

When Yardsticks Become Boomerangs

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Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:1-6

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn now to Matthew chapter 7. We're continuing through the Sermon on the Mount, and today we come to a very interesting passage of Scripture. We're going to read Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 through 6, in a moment. The title of my message is a little of different today: "When Yardsticks Become Boomerangs." You'll find out why I called it that in just a moment.

Let's look in verse 1. Our Lord says, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."* (Matthew 7:1-6)

Now, so far in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord has been talking about our relationship to God, and our relationship to things. And now, in chapter 7, He begins to talk about our relationship to other people, and He begins speaking about I suppose one of the most treacherous things in human nature. It is our human nature to put other people

before us, that we might judge them. We want to measure, adjudicate them guilty, and then in our hearts and minds condemn them. And we all have our measuring rods. We all have our tape measures. We all have our yardsticks by which we measure and then judge other people. But our Lord says that that yardstick will become a boomerang. That is, the very yardstick that you use to judge somebody else with is what you're going to be judged with. It's going to come back to you in a deadly way. I heard about a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. That judgment of yours is the very judgment that you're going to be judged with later on.

Now, let's look at this verse, because there are a lot of questions in these verses that need some good answers.

I. We Are to Apply Wise Discrimination

Number one: We are to apply wise discrimination. Now so often people are confused, because if you try to discriminate, evaluate, adjudicate any matter, there's always someone who will say, "*Judge not*"—"Judge not." Now the word that is translated "judge" here, *krino*, has a number of meanings—as a matter of fact, about a dozen shades of meaning. It might mean "to separate." It might mean "to choose." It might mean "to select." It might mean "to determine." It might mean "to evaluate." Or it could mean "to condemn." Now you're going to know which one—like many words, you have to see the word in its context.

Now our Lord is not telling us here that we are not to make evaluation and discrimination, because in these verses, verses 1 through 6, He tells us three things to look out for: logs, dogs, and hogs. He says, "You can't look for sawdust in your brother's eye, when you've got a log in your own eye." He says, "Don't give that which is holy to dogs." He says, "Don't cast pearls before swine." Now, evidently, you've got to know what a log, a hog, and a dog is. You've got to make some evaluation. You have to make some judgment. Our Lord is not saying that we cannot make discriminatory evaluations. As a matter of fact, that's the one thing that you must teach your children to do: how to measure the good and the bad; how to see what is right and choose what is right; how to see what is wrong and refuse what is wrong.

All judgment is not forbidden. Jot these verses down. John chapter 7 and verse 24: "*Judge righteous judgment*"—"Judge righteous judgment"—John 7:24. Why, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 15, the Bible says, "*He that is spiritual judgeth all things*"—"he that is spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:15) A spiritual man knows how to evaluate, to discriminate, to choose what is right and to refuse what is wrong: "*judge righteous judgment.*" "He that is spiritual judges all things."

Now, there are some people who just think we are wrong and un-American if we don't just put our arms around everybody else, and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." But the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits*"—"try the spirits," "judge the spirits"—"*whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" (1 John 4:1) And our Lord Jesus Christ in this same chapter—you're in Matthew chapter 7, just fast-forward on down to verse 15. We'll get to it later on as we preach about it—but our Lord says, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" (Matthew 7:15) I can just hear someone saying, "Oh now, Jesus, don't judge. Jesus, you just said, '*Judge not.*' Why, you don't have any right to call them false prophets. Lord, you don't have any right to call them ravening wolves." And what Jesus said—He said, "You'd better watch out: they'll get you. '*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits.*'" (Matthew 7:15–16) Anybody with his eyes wide open needs to make discernment.

And so our Lord is not saying here that it is wrong to make discerning discrimination. As a matter of fact, it is wise to do that. That's what you do every time when you go to the polls and vote: you judge. You say, "It should be this man, this woman"—"this man, this woman. I have to make a judgment." It's a shame Americans don't do it better.

