflecting on the loss of his wife and his oldest son, he spoke of the policy of nonviolence he had come to embrace. "There are two men I am supposed to hate. One is a white man, the other is black, and both are serving time for having committed murder. I don't hate either one. There is no time for that, and no reason either. Nothing that a man does takes him lower than when he allows himself to fall so low as to hate anyone."

But how can a man not hate when his wife and oldest son have been murdered? The answer is this—"There is no time for that." For life to be purposeful, we need to let go and move on in life.

(<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/quot-you-can-forgive-the-past-quot-clarence-eisberg-sermon-on-forgiveness-248318>)

I wonder how many of us have gotten into trouble because we gave in to anger and hatred. Perhaps we have said things in a moment of anger that we later lived to regret. Marriages have been rocked, families broken, friendships ended, careers destroyed, and churches split because we lost our temper and said and did things we later regretted.

Behind our anger and hatred often lies a problem—we have wrongly judged another person and have sinned in the process. In our rush to judge, in our haste to make sure someone else takes the blame, in our zeal to find the guilty party, we have violated the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1—“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” Eugene Peterson says it this way in his paraphrase of the verse—“Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment.”

Let’s now look at Matthew 7:1-2.

### **I. What exactly did Jesus mean when he said, “Do not judge”?**

Verses 1-2: “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.”

Whether we are aware of it or not, we judge people from time to time. And our human judgment can be in the form of a critical spirit, a condemning spirit, a complaining spirit, and a self-righteous spirit.

When Jesus says, “Do not judge,” it doesn’t mean that He’s forbidding us to criticize, to condemn, to compare, and to confront in every circumstance. In Matt 7:6, Jesus alludes to certain people as “dogs and pigs”. He warns His disciples not to waste the sacredness of God’s Word on people who have absolutely no interest in it. These people may even turn on them in violence. Jesus makes a judgment on these people and even calls them “dogs and pigs” because they have no sense of the sacredness and preciousness of God’s Word given to them.

Jesus is not saying we should never pass any sort of judgment. Every day we make judgments about things around us. We pass judgment on appearance, behaviour, speech, attitude, work ethic, competence, character, etc.

If I may paraphrase what Christ means when He says “Do not judge,” it will be something like this—“Do not put a label on people and then marginalize them in your self-righteousness.”

In 7:1b–2, Jesus tells us the reason that you shouldn't judge is this: "... or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged ..."

When Jesus says "or you too will be judged," He uses a future passive verb. He is referring to being judged not by men, but being judged at the judgment seat of Christ by Him. In other words, the Lord will use the same measure you use to evaluate others when He evaluates you! What you give to others will one day come back to you. This is the boomerang effect.

Now, how do I want to be judged by the Lord when the time comes? Well, I want the Lord to judge me with His grace and mercy (don't you?). And if I want the Lord to do this to me, let me then first learn to do this to others ... because of the boomerang effect. You give it to others, and the Lord will give it back to you one day.

I want to love people enough to confront them of sin when necessary. But I want to grant grace and mercy to them as much as possible. And when I am being judged by the Lord one day, I want Him to likewise judge me of my failures and shortcomings with all His grace and mercy.

In Matt 18 we read of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The servant who has received mercy from his master refuses to do the same to others. The result is that with the same measure of mercilessness which he has given to others, the master eventually gives it back to him.

There is a huge difference between being discerningly critical and hypercritical. A discerning spirit is constructive; a hypercritical spirit is destructive. This implies that we have to be very careful and prayerful about coming to a negative conclusion about someone. After all, I can see what someone does, but I cannot know for sure why he does it; I can hear what someone says, but I cannot know for sure why he says it. Only the Lord is truly able to judge the motive of the heart, and thus, fully qualified to pass final judgment on anyone (1 Sam 16:7).

E.g. I can judge a person to be a perfectionist, and so, conclude that he is very hard to work with because he's so hard on himself and others.

But one day, he tells me his sad story. While growing up as a child, he'd never felt loved and appreciated by his parents.

His older brother scored 90 marks for his paper, and his parents would say, "We are so proud of you. Well done!"

But when he chalked up 99 marks, his parents would snarled, "Why 99? Why not 100? Why are you so stupid? Why didn't you work harder?"

And with tears in his eyes, he added, “The reason why I strive for perfection is because I crave for those love and appreciation that I didn’t get from my parents as a child.”

