

Jesus On (11):
Judging (7:1-6)

Introduction

David Kinnaman from the Barna Research Group teamed up with a friend of mine, Gabe Lyons, and did a major study on people who weren't self-professing Christ followers and who weren't involved in a church.

Essentially they were trying to find out: "What is your biggest reason or barrier to Christianity? If you've ever considered it and rejected it, or just walked away from it, what was the reason?"

You might think the number one reason was intellectual barriers - people with questions that couldn't be answered.

The number one reason was judgmentalism. That churches are too judgmental.

They look at Christians and the church and feel - right or wrong - that they are filled with people who are prideful, acting morally superior and finding fault with everybody else.

People who lack compassion, lack understanding and lack grace toward other people.

In the minds of those from the outside looking in, Christians just seemed more interested in condemning people than helping people.

So let's say a single-parent mom comes to a church looking for community and support, wanting to find God. She's in her teen years and had the baby out of wedlock. She's just trying to find her way through it all.

She's not proud she got pregnant. It wasn't her plan "A" for doing life. But it happened and she's alone and she's scared. So she turns to God's people for help.

What do most people outside of a church think she'll hear when she goes?

Most people think she will be told: "You shouldn't be a single mother. You shouldn't have had sex. You shouldn't have gotten pregnant."

They think that's the response she'll get.

You pick any story or any situation, and it's always the same expectation:

"You shouldn't be an addict.

"You shouldn't be living together.

"You shouldn't have questions.

"You shouldn't be divorced.

"Bad, terrible, screwed-up you.

"You have no business doing that, and as a result no business being here."

And when those same people are asked why they feel that way - why they think that's the way churches are going to be or certain Christians are going to be - the answer is always the same:

First-hand experience. First-hand knowledge. They'll say, "It happened to me."

And they've got stories, like these people:

Video:

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/27317/Judged>

(length around 4:30)

Rejected.

Shunned.

Condemned.

Blamed.

Crushed.

Cast-out.

Unloved.

Because of the way they looked, because of the things they did, because of the questions they asked, because of the mistakes they made.

Judged.

And by the very people they hoped would help them, and accept them, and help them get back on their feet after falling down.

People who called themselves followers of Christ. And it's made them turn away, turn off and tune out.

I. Jesus On Judgmentalism

Do you know what the dark, twisted irony in this is?

It's that what many Christians are known for and have a reputation for - this judgmentalism - is the very thing Jesus went on the warpath against.

He condemned it to the very core of His being over and over again.

Now why am I bringing all this up?

We're in a series through the Sermon on the Mount, the most famous message Jesus ever gave. It's called the Sermon on the Mount because he gave it on the side of a hill.

We've been calling it "Jesus On" because in this single message, He touches on so many things.

So far we've looked at what Jesus had to say on everything from happiness to making an impact with your life; from adultery to divorce; from how to pray to how to overcome worry.

Today we're going to find out what Jesus had to say on judgmentalism. Because He comes to that topic in His sermon and He camps out on it. He gets so upset when this rears its head.

Here were His words:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! 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. Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:1-6, NLT)

Now that's pretty clear, isn't it?

Jesus said, "Do not judge."

That's God's job, not ours.

Now it's very important to understand what Jesus means by judging others, because sometimes this can be misinterpreted.

It doesn't mean we can never make a value judgment.

It doesn't mean you can believe that some things are wrong and some things are right.

This isn't about never taking a stand.

It isn't about being a moral wimp.

Some people think refusing to judge someone means mindless affirmation of whatever anyone says or does. I think most of us know that makes no sense.

If someone came up to me and said, "I believe that the best way for you to optimize the performance of your laptop is to remove your anti-virus protection, take down your firewall, download as much free software as you can from sketchy sites you've never heard of, open up every attachment that comes your way,

"... and you know that relative you never knew you had in Nigeria who died and left you millions in their will? Definitely send all of your bank account information right away."

No! That would be crazy! We're smarter than that.

And that's not being judgmental.

If you want to avoid being judgmental, it's not about refusing to believe something, or hold to something, or stand for something.