We must examine our words. We must examine our actions. We must examine situations by the Word of God. So He's not talking about wise discrimination, nor is He talking about Bible measurements. There are certain things that are just wrong, plain wrong. And why? The Bible says so. Adultery is wrong. Fornication is wrong. Sodomy is wrong. Lying is wrong. Stealing is wrong. Pride is wrong. Hatred is wrong. Envy is wrong. That's not my judgment. That's God's Word. It's just that simple. And sometimes, if you stand up and you say, "Oh, these people who do these things are wrong," there's always some self-righteous person who will say, "Don't judge." I don't have to. God already has. God already has. That is the Word of God.

Now we live in a day that hates moral absolutes. They just hate them. And they hate theological absolutes. And when you confront society with absolutes, there's always someone who will say you are judging.

To call wrong what God calls wrong is not judging, nor is it unloving. I want to show you an interesting verse. Turn to Leviticus chapter 19 for a moment. Just turn to this one, because it's worth noting. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus—all right, that makes it the third book, doesn't it? All right, this one I just discovered, and it was an amazing verse when I saw it—verse 17. Listen. Look at it: "*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...*"—we'd all say *amen* to that, just say *amen*—"*Thou shalt not hate thine brother in thine heart: thou*

shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." (Leviticus 19:17) Now, do you know what that verse means? That verse means, "If you do not point out sin where sin needs to be pointed out, you hate your brother."

There are those who will tell you it is unloving—it is unloving—to call sin sin. It is unloving not to call sin sin. We have a generation of young people who are being sucked down into the swirling sewers of sin, and nobody has the moral courage and—if you'll forgive the word—the guts to say, "That is wrong, because God says so." And if we love them, we will. If we love them, we will. If we love them, we will. It is not judging to do that, in the sense that Jesus is talking about. It is certainly not unloving.

So, when He says, "*Judge not,*" He's not talking about evaluation and discrimination between right and wrong. Nor is He talking about Bible standards, holding up Bible standards. Our Lord said, "Not a jot, not a tittle, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18) He's not talking about that. Nor is He talking about law courts where we have civil cases and criminal cases. Thank God for the law courts. They are ordained of God. Read Leviticus chapter 19. (Leviticus 19) Read Judges chapter 13. (Judges 13) You know, there are those people who would like for us to not have policemen. They don't want us to have judges and magistrates and all of that. Why, if there were no civil law, hell would have a holiday. The law courts are ordained of Almighty God. Read Romans chapter 13. (Romans 13)

II. We Are to Avoid Wicked Condemnation

So, what is our Lord saying here? Well, He is saying that we are to apply wise discrimination. But now, secondly—listen—we are to avoid wicked condemnation. Now, let's see what He does mean when He says this in Matthew chapter 7: "*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*"—your yardstick will become a boomerang.

Now what our Lord is talking about here is unmerciful and self-righteous condemnation of another human being. Now you're in Matthew 7—Matthew, Mark, Luke—just turn to Luke for a moment. Just turn to Luke—quickly do it—Luke chapter 6 and verse 36, and we're going to find what our Lord means. Luke 6, verse 36—here's the parallel passage. Our Lord preached this sermon several times, and here He expands on it a little bit. Luke chapter 6 and verse 36—He says, "*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not...*"—now you see the judging that He's talking about is unmerciful judgment—"*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*" (Luke 6:36-37) Here our Lord makes it very clear what He's talking about. He's talking about a censorious, unloving, unmerciful, condemning attitude toward another human being.

God is the only One who has the right and the prerogative to pass that kind of judgment. Jesus said, in John chapter 5 and verse 22, *“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committeth all judgment unto the Son.”* (John 5:22) The same Jesus Christ who wants to be your Savior will one day be your judge. But all judgment belongs to Him—that is, to condemn. And if you try to condemn another human being, what you do is to assert God’s authority. God has not appointed you to be the prosecuting attorney. As a matter of fact, the devil himself is the accuser, and when you do it, you are acting just like the devil.