My point is this: *People want to be judged not with condemnation, but with grace and mercy because they often have a story to tell.*

Moving on ...

## II. Why do we tend to look at the fault of others?

Verses 3-4: “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?”

Why do we tend to look at the speck in someone’s eye and ignore the plank in our own eye?

There are at least two reasons:

- One, we tend to be more self-righteous and less self-aware. We see so clearly the failures and shortcomings of others, but we just can’t see those of our own. We often have little self awareness. The self-righteous tendency is often expressed as some form of fault finding. I am so very right and that makes all others so very wrong.

When I bring my righteousness up in order to diminish that of the other person, I increase myself and I decrease the other person. When I bring my righteousness up, I am also putting aside the righteousness of the Lord. But the Bible teaches us that He (the Lord) must increase, and we must decrease.

If I measure myself according to the righteousness of the Lord, I will not dare say that I am better than the other person. He may have failed the Lord by 1 foot and I may have failed by 1 inch. But the fact is that we both have failed the Lord according to the measure of His perfect righteousness.

Self-righteousness can lead us to deal with people in a proud and aggressive way. But self-awareness can lead us to deal with people in a humble and gentle manner because we are aware of the plank in our own eye.

So let’s pray to the Lord to take away our measure of self righteousness and fill us with a better measure of self awareness as we relate with one another.

Jesus 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.”

- Two, we tend to play up the issues of others in order to play down the problems of our own. I know I have problems. But the failures and shortcomings of others make me feel better about myself. So I choose to focus on the issues of others. It is a kind of escapism and avoidance of personal responsibility. Some examples of how we can do this:
  - Having a strong tendency to find others guilty.
  - Adding aggravating remarks about others when telling a story.
  - Taking pleasure in condemning others.
  - Telling the truth in order to hurt, not to help.
  - Putting others down in order to make your own self look better.
  - Minimizing your faults while magnifying those of others.

But our judgment is always wrong no matter how much Bible we use when it is:

- Needless
- Unfounded
- Hasty
- Unrestrained

Moving on ...

### **III. How can we help ourselves in order to help others?**

Verse 5: “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.”

It’s easy to see the speck in your brother’s eye, but much harder to see the plank in your own. In dealing with the faults of others, our greatest need is clear vision. First, we must see clearly. And we cannot see clearly until we have removed the impediment from our own eyes.

Christian love is not blind. God never says, “Ignore the faults of others.” But He does say, “Take care of your own faults first.” Look in the mirror! Ask God to show you first your own sins.

Psalm 139:23-24 reads: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” If we would pray this way and mean it, we would do a lot more confessing and a lot less judging.

The order in which we do things is crucial. We are to judge ourselves first by asking God to show us our sins. We sit and wait and pray for the Holy Spirit to show us ...

- Our weaknesses
- Our faults
- Our mistakes
- Our bad attitudes
- Our foolish words
- Our pride
- Our arrogance
- Our need to be in control
- Our need to tell others what to do
- Our desire to have our own way
- Our anger
- Our bitterness
- Our lack of mercy
- Our lack of love

Did you notice what Jesus called the judgmental person in verse 5? He called him a “hypocrite”. That is a strong and harsh word. But that’s what we are when we judge and condemn others without first judging ourselves.

The order is crucial. First, we judge ourselves. First, we are hard on ourselves. First, we ask the Lord to show us our sins. Put in another way, don’t look out of the window and say, “Lord, that man out there has something wrong with him. Fix him up!” Rather, stand in front of the mirror and say, “Lord, this man in the mirror has something wrong with him. Fix him up before anyone else.”

Until we do that, we will never have a clear vision of ourselves and how to help others. But once we have allowed the Holy Spirit to do His painful surgery within; once we have confessed and repented and mourned over our own sin, then and only then are we ready to do redemptive work on someone else.

Indeed, when our own shortcomings bother us a lot more than those of others, the failures of others won’t seem so huge to us anymore.

That person who has judged himself will display:

- Humility
- Godly sorrow
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Discretion
- Restraint

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Once we are cleansed and humbled by the Lord, then we are ready to remove the tiny speck from a brother's eye. And the Lord will be glad for us to do it because He knows we are not there to hurt, but to heal and help.

In summary, there are two principles concerning how we can help ourselves first in order to help others.

- One, "First remove the plank in your own eye." The shortcomings of others are meant to challenge me to first seek the Lord to help me correct my own shortcomings.
- Two, "Then remove the speck from a brother's eye." After the Lord has so helped me, I can then seek the Lord to use me to help correct another's shortcomings in His grace and mercy.

