



**RELIGION RESTORED - Restored Love - Matthew 7:1-6,12 - March 20-26**

**Main Idea:** Sober judgment, done in the right way with the right heart, is God's way of handling conflict

**Look Back (Remind yourself of the challenge from last week)**

Last week you were challenged to look at the priorities of your life and see what has become the master of your life. As you spent the week meditating on this passage, what did you experience? What might God be trying to say to you?

**Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)**

*Read Matthew 7:1-6, 12 together.*

This section, as we enter into the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, is one of the most difficult teachings of Jesus. On the one hand, we have all experienced judgemental Christians who are quick to condemn others and place themselves in the seat of self-righteousness. But on the other hand, we have all experienced those who are clearly walking in sin, and yet use these words, "do not judge," to dismiss others who are trying to help them on the road to repentance.

So which is it? Are we allowed to point out wrongs? And if so, what is the way in which we are to do it?

One way to approach this dilemma is to notice the difference between a judge and a jury. In the legal system, the jury is the group that determines whether a person's actions are right or wrong. But it is the judge who does two important things: 1.) determine whether the jury's conclusions were processed properly, 2.) attach a punishment to the crime. In that sense, the obligation to point out sin and seek to restore the person is certainly part of the Christian life, whereas attaching a condemnation onto that sin is not.

It is important to take these words of Jesus alongside other teachings in Scripture, whether they be from Paul (Titus 1:13, Ephesians 5:1; 1 Timothy 5:20), James (James 5:19-20), or Jesus himself (Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:3). The call to correct our brothers and sisters in Christ is necessary, needed, and sometimes the most loving thing we can do for one another in community.

**Discussion Question:** How have you seen a loving correction done well? What was the impact? How have you seen self-righteous judgment done poorly? What was that impact?

One of the clear points of Jesus teaching is the reciprocal nature of judgment. What we give we will also receive. To put it another way, the spirit and heart behind the way we handle one another's sin is the same spirit and heart that will be returned to us when our sin is exposed. Where we give compassion, patience, kindness, and love, we will see it brought back to us. Where we give ruthlessness, vengeance, harshness, gossip, slander, and criticism, we will receive it back upon us.

**Discussion Question:** Where do you see the need to repent of harsh judgment in your own life? How have you given to others what you would never want to receive yourself?

### **Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)**

As in so much of this sermon, it all comes down to the heart. And measuring our heart in dealing with other's sin is a key identifier of whether we are judging like Christ or like the world. If we approach someone's sin with a sickening glee, or even joy, that this person is going to be shamed, exposed, or punished for their wrongdoing, we can know that our heart is in the wrong place. But if we consider approaching this person and feel a sober dread, knowing that it is necessary while caring for their goodness, but also wishing it didn't have to be done, we can be assured that our heart is in the right place.

One of the most beautiful expressions of the Christian community is when we lovingly restore a brother or sister from their sin.

**Discussion Question:** What has been going in your heart during this conversation? On one end, have you felt convicted about how you've been wrongfully judging others? Or on the other, do you realize that you need to have a difficult conversation with someone you love?

**Challenge:** Spend time in prayer three times this week, focusing on having a heart that sees the need for compassionate confrontation. Ask God to put your desire in the right place. And be open to where he might be asking you to move within your community.