The Apostle Paul, with that great mind of his, asked this question in Romans chapter 8 and verse 33: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”* (Romans 8:33–34) Jesus Christ is the only One big enough, wise enough, strong enough, good enough, loving enough, all-knowing enough to redeem or to condemn. You don’t have the power to redeem anybody, and you don’t have the power to condemn anybody. And when you use unmerciful, unloving, unforgiving judgment toward another human being, again I say you are usurping the authority, the right, of Almighty God.

Now, why do we do this? I want to mention three or four reasons why human beings judge other people.

A. We Judge Others Because of Our Iniquity

First of all, because of our iniquity. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is thine own eye?”* (Matthew 7:3) Here’s a man with a saw log in his eye looking for sawdust in somebody else’s eye. Don’t tell me the Lord Jesus didn’t have a sense of humor. Here’s a man trying to practice spiritual ophthalmology, and he’s got a plank in his eye.

Now, who is the Lord talking to? He’s talking to hypocrites. Look in verse 5: *“Thou hypocrite.”* (Matthew 7:5) Learn this, friend. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical.

You say, “Well, why do you say hypercritical?” Well, I want to ask you a question. You guys are taking notes—I hope you’re not writing a letter. All right now, look up here at me. They could be, you know. I sit by that guy right there. All right, have I got a speck in my eye? Huh? They don’t know. You know why they don’t know? Have I got a speck in my eye? Is there sawdust in my eye? They don’t know. Does anybody here know whether I’ve got a speck in my eye? You don’t know. You know why? You’ve got to get real close and look real hard to see it. I mean, in order for you to find out, you’ve got to come up and inspect me. Isn’t that right? You have got to get up close. If you see a speck in my eye, I’ll guarantee you

made an extra effort to find it, didn't you? I mean, you have to look for it. You have to get up and inspect me very carefully.

Now, wouldn't you be ludicrous if you had a big two-by-four in your eye, coming up here looking for a speck in my eye? That's what our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about. You see, listen. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical.

People find what they are looking for. Every church has its own speck hunters. We've got some in our church. They specialize in specks, motes: examiners of other people. You always see what you're looking for.

You remember the little poem,

*Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
I've been down to London to visit the Queen.
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you do there?
I frightened a little mouse, under her chair.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Isn't that something? There's the Big Ben, the Tower of London, the Palace, all of that, and this cat goes to London: what does he see? A mouse under the Queen's chair. Not the Queen—the mouse under the Queen's chair. Why did the cat see a mouse under the Queen's chair? Because that's what the cat was looking for.

Do you know you'll find this morning what you're looking for? If you came this morning to find a mote, if you'll get up close enough, you'll find it. If you came this morning to find some criticism, something to criticize, you can find it. If you come this morning to find some fault in the sermon, I'll guarantee you can find it. I'll tell you something else. If you came to find God, you'll find Him too. You will. You will get what you are looking for.

If you wanted somebody to survey the landscape for you, suppose you got a buzzard and you sent the buzzard out, and you said, "Mr. Buzzard, go survey the landscape." And he would fly over the meadows, and the streams, and the brooks, and the flowers, and the fleecy clouds, and come back, and you would say, "Mr. Buzzard, what did you see?" He'd say, "I saw a dead cow with maggots in it"—because that's what he'd be looking for.

You see, it's the hypocrite. It's the hypocrite who sees in others, really, what is in himself. All we see when we judge others—or what we see generally when we judge others—is a reflection of what is in our own hearts. That's what our Lord is saying. Here's a man with a saw log looking for sawdust.

I heard about an old grandmother who would go into the house, and she would dust, and then dust again, and then dust again—kept on dusting the furniture, and polishing the furniture, because she said, "It's dusty." Finally, they took off her glasses, and they were covered with dust. Why, what she was seeing was just simply herself.

