

SIMPLE FAITH

If You're Serious About Simple Faith, Stop This!

Matthew 7:1–5



LET'S BEGIN HERE

What's the best thing to wear while listening to the Sermon on the Mount? A pair of steel-toed boots! Could any body of truth be more convicting than Matthew 5, 6, and 7?

Without concern for how folks would react or what opinions they would form, our Lord declared His penetrating message for all to hear. His words cut like a sharp spade through rocky soil, leaving no stone unturned . . . and no listener untouched. Throughout history, the sermon has stood as a timeless, relevant rebuke. Today is no exception.

The first five verses of chapter 7, though succinct and simple, pose a reproof to us every time we are tempted to judge others. May these words reach us, touch us, and strike at our hearts to bring to an end our long-standing and unattractive transgression of judging.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Judging: An Unfair and Unattractive “Game”

Many Christians have grown so adept at judging others that they have well-defined rules by which they operate. These rules draw those judgmental Christians and the people around them into a destructive “game” that leads to heartache for everyone involved and weakens the body of Christ in the process.

2. Jesus' Timeless and Relevant Counsel

Despite the obvious problems with judging, Christians continue to practice it at alarming rates. This makes judgment one of the most difficult topics to address with God's people; its roots stretch deep, infiltrating the very foundations of our faith. Jesus, however, cuts at those roots with impressive force, issuing a command, offering an explanation, and concluding with a reproof.



Quotable

*Examine yourself
before examining
anyone else. Be
much more thorough
with your own
self-examination.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Jesus' simple, three-word command encapsulates the thrust of His teaching in this section of His sermon: "Do not judge" (Matthew 7:1). But what did the Lord mean by *judge*? He wasn't condemning making decisions in a courtroom. We can all appreciate the value of a disinterested third party who can help settle our disputes according to principles of fairness. Jesus also didn't suggest that we shouldn't discern between truth and error. Just a few verses down, Jesus warned His followers to beware of false prophets (7:15). In order to know which people to watch out for, we must first make judgments about the truth or error in their statements and actions. These kinds of judgments are necessary and good.



A CLOSER LOOK

Never Judge?

Jesus commanded us not to judge others and instead focus on our own shortcomings. But did He mean for us *never* to make judgements? Are we to simply look at the failings of our brothers and sisters and say, "Live and let live!"? Actually, no; Jesus wants us to help our fellow believers live well, but that help needs to happen in the right way.

The Lord laid out that process by offering a reproof in Matthew 7:5, telling His followers to first remove the logs from their own eyes and only then worry about the specks in the brothers' and sisters' eyes. In Galatians, the apostle Paul revealed that he understood the implications of this teaching in the Christian community: correction requires a proper spirit. And that spirit bears no resemblance to the critical, negative attitude associated with judgment. Instead, Paul exhorted believers to "restore" the sinner "in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

In other words, we correct another only when we've humbled our hearts by examining ourselves and removing the logs of sin from our own eyes. The Lord wants us to come alongside our brothers and sisters as healers rather than judges, helping them grow and mature in their faith, just as we seek the same for ourselves.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Playing the addictive Game of Judgment can overtake our thoughts, shading them to such a great degree that we can no longer see what we're doing. How can we conquer this terrible habit? How can we control our minds and our tongues? How can we look at others in the way God wants us to?

- First, *examine yourself before ever examining anyone else*. This should occupy the bulk of the time you spend making judgments.
- Second, *confess your faults before confronting a brother or sister*. Allowing the other person to see your own weakness and struggle with the issue at hand or another sinful habit sweetens the medicine you're preparing to administer.
- Third, *understand his or her struggle, and be gentle in confronting*. If you have followed the first two steps, the third will come much more easily.
- Fourth, *remember the goal is restoration, not probation*. Every time we offer correction, the goal should always be to bring the individual back into peaceful fellowship with God and His people.

Make a spiritual examination of yourself. What logs reside in your own eye right now?



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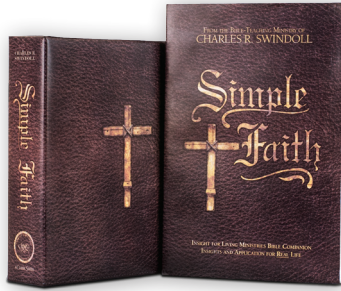
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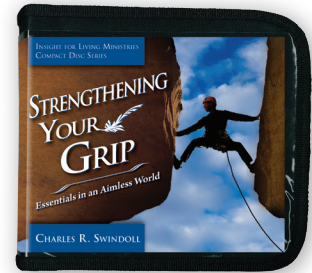
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