It's not about refusing to say you feel something is right or wrong, good or bad.

It's not giving up your thinking capacity, or discernment, or wisdom.

It's not about checking your brains at the door, much less your moral compass, character or value system.

It's not even about never putting your arm around someone you care about and cautioning them out of love and concern for their life.

Sometimes, when people say, "Don't judge me," it's code for "Don't you dare say that anything I do is wrong or bad in any way."

You can't do that if you love someone and care for them.

If someone can't see where they are walking, and they are about to step off a cliff, it's not judgmental to say, "Stop!"

It's not judgmental to tell someone reaching for contact lens solution that they are actually getting a bottle of carbolic acid and will go blind if they put it in their eyes.

Here's what real judgmentalism is about: it's the practice of personal condemnation.

As John Stott put it, you have to be able to assess people and situations, but that doesn't mean you have to judge them harshly.¹

The judgmental person Jesus is talking about is someone who is a fault-finder, who is negative and destructive towards other people, who puts themselves up as superior and picks the lint off of someone else's soul.

And Jesus gives us three reasons why you should never, ever be judgmental in that way. Let's go back through His words.

Reason #1:

"... [Jesus said] *you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*" (Matthew 7:2, NLT)

That's a pretty good reason not to do it.

And think of how many ways we've put this truth into common sense wisdom sayings for doing life.

"What goes around comes around."

"Be nice to people on the way up the ladder; you'll meet them again on the way down."

Or, even borrowing from other words of Jesus, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

So if you are judgmental toward others, you can expect them to be judgmental toward you.

But nobody wants people to be judgmental toward them, so stop being judgmental towards others! It's a simple principle.

The more gracious you are toward other people, the more gracious they will be toward you.

But this actually runs even deeper.

The heart of a judgmental attitude is to that you are in position to judge. Now, only God can truly judge others, which means if you start judging people you are assuming God's role. You are claiming the competence and authority to judge other people.

God happens to take His position quite seriously, so if you presume upon it, you will be judged by Him accordingly.

In other words, God will judge you on the basis of whether or not you measure up to the standard required for judging - which is being God yourself.

Anybody want to go through that test? So that's the first reason not to judge.

Then Jesus gives **reason #2**:

"... [Jesus said] *why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?*" (Matthew 7:3, NLT)

How crazy is it to judge someone else for what you perceive to be the sin and failure and screw-ups of their life when you've got so many of your own!

And if you don't see that you have a log in your eye, compared to the speck in theirs, it's because the log in your eye is so big it's blinding you!

By the way, when Jesus said this, people were laughing. They were cracking up! Because these were jokes.

Little insight into middle-eastern humor during the time of Jesus. They told jokes through exaggeration.

New Testament scholar Elton Trueblood wrote an entire book on this called *The Humor of Christ* where he cites 30 or more passages that were just laugh-out loud moments for the people listening to them.

Like when Jesus said, "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven," they were saying, "That's a good one, Jesus!"

He said, "Wait, I'm just getting started with all the camel jokes! Those religious leaders who are all hyper-legalistic - they strain at gnats and swallow camels!"

And they'd be saying, "Stop, you're killing me!"

So here, when He says get rid of the 2x4 in your eye before you worry about the little splinter in someone else's, they were cracking up!

But there was truth in the humor. We need the humility to remember our own faults and failures before we worry about someone else's.

I can't remember where I first heard this, but I heard someone once say that whenever you point your finger at someone in judgement, there's three fingers pointing back at you.

But Jesus gave a **third reason** not to judge.

Let me read His words again:

"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:6, NLT)

You hear that, and you might be going, "Whaaa?"

Well, it's some more humor and everyone there got it.

Give a dog something sacred? A pearl to a pig?

But He's saying something very sobering.

If you're going to be a person who judges others, then you yourself are not deserving of the message of grace.

That's like giving a diamond to a pig.

There are people who have so given themselves over to particular attitudes, particular spirits, particular dispositions, that they don't deserve the message of grace.

And those who are judgmental? Jesus would say they fall into that camp.

So how do you get this right? What does this look like in practice?

What does not being judgmental, but not checking your brains and wisdom and discernment at the door look like?

