

The Mote And The Beam

Introduction. For some reason, it is easier to jump to negative conclusions about people than it is to assume the best about them. When we do this, we ascribe to them bad intentions and evil purposes that may not be true. We also reveal something about ourselves, for the faults we see in others are actually a reflection of our own. Ed Howe said, "The average man's judgment is so poor, he runs a risk every time he uses it."

Sometimes judging is forbidden (Matthew 7:1; James 4:11-12), and sometimes it is encouraged (Luke 12:57; John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13). So it is apparent that judging is used in more than one sense in the New Testament, and this is the purpose of our study today.

I. *What Is Judging?*

A. The kind of judging that is encouraged.

1. The Bible does not forbid the judgments of civil courts (Romans 13:1-7), the judgment of the church upon disorderly members (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), individual judgments of wrongdoers and evil people (Matthew 7:1-6; 7:15-20; Titus 3:10-11; 3 John 9), recognizing and disapproving the faults of others (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), decisive preaching that draws the line between truth and error, and the lost and the saved (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), nor the identifying of false teachers (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).
2. All of these types of judgments must occur by the world and by God's children in order to be right.

B. The kind of judging that is forbidden.

1. Often we look at people and put the worst possible interpretations on their actions. In looking at the context of Matthew 7:1-6, the kind of judging forbidden by the Lord is harsh, hasty, unfounded, hypercritical, uncharitable, and malicious judgment.
2. The critic has a "beam," whereas his victim has a "mote."
 - a) "Beam" denotes a piece of timber like a floor joist or ceiling rafter. "Mote" means a dry stalk or twig, a straw or chaff; a speck or splinter. Jesus' picture is that of the harsh critic having a log protruding from his eye (greater faults) while trying to remove sawdust (lesser faults) from his neighbor's eye.
 - b) The Pharisees condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath while they failed to render proper assistance to their parents (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 3:1-6). Feigning concern for the poor, Judas accused Mary of wastefulness when he himself had been stealing money (John 12:5-6).
 - c) The harsh judge is called a hypocrite.

- (1) Seeing a fault in the life a person he envies or dislikes, he will condemn it; whereas, he will let the same offense go unheeded or uncondemned in one whom he loves (Matthew 7:5).
- (2) The mote hunter pretends to abhor evil while, in reality, this is not the case; otherwise, why the tolerance in one and the condemnation in another? Along with being guilty of greater sin, he pretends to be what he is not.

II. ***What Causes Judging?***

- A. Some have an inferiority complex. They cannot feel good about themselves until they tear down someone else (Luke 18:9-14).
- B. Some try to justify their own sinful life and console their conscience.
 1. The "mote hunter," upon finding a similar fault or comparatively insignificant wrong in another person, will magnify it out of proportion and then think that they are not so bad after all (2 Corinthians 10:12).
 2. But we cannot whitewash ourselves while blackening others. Judging others is dangerous, not so much because you make mistakes about others, but because you may be revealing the truth about yourself. Ironically, we often judge in others what we are guilty of ourselves (Romans 2:1).
- C. Envy seeks to get rid of its victim. Saul sought to kill David, and Haman built gallows for Mordecai. Envy seeks to do this by wounding with unfounded, harsh judgments.

III. ***Why Is It Wrong To Judge Others?***

- A. We never fully know the circumstances of others.
 1. Sometimes we make snap judgments when we run across situations that aggravate us.
 2. Not having all the facts can cause us to make some judgments that we later regret.
- B. It is difficult to be impartial in our judgments.
 1. The Greeks used to hold court in the blackness of night, not even being able to see the man being tried, so the judge and jury could pass sentence on the factual evidence.
 2. The Persians tell of a king who had an unjust judge killed and flayed, with the skin being used to cover the seat of a chair. The king then had the judges set in the chair as a grim reminder to hand down impartial and unprejudicial verdicts.
- C. Not everything we condemn in others is actually sin.
 1. Hannah was accused of being drunken, but she was not (1 Samuel 1:12-18).

- 2. Jesus was accused of blasphemy, but He was innocent (Mark 2:7).
- D. The right to judge is not ours but the Lord's.
 - 1. Judging is an infringement on the prerogative of God (Romans 14:4, 10-13; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5; James 4:11-12).
 - 2. Since the law of Christ prohibits judging, when we critically judge others we call in question the law itself. We become judges of the law rather than doers.
- E. We cannot see the inward man.
 - 1. Experts say that you can only see the top 10% of an iceberg.
 - 2. What a difference it would make we could see motives, intents, and inner battles.

IV. ***What Is The Remedy For Judging?***

- A. Love.
 - 1. Love is always slow to expose and eager to believe the best.
 - 2. Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).
- B. Practice the golden rule.
 - 1. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus tells us that we should act toward others in the way we should have them act toward us.
 - 2. If you think it is unfair to be judged critically, then you should not judge others in the same way.
- C. Examine yourself.
 - 1. If we examine ourselves, we will see that there is a lot of good in the worst of us, and a lot of bad in the best of us.
 - 2. If we are critical of ourselves, we will be charitable toward others. When looking for faults, use a mirror instead of a telescope!
 - 3. Thomas Kempis said, "Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be."
- D. Look for the good in others.
 - 1. Although Paul was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, God saw in him the possibility of being a chosen vessel and minister (1 Timothy 1:13).
 - 2. It is easy to concentrate on the one small black dot on the white sheet of paper, and fail to appreciate all the white surface that remains unmarred.
- E. Consider the fact that the victim is your brother.
 - 1. Judging is contrary to the very spirit of brotherhood.
 - 2. After all, being members of the same family, and having the same Father, should make a difference in our demeanor.
- F. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
 - 1. Ezekiel sat where the people sat for seven days (Ezekiel 3:15-17).
 - 2. Understanding is one of the biggest preventatives to harsh judging.

- G. Remember that our judgments are often wrong.
1. Eliab misjudged the motives of David (1 Samuel 17:28-29).
 2. Lysias misjudged Paul (Acts 21:37-38).
 3. Nathanael was wrong in his judgment about Nazareth (John 1:46).
- H. Consider what judging will do to you.
1. It will blind you to your own faults. This makes repentance impossible.
 2. It will destroy your friends as you pick them to pieces.
 3. It will put out your eyes to the beauty and virtue in others.
 4. It will rob you of happiness, for you will constantly diet on the negative.

Conclusion. All too many Christians today attend church services to find fault, to gossip, and to criticize. Ronald Reagan said, "I don't pay much attention to critics. The world is divided into two kinds of people: those who can and those who criticize."