

## **June 18/23 – Leader’s Guide**

### **Matthew 7:1-5; 12 “Do not judge”**

In chapter 7 Jesus turns to our relationships, beginning to build to a central principle that is meant to guide all of our relationships. “Whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them”.

#### **Read Matthew 7:1-5;12**

1. (vs. 1) In Greek the word to judge can mean i) to discern or evaluate ii) to judge in a court of law iii) to be judgmental, censorious. From what we have read already in the sermon on the mount what meaning of the word do you think Jesus is using here? What are some practical examples of this in our lives and in our world?
  - i) *There is nothing in the context that would suggest that Jesus is inviting us to do away with our justice system*
  - ii) *If Jesus were asking us to step away from discerning, evaluating, making distinctions between right and wrong then he has been contradicting himself all the way through the sermon. For he has said don’t respond this way, respond that way – don’t be like the Pharisees who parade their goodness in order to be seen by others, instead keep it between you and God.*
  - iii) *This is the only semantic option available to us... don’t be judgmental / censorious.*

*Here are some of the examples that Tim used in the sermon...*

*in judgment, we flatter ourselves by giving the best possible justifications and excuses for our own behavior – but will interpret everyone else’s actions in the worst possible light*

*In judgement we erode relationship – choking off openness and vulnerability - as others wall off areas of their heart and life for fear we will judge them*

*In judgement we claim an authority to read hearts and motivations – make snap judgements without all the facts – and don’t change our minds with new perspective*

*In judgement we’ll externalize wrong – a relationship erodes and we lay the blame at the feet of the other – become overly critical of them to protect self – however most broken relationships have been contributed to by both*

*parties – such externalizing of blame in judgement renders us susceptible to repeating the same pattern in every subsequent relationship.*

2. (vs. 1-4) Jesus is so desirous of change in this area that he speaks decisively to our hearts. Which of Jesus' words impacts you the most? Why?

***Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, with the measure you use it will be measured to you.***

*Now there are two ways we could take that – in some ways this is great insight into the way relationships work right – we foster in others what we bring to the table - I mean when you are in relationship with someone who is merciful – understanding – open – gracious - they tend to foster that in us – in our relationship - as we extend the mercy and grace that has been given to us – but if we're in a relationship with someone who is judgmental – has a critical spirit – that also tends to be the spirit of our relationship with them – we'll be guarded – protected – as they're fault finding – we're fault finding – judge not that you be not judged – we foster in others – in relationships - what we bring to the table.*

*But there is another way to hear Jesus –the passive language here more often than not refers to God – Jesus is saying - when you judge you're taking the place of God – you're saying I can see into that person's heart – I know what motivates them – I can make a final determination of their character – I have everything I need to close the book on them – that's usurping God – taking God's place – and Jesus is saying – you want to take the place of God – ok – then you'll be measured by the same ruler you've held up to others.*

*Imagine for a moment you have an app on your phone – every time you hold up a standard for others – make a judgment of what is right or wrong – the app records you – at the end of your life you come before the judgement seat of Christ – and Jesus says – I see that you have taken my place – as judge – as discerner of hearts and motivations – ok – since you've taken my place – I won't hold you accountable to my standards – I'll hold you accountable to the standards you've expected of others – and then the app plays back all the standards you held others to – and the question is asked – did you meet your own standards? - I don't know about you – but I'd be decimated in moments – judge not – that you be not judged.*

***Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?***

*Jesus then brings it home with a hard hitting yet humorous image – why do you see the speck in another's eye and don't notice the beam in your own – how can you say – let me help you with that speck – you can't even see – can't even maneuver - what with the beam in your own eye – humour can be incredibly disarming – meant to wake us up to reality – yes discern – yes evaluate – yes use your critical faculties – but you are in no position to bring such things to bear in relationship with others – you don't see yourself rightly – so you can't see others rightly*

*There is also something to the speck and the log begin made of the same material – wood. It is very often the case that we will judge harshly in others what we struggle with ourselves.*

3. (vs. 5) What is Jesus encouraging his followers to do within the community of believers in this verse? What would it look like practically to “take the log out of our own eye”?