If we are not to judge, but we're also not to just go mindlessly through life as we interact with others - affirming anything and everything as equally valid and noble and true - what is it that we need to be fleshing out?

Two words: grace and truth.

II. Woman at the Well

Let me take you to a scene from Jesus' life that shows exactly how this works.

It's found in the biography of Jesus written by a man named John:

"Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

"'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?'

"Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

"'I have no husband,' she replied.

"Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'" (John 4:4-18, NIV)

To me, that is one of the most fascinating - and enlightening - conversations Jesus ever had with anyone.

Particularly, when you know all of the dynamics surrounding it.

A. The Grace

Beginning with the fact that it shouldn't have happened. Take another look at the opening verse:

"Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria." (John 4:4, NIV)

No He didn't. No Jew HAD to go through Samaria. Not if they could help it.

Jews hated Samaritans and, to be fair, Samaritans weren't that high on Jews.

Samaritans were, in the mind of a Jew, a mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites who were left behind when the Assyrians invaded, and the Gentiles that the Assyrians moved in for occupation.

The Assyrians were known for this. When they conquered a people, they would move in others for intermarriage to create a new ethnicity essentially.

Now if you were a good Jew, you would not give into this and seek to get married with anyone other than another Jew. Samaritans didn't do that.

Samaritans were descendants of Jews who hadn't stayed true to their heritage, but married gentiles and produced what were called "half-bloods," because they had been invaded and defeated.

So they weren't seen as real Jews, pure Jews, clean Jews.

They were seen as a second-hand, watered-down, inferior race that reminded every good card-carrying Jew of the most shameful and embarrassing part of their national history.

But not only were they looked down on for their heritage, there were theological differences about where and how to worship, and they didn't have the same customs or traditions as the Jews.

The hostility between these two people was so great that a Jew would be considered ceremonially unclean if he even *touched* a cup that a Samaritan had drunk from.

So whenever a Jewish person travelled, they would always go around Samaria, but never, ever through it.

Now look again at what the Bible tells us in that opening line:

"Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria." (John 4:4, NIV)

This had nothing to do with geography. Jesus looked at Samaria, and Samaritans, and had to go. Purposed to go. He was on a mission to go.

So what happened?

The Bible tells us that He came to a town, to a well, and sat down.

We're told it was the sixth hour, which means around noon time, because back then they would start counting hours around dawn or 6 a.m.

So it was midday. And it was hot. And Jesus was thirsty.

Again, here's what happened next:

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)" (John 4:7-9, NIV)

Now we already know about relations between Jews and Samaritans, but here's what else was going on.

In the ancient near eastern culture of that day, there were specific rules and customs governing how people would interact with each other. At least, if you were a Jew.

And Jesus just broke about every single one. Let's recap:

First, He went into Samaria.

Then He talked to a Samaritan.

And not just any Samaritan, but a Samaritan woman.

And He did it when she was alone, and He was alone.

And then He asked her for a drink - and from *her* bucket, essentially saying, "Take your cup to get water from your bucket and let Me drink from it."

What Jesus should have done when He saw her, according to the custom of the day, was to withdraw by at least 20 feet until she was done at the well and left. And watching her the whole time to see what she touched to make sure that He didn't touch it.

He didn't move, and she still came. Which also tells us about her. I mean, the fact that she was there at all tells us something. No woman should have been at the well at noon.

Again, a little background for you.

The women gathered water in the mornings, when it was cool, and they did it as a group. Anything else would have been considered immodest and improper. There she was at midday, alone, which no respectable woman would do.

We don't know whether it was to purposefully avoid the other women, or because the other women had rejected her because of her reputation for immorality, or because she was wanting to meet men.

But she had no business being there.

And Jews couldn't touch a Samaritan, much less drink after them. That would make them ceremonially unclean.

Defiled.

And it could happen just by sitting where they had sat or riding on a saddle that they had ridden.

And Jesus is willing to drink after her?

Do you see how much this was violating customs?

Good Jews didn't associate with bad Gentiles.

Here's what Jesus should have done: Judged, condemned, and moved on. But He didn't. He reached out and accepted.