Let me tell you what God says. Turn to Romans chapter 2 for a moment, and look, if you will, in Romans chapter 2. Boy, I'm telling you, if God doesn't excoriate the judgmental person here! Look in verses 1 through 3: *"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself;"*—your yardstick becomes a boomerang—*"for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"* (Romans 2:1-3)

In chapter 1 of Romans, the Apostle Paul is talking about the pagan, the ungodly, the sins of the flesh. (Romans 1) In chapter 2, he's talking about the religious man and the sins of the spirit. (Romans 2) There are many in this building today: you're dressed so nicely; you look so nice; you have a Bible; you're glad to judge the thief, the prostitute, the murderer, the pimp, the drug pusher, the pervert; you wouldn't do any of those things, but your heart is headquarters for hatred; you reek with pride; you're stuffed full of self-righteousness, and you judge other people. Jesus Christ had far more to say to the Pharisees, who were so full of self-righteous pride, about their sin than He said to the harlot, the thief, and the down-and-out. You know one of the great dangers in America today? We're egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking we're too good to be damned—and we judge other people. We're full of lust and ambition and pride. Oh, we don't commit adultery; we don't steal. But God sees our heart. God sees the wickedness that flows out of our heart. The sin of the flesh can be so easily hidden in the heart. But God sees it.

You remember the story there in the Gospel of Luke? Two men went to the temple to pray: one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood, and he prayed, "Father, I thank you that I'm not like other men. I tithe. I fast. I attend the worship service. And, God, most of all, I thank you that I'm not like this publican." Publicans—they were the tax collectors and the offscouring of society. And Jesus said, "The old publican, he was praying, he wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. He beats himself upon the chest, and he says, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'" Actually, the Greek says, "the sinner." He saw himself as the worst sinner of all. "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men—like this man." And Jesus said, "That man went home justified. The other man just went home." (Luke 18:9-14)

Everybody's going to leave this church this morning. Some are going leave dignified, and some are going to leave justified. We're so full of our self-righteousness. Read Romans 2. Our Lord swings His guns upon the self-righteous.

B. We Judge Others Because of Our Insecurity

I'll tell you another reason that we judge: not only because of our iniquity, but because of our insecurity. Envy digs the mud that jealousy throws at success. We're so insecure. We want to judge other people by our standards, because if we can get them to look like us, act like us, and do like us, then we feel better. Somehow it makes us feel better.

In Greek mythology, there was a chieftain. He was a robber, and his name was Procrustes. And he would go out and capture people, and drag them into his cave. And in his cave he had an iron bed. Have you ever heard of the iron bed of Procrustes? And he put people on the bed—that's what he measured them with. If they didn't fit his bed, if they were not long enough, he would stretch them until they would fit his bed. If they were too long, he would lop off their legs. And he made everybody fit the bed that he thought was just. Now we do that. We have the bed that suits us, and we say, "Everybody else has got to be just like me." You'd better thank God that they're not.

C. We Judge Others Because of Our Ignorance

Many times, because of our iniquity, we judge. Many times, because of our insecurity, we judge. Many times, because of our ignorance, we judge. We judge people. We don't know enough. That's the reason that I'm so glad that God is the judge. The Apostle Paul, there in 1 Corinthians, mentions some people who were judging them. You know that people always like to judge preachers. They think that's they've been called of God to do that, you know? And many of you are just sitting out there kind of evaluating me right now. And they were judging the Apostle Paul. And do you know what the Apostle Paul said to them? He said, "It's a small thing with me that you judge me." He said, "I don't even judge me." He said, "We'll wait till the Lord comes and makes known the counsels of men's hearts. Then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4:3-5) What did he mean by that? He said, "I don't even know enough to judge myself. So how on earth are you going to judge me, if I can't even judge me? I'm on the inside, looking out. You're on the outside, looking in." And Paul said, "I can't even judge me. How are you going to do it?" You see, our ignorance causes us to judge other people.

I was reading about a lady—she went into the airport, waiting on her plane. She thought she would have some cookies and a cup of tea. So she went into the little shop like they have there, and bought her a bag of cookies, went and sat down, put the bag between herself and the man who was sitting next to her, had a cup of tea; and she noticed that the man sitting next to her just reached over and opened her bag of cookies and took one out. She thought, "Now, that is some nerve." She said, "I'm going to eat my cookies anyway." So she reached in and took a cookie, and began to eat it. And he finished the one he ate, and

reached in and got another one. She didn't know what to do. She was embarrassed. But she would take one. And he would take one. Finally, there was one cookie left. He reached down and broke it in half and ate it. She was so steamed. She thought, "Of all of the gall! The nerve of that guy!" Anyway, she gathered her stuff, the plane was called, she sat down on the plane, still steamed, opened her purse to get a tissue, and there was her bag of cookies.