*Here is an unedited section of the sermon that will speak to this question.*

*Now this is often where we leave it – don't judge - don't play God – worry about the log in your own eye – not the specks in other's – mind your own business – let them worry about their specks – let them get in front of a mirror with a tissue or tweezers and figure it out on their own*

*But they had no mirrors – and the speck in the eye is a real problem – there's agitation – watering – pain – if you've ever had anything in your eye – you know the pain the discomfort – the need to get it out before you can think of or do anything else – in Jesus' world – specks in the eye needed the help of another – someone to loving come alongside and support – aid – guide – which is Jesus' point – we need others who love us enough to help us get rid of the irritants – the things that keep us from living the full life that God intended for us – the hinderances to living in step with the kingdom – this is one of the primary functions of Christian community – as Paul put it in our Ephesians reading – that we would speak truth in love to one another that we might grow into the fullness of Jesus – or as the writer of Hebrews puts it – that we would consider the ways we can spur one another on to love and good deeds -*

*E Stanley Jones – was a methodist theologian and missionary to India – personal friend of Gandhi - wrote a book on the sermon on the mount and in his section on these verses he said this - the attitude of censoriousness – that judgmental – critical spirit - is always a sign of a declining spiritual life – when religious people start backsliding they begin backbiting*

*Which means what? It means the way to step away from judgement and embrace a life of speaking truth in love is the fruit of spiritual renewal – which is where Jesus invites us.*

*vs. 5 – you hypocrite - which is the word for actor – one who pretends to be something they're not – you hypocrite – don't pretend to be something you're not – you have a log in your eye – you can't see yourself clearly – so you can't see another clearly...*

*So how do you see ourselves clearly - we look at the glory – majesty – holiness of God revealed in Jesus – and know - this is who I was created to be – this is the character I am meant to display – the love I am meant to express – the compassion I was created to embody – do I see that reality reflected in me – such an encounter with the holiness - glory of God is meant to bring us to our knees – wretched blind fool that I am – who will rescue me...*

*The message of the gospel is that when we see ourselves in light of the holiness of God – and are rightly undone –we are met with the lavish love of God in Jesus – a God in whom there is no condemnation - only love – only forgiveness – only mercy – only adoption – you are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased – only invitation – come follow me and I will make you new – first take the log out of your eye – acknowledge it and find healing by way of his grace and forgiveness*

4. (vs. 12) How does our passage (vs. 1-5) illustrate this principle in action?

*Perhaps think of it this way – I was meeting with someone this week whose taken to coaching his son's baseball team – as a coach he is there to encourage the things that will enable them to reach their full potential – to point out the things in their throw – their swing – their situational awareness that are hindering them from reaching that potential – these kids need that – ask for it – appreciate it – yearn for it - why? – because they're all committed together to being the best baseball team they can be*

*As Christian community we have committed ourselves to Jesus – to living out the patterns of the kingdom – to anticipating the new creation in everything we do and say and pray – to grow to maturity in Jesus – to reflect his character - would we not then similarly desire others around us to encourage the things that we should press into – to draw our attention and support us in stepping away from the things that are hindering that? Would we not yearn for that – desire that – be appreciative of that?*

*Would this not be love in action? Doing for another what we would want done for us?*

5. How does the gospel shape our hearts to speak the truth in love to one another?

*We see the reality of our sin in light of God's glory and holiness revealed in Jesus and so our sin will always loom larger to us than the sin of the other.*

*In our sin we encounter a God in whom there is no condemnation so we can come alongside another in their sin without displaying an ounce of condemnation.*

*In our sin we have tasted the love, grace, mercy and forgiveness of God and are then able to extend that to another.*

*It was D.M. Lloyd Jones in a sermon on this text who said – How can we get the speck out? There is only one thing that matters at that point and that is that you should be humble. You should be sympathetic, you should be so conscious of your own sin and your own unworthiness, that when you find it in another, far from condemning, you feel like weeping. You're full of compassion – you really do want to help – you have so enjoyed getting rid of the thing in yourself that you want them to have that same pleasure - that same joy.*