You see, true discipleship is not about ME only. It is not as long as I am alright before God I mind my own business, lest I am guilty of judging others. True discipleship is about helping others to grow in Christlike godliness by first seeking to grow in such a manner myself.

## Conclusion

I know of a servant of God who lives in another country. He was born into a Christian family. His father was the police chief of a village. His mother was a very prayerful woman who prayed much for her children. His parents have eight children—seven daughters and one son. The son is the youngest of all—and that's this servant of God whom I am talking about.

He had a rebellious streak during his growing up years. So he ended up as a gangster, involving himself in fights, alcoholism, and drug addiction. He got himself into many situations that brought much embarrassment and pain to his parents, especially his father who was the police chief.

One time, he got into such a mess that his father believed "enough is enough". So the elder man ordered the arrest of his own son. When this wayward son was in prison, he felt much anger and hatred—towards his father.

The Lord by His grace sent a godly man to the prison to reach out to him with the love of Jesus Christ. He had a powerful encounter with the Lord. The Holy Spirit convicted him and he repented of his sin. He was saved and radically transformed.

After his release from prison, he kept away from his wayward friends and drugs. He put himself through “cold turkey” treatment and was eventually delivered from the bondage of drug addiction.

Later, he committed his life to serve the Lord in full-time ministry. He went for equipping and after that he served the Lord in different ways—as pastor, as church planter, and as evangelist. Today, he is the principal of the Myanmar Theological College (MTC). That man’s name is John Phongshar (fondly known as John P).

On 20 Jan 2018, I was in Yangon for the commencement service of some of MTC students. Only three graduated with the BTh degree. There could have been at least seven more.

But a year earlier, these other seven who were supposed to graduate in 2018 were caught taking drugs in the college dormitory. Drugs are a huge problem in Northern Myanmar where many of the students have come from. This was what happened to these seven students—they went back home during the term break, went back to their drug-addict friends, and then went back to drugs.

So John P had to make the hard and painful decision to send them back home not just to discipline them and to prevent the other students from being influenced, but also to rehabilitate and restore them with the help of their churches back home. Once they have recovered and been restored to good Christian standing as affirmed by their home churches, the door to MTC is always opened to them.

When I asked John P how he felt about having to send home these seven students, he said, “I have learnt that there are times when I need to be cruel in order to be kind. When my father ordered my arrest and I eventually ended up in prison, I hated him for judging me—his son—so cruelly. But as things turned out, the Lord taught me that my father’s action was not a call to judge, but a call to love.”

Sometimes, the call to love may look like a call to judge because it is tough love.

When Jesus says “do not judge,” He doesn’t mean “do not love, do not care, do not correct.” Rather He is saying, “Do not be a quick judge of others’ shortcomings, and a good lawyer of your own shortcomings. Whenever you are tempted to judge others, be reminded first to look at your own imperfection.”

When we mature in first correcting ourselves, we can then minister by correcting others in grace and mercy. This is not being judgmental, but being obedient to Christ’s command to love one another (John 13:34).



We are all imperfect. So our evaluation of one another must be tempered by grace and mercy because we have our own imperfection. Only Jesus Christ can judge with pure justice, grace and mercy because He's the sinless and perfect One. The Bible tells us that He will come again to judge this world, including you and me. He will judge those who belong to Him with His grace and mercy not because they are perfect in themselves, but they are perfect in Him.

If you want to know what it means to be perfect in Jesus Christ and to belong to Him in His grace and mercy, we invite you to talk with us after the service. We will be most happy to share more with you.

I'd like to end with a simple prayer for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Saying words alone won't change our hearts, but if these words reflect our deepest desire, then today could be a new beginning for us.

Heavenly Father, our problem is not with your Word. We know what it says. And our problem is not first with other people. Our problem is first with ourselves. We confess that too many times we have been critical of those around us. Forgive us of our thoughtless, unkind, and hurtful words. O Lord, teach us to love and be gracious to one another.

We ask that the Holy Spirit will fill us with your power so that we might become truly different people. Set us free from bitterness, from anger, and from a judgmental spirit. Grant us power to love one another.

Make us like Jesus who is full of truth, of love, and of grace. Do this today as we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen!

*Pray that the Lord will help us not to put one another under a microscope to find fault with one another, but to build up one another in grace and mercy so that we can all grow unto Christlikeness.*