None of us is wise enough to judge another person. We don't have all of the facts, even when we're certain that we do. Thank God there's One good enough, One wise enough, One loving enough to judge me and to judge you. And the Bible says, "Shall not the Judge of all heaven and earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25) Put this verse down in your margin—Romans 14, verse 4: *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."* (Romans 14:4)

D. We Judge Others Because of Our Insensitivity

I tell you another reason we judge: not only because of our iniquity and not only because of our insecurity, and not only because of our ignorance, but because of our insensitivity. Do you know the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, in John the third chapter, *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;"*—to judge the world—*"but that the world through him might be saved."* (John 3:17) Many times, we're quick to judge and condemn those that God wants to save. Maybe we do know all of the facts. Maybe they do deserve to burn in hell. But I don't want them to go there. Do you?

I cringe every time I hear one individual tell another individual, "You go to hell." Who are you to tell somebody to go to hell? If you know Jesus Christ, your heart ought to be yearning, burning, hoping that they go to heaven. And when you tell an individual to go to hell, it makes me believe, dear friend, you probably are headed there—because "with what judgment you mete, it will be measured to you again." And that yardstick is going to become a boomerang that's going to come right back to you. *"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."*

Our Lord is full of compassion. We're so insensitive, that we judge. When Jesus Christ saw Zacchaeus, that little man down there in Jericho who climbed a tree that he might see the Lord, that tax-gatherer—he was a thief—but Jesus, when He saw him, Jesus didn't say, "Hey, listen. You black-hearted son of the devil, you skinflint, get down out of that tree!" Jesus said, "Hey, Zach, come on down, buddy. I want to go have dinner with you today." Jesus loved him. Jesus did not condemn him.

Conclusion

Well, what is our text telling us? We must apply wise discrimination. We must avoid wicked condemnation. We must apply wise discrimination: we've got to know the difference

between logs, and hogs, and dogs, and wolves in sheep's clothing. We've got to know that God has given us some standards. God teaches us that we're to choose what is right, and refuse what is wrong. But, oh, our hearts are to be filled with mercy and compassion and forgiveness with those who need it!

And if not, what is going to happen? Friend, if you want to a part of the FBI, the Fundamentalist Bureau of Investigation, I kind of feel sorry for you. Turn to the book of James. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 13—James 2, verse 13: *"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy..."*—*"he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy;"*—but, oh, look at the next part of that—*"and mercy"*—*"mercy"*—*"rejoiceth against judgment."* (James 2:13) Don't you love that? When I stand before God, I tell you what I want. I want mercy. I need mercy. And I don't want to judge you, because if I do, I won't have any mercy. I want to see every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, as God sees them. And God loves them all: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16)

God is a God of love. God does not rejoice in judgment. Yes, judgment will come. The hottest part of hell is reserved for the unmerciful. We look at other people, and we say they're unworthy.

Michelangelo, the sculptor in Florence, was walking past the quarry, and he saw an ugly piece of marble—misshapen, ugly. They had discarded it. They had thrown it out. It was useless. Michelangelo looked at it a while, and he said, "I want that piece of marble." And they said, "Sir, it's no good." He said, "I want it." He said, "There's an angel in that piece of marble. I can see him, and I'm going to set him free." And in that piece of marble, and out of that piece of marble, Michelangelo made the sculpture of a beautiful, beautiful angel.

Now we see people sometimes unworthy, unfit, fit only to be discarded. But God doesn't love us for what we are; He loves us for what we can be. God doesn't change us, so He can love us. He loves us, so He can change us. And God sees a saint in you today. You just put yourself in His hands.