

Talks – Judging – myfishbites.com

Thanks!

For some of this material, these two books have been super helpful!

- Stephen Gaukroger, 'Thirsty For God. Matthew 5-7: Jesus' teaching for today' (Scripture Union, 1991)
- Nicky Gumbel, 'Challenging Lifestyle' (Kingsway Publications, 1999)

Judging Others

Matthew 7:1-6:

"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. "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? 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. "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 then turn and tear you to pieces.

Intro

Are you a judgemental person? Do you always have an opinion, are you habitually critical, judging people harshly and condemning others? If so, hear God's words very closely today.

Judgement

Jesus cautions us against judging others. Why? Because by the same measure we judge someone else, so we will be judged. This does not mean that we should never judge, no, it is the destructive criticism that Jesus really gets at.

Let's read from the Amplified Bible – 'Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned.'

So when can we judge? Well, the Bible makes it clear that there are judges appointed over us in society (*Romans 13.2*), that parents have authority in the home, that there is authority in the church. Paul also makes it clear that within the church, immorality must and will be judged (*1 Corinthians 5*). Paul himself also attacked false teaching (even confronting Peter). We also have to be on our guard as Christians, so that we discern false prophets, and so that we don't "throw pearls to pigs".

Pearls and pigs? What's that all about?! It just means being smart about where you put your time and energy. So if there's someone who always gambles all their money, don't give them any money unless you spend it with them on good things! We need God's wisdom especially in this world full of tricksters, fraudsters, viruses and people ready to steal your personal information.

We can also put over positive criticism. I've been part of Just10 Devon, a mission with J John looking at the 10 Commandments over 10 weeks. There has been positive and constructive criticism there too, but this has enabled all of us to grow and move forward together. I also lead a band, and disciple young people. They grow through constructive criticism which comes from a heart wanting to help and encourage them.

I was once working in a lesson with a teaching assistant. The teaching assistant was ordering the young people to do work. My approach was to get alongside, mess about a bit, get them to do a bit of work. When I got them to do work it wasn't from a harsh judgmental place but a place of encouragement. The young people listened more to me than that particular teaching assistant! And we must also have good judgment so that we don't waste time and throw pearls to pigs. I have spent time with several young people who don't want to change and so I spend my energies elsewhere. Other times we need to recognize that young people need time to change and will come around in their own way and time. So we need good discernment.

So, what is Jesus saying?

My dad was once told, 'If we always listened to what you said, we'd never do anything!' Why? Because he always found a reason not to do something. Today his attitude is to try and be encouraging and not judge people.

Jesus is saying don't be consistently negative and critical. In a study of 10,000 people with mental and emotional health problems, a researcher found that nervous and neurotic people were the ones who were always critical and fault-finding. So we need to know that being this way affects us spiritually and in every other way. Want to improve your mental health? Be positive about yourself and others! (Read Stephen Gaukroger, 'Thirsty For God' page 133).

When we judge wrongly, we set ourselves up as God. Why? Because only God can judge. We also know that we do not judge fairly, only God judges fairly. We don't know the truth of a situation, how someone said something and how they are feeling (this is why email and texting isn't the best way).

To slightly paraphrase something J John said, we shouldn't enjoy saying things about people we don't like. Think about it.. A magnifying glass or a microscope shows us things not immediately obvious to the human eye. We're not here to magnify people's weaknesses. The Bible tells us that we are all weak, we've all fallen short (Romans). We don't want to be like Pharisees, creating a culture in church where everyone's looking over their shoulder, scared to say something.

In Luke 18.9 Jesus described the Pharisees as: *"some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else."* You know the contempt Jesus had for the Pharisees because of their super-critical attitude towards others when they were a mess themselves! Let's not be like them.

Why Not Judge?

A famous Bible teacher called Derek Prince talked about a man who complained at his wife saying, "I'm sick of your cooking." The end result was not only that he and his very talented wife divorced, but also that he had endless stomach problems to the end of his life.

