

Judge Not
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When Jesus said, “JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED” (**Matthew 7:1**), he was not merely uttering good advice, but a prohibition, a strong negative command. Unless we understand what kind of “judging” the Lord prohibits, we will do much abuse to this passage. We must understand His prohibition in harmony with the context and with other words he said on the same subject. In the immediate context he warned, “GIVE NOT THAT WHICH IS HOLY UNTO THE DOGS, NEITHER CAST YOUR PEARLS BEFORE THE SWINE,” and “BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS” (**vv. 6, 15**). Both warnings require some “judging” (i.e., selecting, choosing, determining, which requires evaluating evidence, exercising discernment) regarding one’s fellow man to determine who is a two-legged “DOG” or “SWINE” and who is a “FALSE PROPHET” (“BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM,” **v. 16**).

Unless the Lord contradicted Himself, He was not forbidding us to form an opinion about someone’s character when he said, “JUDGE NOT.” He elsewhere commanded us to judge “JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT” (**John 7:24**). The kind of judging Jesus forbade is the unjust judgment of the double standard that can see the tiniest fault in others, but cannot see even major faults in self (note the Lord’s “MOTE” and “BEAM” illustration [**7:3-5**]). Hypercritical faultfinding that makes no allowances for any flaws in others needs to be exposed and recognized for what it is. Censorious, hypocritical “judging” of others demonstrates the following:

- **It is a morbid habit.** One can be like a buzzard that concentrates on finding rotting carcasses, or he can be like a humming bird that seeks sweet nectar. Jesus forbade us to have the “buzzard” approach to life that is always seeking and seeing only the worst and is ready to feast on it and spread it to others. Such harsh judgments blind us to that which is beautiful and good. (This precept obviously does not mean one should take a “Pollyanna” approach to life that denies “dogs,” “swine,” or erroneous teachers and doctrines.)
- **It blinds us to our own faults.** The chronic faultfinder rarely does any of this work on himself. In condemning the mote-hunter, Jesus was not lessening our responsibility to admonish the disorderly or to reprove and rebuke them when it is needed. He was warning us of the need for self-criticism and self-discipline. If the super-judges could see themselves for just one day through the eyes of others, it might begin to cure them.

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- We “buy” and “sell” on the same scales. The Lord taught that one who judges others harshly invites-- -and will likely receive—the same from others (“what goes around, comes around”). This also works in reverse: “GIVE AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU” (Luke 6:38). Although there are many exceptions, people tend to return to us the same attitude we radiate. God will also judge us according to our judgment of others: “FOR JUDGMENT IS WITHOUT MERCY TO HIM THAT HATH SHOWED NO MERCY” (**James 2:13**). “THEREFORE, BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL: FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY” (**Matthew 5:7**).

Judge not provides no haven for the false sense of tolerance that would prohibit the necessary work of exposing sin and error. However, it most certainly prohibits a hypercritical attitude.