For maybe the first time in her life, she heard someone say: "No matter what you've done, no matter how you've lived, you matter to me. I'm not going to try to buy you. I'm not going to use you. I'm not going to condemn you. You matter to Me, and you matter to God."

A woman who had slept in all the wrong beds, a serial adulterer, someone who had led such a seedy life that the other women in town seemingly wanted nothing to do with her.

A woman who was brazen enough to go up to a traveling man at the well at noon, maybe even hoping to add a seventh relationship to her string of six.

Or maybe just prostitute herself; but nothing good.

A woman who had no status, no position, no virtue, seemingly no morals. She *mattered* to Jesus. And He offered her living water, which confused her.

Jesus wanted her to see that she could have the deepest needs of her life intersected in ways that only God can.

He wanted her to see that she could have true life change.

B. The Truth

But that wasn't all there was to the conversation, was it. With the acceptance and grace came something else.

Truth.

Look again:

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

"'I have no husband,' she replied.

"Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'" (John 4:15-18, NIV)

Can you imagine how that must have felt for her to have this stranger know everything?

In the midst of radical acceptance, and the offer of grace and relationship, Jesus brings up the state of her life.

He tells her to go get her husband, knowing full well that she didn't have one and that the state of her relational and sexual life was a mess.

And He wasn't trying to be cruel. He wasn't trying to be morally invasive. He wasn't trying to be condemning.

He was trying to save her. He was trying to make her see her life the way it really was. That it was morally, spiritually, relationally bankrupt and empty.

She needed to confront the reality of her life. He wanted to show her she was so much better than this. But first, she needed to see the way things really were in her life.

III. Grace and Truth

Grace and truth together.

Jesus accepted her as someone who mattered to Him, but He never affirmed the lifestyle she was living.

Jesus didn't condemn her for what she did, but He didn't condone it either.

Grace and truth going together.

And when they go together, you don't have the spiritual malpractice that comes with judgmentalism. Instead, you have the spiritual healing we all long for.

This woman sure did.

If you know the ending to this story, after their conversation she went running to the town and she said, "You've got to come hear this guy! He told me everything that was going on in my sex life and He'll tell you all about yours - it was just so cool! You gotta come hear Him!"

There was something about Jesus' manner, where grace and truth was never offensive.

Where He could tell people exactly what was going on in their life -

... here's what's going on in your marriage;

... here's what's going on in your parenting;

... here's what's going on in with your family;

... here's where you're dropping the ball financially;

... here's the areas you are not honoring God with your life.

He would talk to people in a way that was so winsome and compelling, and saturated with grace and truth, that at the end of the conversation all they wanted to do was invite Him to their parties to introduce Him to every friend that they had.

So that He could give them grace and truth, too.

You know, truth without grace is just judgmentalism. And grace without truth is licentiousness. We desperately need both.

How have we screwed that up so bad? Why have we screwed this up so bad?

Because all of us here, what we want more than anything, is a relationship with God that would bring grace and truth to bear on us in a way that would bring real healing, restore us and have us become all that God would want us to be.

Conclusion

Well I'll tell you, I can't speak for every church, but I can speak for this one.

This is the path we're on friends. The grace and truth path.

I've often thought it's like the world tells us to play this great big game of "hide and go seek."

And because we've encountered so much judgmentalism, we play along.

Everybody hide, because if you come out and are found, you will be rejected. And you're going to be condemned.

Jesus wanted the church to be the place where a huge, collective, "Olly Olly in Free Free" - do you remember that as kids?

It's where you could come out of hiding - to base, to home.

Jesus wanted that to be what the church is like because it's time for all of us to be found.

It's time to come home. That kind of game is over. Hide and go seek needs to end.

Around here, we just call it trying to be authentic and real.

We've got an understanding that we're all coming to Christ broken in our own unique ways.

There's not a single person here who isn't broken. And we need grace, and we also need truth.

And when it's handled right, it's a beautiful thing.

Because it's a Jesus thing.

Let's stand for a closing prayer.

ⁱ John R.W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount for Today* (IVP), p. 176.