1. You see, our words and judgments come back and affect us. Jesus, warning of the last days said, *'For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.'* We'd do well to listen to this warning in our daily lives. We should speak words of life not of negativity. Try it for a week and see how you feel. See how others around you feel too! You may well find they like you more!

When I went to my church I felt God say I shouldn't ever say anything negative about the leaders. My previous church had lots of issues and lots of people left. But in my church I never have said anything negative about the leaders – and you know what? I never want to say anything negative about them. I only ever want to encourage and support them and that's what I do.

2. Jesus said, in **John 3:17**: *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

We should have the same attitude. In John 8, we find Jesus dealing with a woman caught in adultery. He drew a circle on the sand while challenging anyone who had not sinned to cast the first stone. No-one did. The response of Jesus to the woman was, 'I do not condemn you. Now go, and sin no more.' We need to reflect this attitude to others, and to practice it in regard to ourselves.

3. The church has become very well known for what it stands against, what it hates. But we can make a difference. A moving story I recently heard took place in a US city. It was the day of the gay parade. One church, motivated by God's love, bought around 10,000 bottles of water and gave them out to the marchers. After gasps of disbelief from the marchers, many started questioning why the church was doing this. Didn't all Christians hate people who said they were gay? No, replied one of the workers, we're doing this because we want to show you God's love.

This is not acceptance of a lifestyle that is sinful, it is a loving response to another person, like you and me, who has sinned and fallen short.

4. We do not know what is in people's hearts. After running a very successful outreach event, I was contacted by one person and then others who started making all kinds of false accusations about my motivations. One criticism was that I just wanted to be on stage. They were wrong, completely wrong. In my heart has always been a desire to represent and glorify Jesus by using the gifts he's given me. It was a painful experience. But they did not know what was in my heart. But how many times have I, or you, done this to others?

5. When I was a baby Christian, I was passionate about God. I had a fire in me that has burned out a bit. But I had come from a difficult personal situation with my brother being killed in Africa. I had come out of a life of meaningless, out of football violence and even the drugs scene. I knew what a change God had done in me, I saw that God was kind, loving, merciful, even to a sinner like me. And all I wanted to do was (like the Fatboy Slim track), praise God like I should.. If only we could all be consumed with that attitude. You see, being judgmental towards others, often means there's something wrong in us, something wrong in our relationship with God or with others. We can easily get this sorted by saying sorry to God and asking for his help to change!

The Bible teacher, Derek Prince, once said that parents who get most annoyed with one of their children, often do so because that child is most like them. Often we see things in others that reveals a lot about ourselves. In what way? Well, if someone else succeeds in something and we react badly, it shows that we may be jealous. Or if something happens and we react angrily, it shows we may have an issue with anger.

6. Jesus tells us that we need to take the log out of our own eye before we tell others about the speck of dust in their eye. We need to remove the plank from our own eyes, the thing that stops us, that blinds us.

Just think – if we have a plank in our eye people would want to avoid us. We may keep hitting them! Having a plank in our eye is painful – not just for us, but for everyone else too – as we are in pain and react, and as we go round bashing other people! Let's remove the plank and then respond to others with love and help.

7. Finally, a story from John Bevere who speaks of an American pastor who had one of his church members come up to him, frustrated at having to pay taxes. The pastor replied that we have to pay taxes and respect our leaders as far as possible, according to Romans. Then it set him thinking. He phoned the city authorities and asked them what their biggest need was. The need was for fire helmets which enable firefighters to see through thick smoke. The cost? \$25,000. The next Sunday he put this to the church and said let's raise this money today. They did and he took the money to the authority who bought the fire suits. When a new part of the church was dedicated, all the city authorities turned out, as did many firefighters. That day, many were saved.

Wrap Up

Let's develop a positive attitude, one that lifts others above ourselves, a servant heart, a passionate heart for Jesus.