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“Judgment vs. Judgmentalism”

Matthew 7:1-5

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Contrary to popular belief, Jesus didn't say that we can't judge others or even that we shouldn't. In fact, in Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus said that we should judge others when it comes to certain people like false prophets. We need to be wise and discerning about others. However, we should not judge based on assumptions, appearances, or our personal preferences. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about the difference between making right judgments, which is good, and being judgmental, which is bad.

Historical Background

1. **Matthew 7:1-5** - *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”*
2. **Matthew 7:15-16** - *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?”*
3. Pastor Gary said, “How are we going to be wise and discerning about false prophets unless we exercise some kind of judgment? Jesus [told us to be discerning] so we won't be deceived [by false prophets]. ... Exercising judgment when it comes to people is not a wrong thing; in fact, it is a necessary thing. [What Jesus condemned] in this section of the Sermon on the Mount is not about judging others per se; it is about being judgmental. ... Judging someone is about discerning the truth based

on facts. Being judgmental, on the other hand, is about finding fault with people. [It's] being critical without cause, based on personal feelings or assumptions."

Being Judgmental Toward Others Based On Appearance Or Behavior

4. It's often the case that people are judgmental of others based on a person's physical appearance or a person's behavior.
5. Pastor Gary said, "The very definition of the word prejudice is the idea of prejudging someone, and oftentimes it is based on appearance. It is to form an adverse opinion about someone based on whatever differences you might have with [the other person]. ... It can be based on the color of [a person's] skin, [accent, culture, gender, level of fitness, how much a person weighs, attractive or unattractive]. ... Both favoritism and discrimination are often based on appearance."
 - a. Pastor Gary shared several examples of studies that show there is evidence to document his point:
 - i. Attractive students receive more attention and receive higher evaluations from their teachers.
 - ii. Good looking patients receive more personalized care from doctors and nurses.
 - iii. Handsome criminals receive lighter sentences than less attractive criminals.
 - iv. A study of male graduates at the University of Pittsburgh found that the tallest students had a starting salary that was twelve percent higher than their shorter classmates.
 - v. Overweight women are more likely to be unemployed, but those who are employed earn an average of five percent less than their normal weight peers.
 - b. "[Plain] people... earn five to ten percent less... than people with average looks, [who in turn] earn three percent to eight percent less than those deemed good looking." ¹
 - c. "[Human] beings are hardwired to respond more favorably to attractive people. Even studies of babies show they will look more intently and longer at prettier faces." – Dr. Gordon Patzer ²
6. **James 2:1-4** – *"My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my*

¹ <https://www.nber.org/papers/w4518>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2005/US/Careers/07/08/looks/>

footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?"

7. **James 2:8-10** - *"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all"*
8. **John 7:24** - *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*
9. Pastor Gary said, "The mistake that we often make in life is that we jump to conclusions about people based on one tiny part of the story that we see or hear. ... And with the rise of social media we have to be especially aware of this because with the rise of social media and everyone taking pictures and videos, there is an epidemic of rushing to judgment. ... [People] draw opinions about people and situations through a limited snapshot, often without context or facts, just by appearance. ... When we don't have all of the facts about something, and we often don't, we can end up making foolish assumptions and drawing conclusions that are often false, and worse, damaging to people's character and reputation. ... Context matters. Facts matter. Giving the benefit of the doubt instead of being reactionary matters. People deserve [this] rather than judgmental assumptions. ... As followers of Christ, [he] is calling us to live by a standard that our culture may not live by. [We] have to be measured people, [patient people, fact gathering people, people who understand things [before making conclusions]."

Being Judgmental Toward Others Based On Our Experience

10. Pastor Gary said, "We tend to judge people through the lens of our own life experiences or through our own personal standards and that tends to be judgmental. If there is no clear biblical instruction about a matter, but we quietly condemn someone in our own hearts, or worse, with our mouths, because they don't do it the way we think it should be done, we are being judgmental."
 - a. **John 7:24** - *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*

Making Right Judgment Of Others Based On God's Preference

11. Pastor Gary said, "[The] reality is that you and your friend have the same sin struggle. ... The sins that you and your friend have might be different [in kind but] they are the same in size. ... All sin carries the same weight and has the same offense against God. ... [When] you start to think to yourself, 'Well, I have this issue but it's not as bad as that issue,' then you are deceiving yourself. [You] are not aware of

the sin in your own heart when you start to compare yourself to other people. ... Your sin is your sin and it looms large. My sin is my sin and it looms large. But in reality, they are both the same size. My own sin should be glaring to me more than your sin. So, since [my sin] is up close, it should be a lot bigger, a plank versus a speck. The reason Jesus is challenging us here is that to be judgmental is for me to see your sin as a bigger deal than mine. ... Jesus called this kind of person a hypocrite. ... A hypocrite is one who underjudges self and overjudges everyone else.”

- a. [Romans 2:1](#) - *“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”*
- b. Making right judgment of others should be in the right order: our own sin first.
- c. Making right judgment of others should be with the right heart of humility.
- d. Making right judgment of others should be for the right purpose: to help a brother or sister.
- e. Jesus was basically saying that we should be more concerned about our own sin and have grace to help others with theirs.

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 7:1-5](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the need to be able to judge without being judgmental. (See #3 above)
3. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks about being judgmental of others when it comes to appearance or behavior. (See #5 above)
4. Read and discuss [James 2:1-4, 8-10](#). (See #6 through #8 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the danger of jumping to conclusions without knowing or considering the facts of the matter. (See #10 above)
6. Allow the people in your group to share examples about ways the Holy Spirit has given more discernment and patience.
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about making right judgment based on God’s preferences. (See #11 above)

8. How has the Holy Spirit helped you make judgments in the right order, with a right heart, for the right purpose?
9. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.