

**Judging vs. Helping***Matthew 7:1-5*

**Introduction:** In his sermon, Steve referred to a 2007 Barna Research Group study conducted among 16- to 29-year olds. The study revealed that Christianity has experienced a significant decline in its reputation among young Americans. Of those outside the church in this age-group, 87% of them said that the term *judgmental* describes present-day Christianity and of the Christians they surveyed in the same age range half also believed that the term *judgmental* describes present-day Christianity. These perceptions may be wrong, but regardless, we would do well to pay attention to them. And we would do well to pay attention to what Jesus talks about in Matthew 7:1-5 regarding judging. As we continue to learn from the Sermon on the Mount how to live as disciples of Jesus, may we learn how to be truly helpful, rather than judgmental.

**Opening Discussion:** The view of 16- to 29-year olds cited in the Barna study is a valid critique of American Christianity. Agree or Disagree?

**Read Matthew 7:1-5**

1. Jesus commands us not to judge (v. 1). What does it mean to judge?
2. What does Jesus say is the consequence of judging others?
3. What is the point that Jesus is making with the illustration of the speck and the log (3-4)?
4. What is the point of verse 5?
5. Practically, what does it look like to take the log out of our own eyes (v. 5)?
6. **Read 1 Corinthians 4:5 and James 4:12.** What do these verses add to our understanding of this issue of judging?

Steve said:

How do you know if you're being judgmental or condemning? Think of a time when you've spotted a flaw or weakness or sin in another person (a friend, a family member, a pastor, a coworker). If you are judgmental, you aren't concerned about helping that person overcome some weakness or sin; your heart isn't broken because that person isn't experiencing God and His fullness. If you are judgmental, you're merely angry and offended. You aren't at all interested in the other person's well-being or spiritual growth. And it shows in the way you respond. You will speak harshly to the person about his/her behavior without any thought about how your words might compound the problem. What you communicate – whether intentionally or unintentionally – is that that person is worthless.

7. Where do you tend to struggle with being judgmental? What kind of faults do you most easily notice in others?

Steve said:

Jesus calls the judgmental person a hypocrite because s/he appears to be one thing (namely spiritually superior to others) while in fact s/he is something entirely different. And so Jesus says, "first take the log out of your own eye." Examine your own life in the presence of God. Let your own sin break your heart and humble you before God. In light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, confess that sin to God and receive a fresh cleansing. "And then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." **Then** your own eye will be clear enough to take the speck out of your brother's eye. If your brother has something in his eye, the compassionate thing to do is to become the type of person who can remove it.

8. What type of person can be truly helpful in helping someone else remove a speck from his or her eye?
9. How can we become more merciful and nonjudgmental people?
10. How can we effectively help people with their sins? What does this look like (see Gal . 6:1 for additional insights)?
11. What is the main implication of Jesus' teaching for your life?