

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY TWENTY-ONE

Attention, All Speck Inspectors!

Matthew 7:1–5

Why is it wrong to judge others? First, we never know all the facts about other people. Second, we are prejudiced people by nature, so we can't be completely objective. Third, we put ourselves in a place only God fits. He alone qualifies as judge.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ON the heels of Jesus' closing statement in Matthew 6, "Don't worry" (Matthew 6:34), comes an equally emphatic command to begin chapter 7: "Do not judge others" (7:1). These sins are like cousins because they have a similar harmful impact on our relationships—vertically toward God and horizontally toward others. In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains:

In the Christian life, if worry is our favorite pet sin, then judging is our favorite pastime. Worry represents a lack of faith and trust in God; judging flows from a lack of love and acceptance of others.¹

Certainly, we have all stumbled into these relational pitfalls. We've fretted when we should have trusted God and condemned others when we should have showed compassion. But, thankfully, Jesus offers a hand up from the pit so we can follow Him on His better path.

In this study, we'll focus on the second of these two sins so we can heed Jesus' warning about the dangers of judging and learn how to turn words of criticism into acts of mercy.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Matthew 7:1–5



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Just as fear feeds our worrying, pride fuels our criticizing. Before you open God's Word, pray that the Lord will free you from pride and give you the deep humility needed to love others.

Father, I open my heart to receive Your truth through the teaching of Your Son. His words are both challenging and liberating. Help me apply what He says and follow Him in obedience. In His strong name I pray, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Matthew 7:1–5* in several Bible translations. *The Message*, a modern paraphrase that uses contemporary language to express the spirit of the passage, helps us feel the intensity in Jesus' command not to judge others: "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults" (Matthew 7:1 MSG).

Have you witnessed people verbally tearing others to shreds? Have you ever been the victim of hurtful faultfinding or been cruelly condemned? What is it about the destructive nature of judging that inspired Jesus to speak so passionately on this subject?

Now, let's dig deeper into these brief but powerful remarks from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.



Observation: Jesus' Command, Explanation, and Reproof

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we begin by observing the literary features of the passage—metaphors, figures of speech, sequence of thought, cause-and-effect.²

In this passage, Jesus began with a command, "Do not judge others" (Matthew 7:1). Next, He explained His reasons for this command (7:1–4). He then concluded with a strong reproof, "Hypocrite!" (7:5). Let's follow this simple outline as we make our observations.



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First, Jesus' *command* is straightforward; however, the term *judge* can have a range of meanings, which we'll consider in the interpretation phase. For now, simply notice the *agent* and the *object*. To whom did Jesus command not to act as an agent of judgment? Look ahead to [Matthew 7:3](#) to find the person who is the object of judgment.

Second, let's observe Jesus' *explanation*. Jesus could have given us many reasons not to elevate ourselves as judge. For example, we don't know all the facts, we don't know another's motives, and we can't be entirely impartial. Without doubt, God is the only truly qualified judge. And yet, Jesus explained His command with another reason. Can you state it in your own words ([Matthew 7:1–2](#))?

The same standard by which we point a finger at others, others will use to point back at us. As we're taught as children, "What goes around, comes around." To think we could get away with a double standard is ridiculous—as ridiculous as the person in Jesus' exaggerated illustration. What is the illustration in [7:3–4](#), and what two mistakes does the person with the "log" in his or her eye make?



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Third, what shocking *reproof* to His own followers did Jesus give in Matthew 7:5?

We can't be judge because we, too, have failed. We have a soiled record. We have "logs" in our lives, and we must deal with our own stuff before we restore another person.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Difference between Judging and Discerning

By teaching against judging, Jesus wasn't excluding *discernment*. Judging truth from error is a mark of maturity. In the next study, we'll see an example of proper judgment when Jesus tells us to discern the type of person before we give that person something precious.

"Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you." (Matthew 7:6)

What then did Jesus mean, "Do not judge others" (7:1)? On page 126 of his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck explains in more detail the kind of judging Jesus was and was not prohibiting. For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](http://netbible.org) at netbible.org. Write down the difference between judging and discerning and the intent of Jesus' command.



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Some judging is not only acceptable, it's commendable. We teach our children not to get into the car of a stranger. That's discernment. What is Jesus saying? Do not conduct your life with a judgmental or negative attitude. Stop being suspicious of everyone. Don't find petty faults and then point them out. The judging Jesus forbids is a condemning attitude toward others. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Difference between Judging and Restoring

Likewise, by teaching us not to judge our friends, Jesus wasn't stopping us from *being a friend*. When someone has a “speck” that needs attention, we can help. How did the apostle Paul say we can restore a person struggling with sin, according to [Galatians 6:1](#)?

What a beautiful description of an agent of healing, *not judgment!* In contrast is the harsh, judgmental Christian who rubs salt of condemnation into people's wounds. What did Paul say to this critical believer in [Romans 14:4, 10](#)?

As we seek to strike a balance between judging and restoring, we recall Jesus' final words in Matthew 7:5, where He offers three steps we can apply.



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Application: Replacing Criticism with Compassion

The stepping-stone words, *first*, *then*, and *deal with*, in the following verse mark the path of compassion to apply Jesus' teaching:

“First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.” (Matthew 7:5, emphasis added)

Is there someone in your life with a “speck” in his or her eye—a sin or fault? If you feel God tugging at your heart to help this person, what does Jesus say to do first? What sins or faults do you need to examine, and how can you acknowledge these issues in humility before approaching the person?

Next, Jesus said that you will be able to “see well enough” (7:5)—in other words, empathetically understand the other person's struggle to be gentle as you guide this person. What can you do to truly “see” the person you're helping?



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Finally, remember the goal is restoration and recovery, not condemnation and probation. What approach do you need to take to “deal with the speck” (Matthew 7:5)?

Jesus chose the eye for His illustration on purpose. The eye is such a delicate organ in the human body. As you reach out to remove the “speck” in your friend’s life, be sure your hands—and heart—are clean. Take great care and be sensitive. Finally, always treat him or her as you would want to be treated—which is the Golden Rule and the subject of our next study!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, teach me to be the kind of person who is easy to live with, who accepts others and leaves all judgment to You. Forgive me for dressing myself in Your judicial robes and passing a critical verdict on another person. I don't know all the facts or the person's motives. Help me to think the best of people who are different than me and to reach out with compassion, not criticism, to those who need Your help. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 125.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”

