

A Deep and Personal Exploration

The Principle of Judgment (Matthew 7:1-6)

Jesus, the greatest teacher, often taught in a way that followed a clear pattern: He declared a principle, expanded on it, and then illustrated it with a real-life example. As we enter Matthew 7, Jesus introduces a new principle: *"Judge not, that you be not judged."*

At first glance, this statement appears to discourage any form of discernment or evaluation, but Jesus follows up with an explanation: *"For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you."* (v.2). The issue at hand isn't discernment, but condemnation. Jesus is warning us against a self-righteous, hypocritical attitude that is quick to criticize others while ignoring our own faults.

Jesus illustrates this with a powerful and almost humorous metaphor: *"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye?"* (v.3). The image is absurd—a man with a massive log in his own eye trying to remove a tiny speck from his brother's. This reveals the heart of the matter: we tend to magnify the faults of others while minimizing our own. Instead, Jesus calls for self-examination before we attempt to help others.

However, Jesus also warns us about casting pearls before swine (v.6), meaning that we should exercise discernment in how we share spiritual truths. Some people will mock or trample over sacred things, and wisdom is required to recognize when further engagement would be futile.

Personal Application:

- Before criticizing someone else, ask yourself, *Am I guilty of the same or worse?*
- Pray for the humility to correct your own faults before addressing others.
- Ask God for wisdom in sharing the gospel and recognize when a heart is unreceptive.

Persistent Prayer and the Goodness of God (Matthew 7:7-11)

Following His teaching on judgment, Jesus shifts to another vital principle: persistence in prayer. He instructs us to:

- Ask, and it will be given to you
- Seek, and you will find
- Knock, and it will be opened to you

This is not a one-time request but a continual pursuit. The original Greek implies ongoing action: *Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking.*

Jesus reassures us of God's goodness by comparing Him to an earthly father: *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"* (v.11). If human fathers, with their flaws, can show kindness, how much more will our perfect heavenly Father?

Personal Application:

- Be persistent in prayer, knowing that God hears and answers according to His will.
- Trust in God's goodness, even when His answers don't match your expectations.
- Approach God as a child approaches a loving father—with confidence and trust.

The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

This is one of the most well-known teachings of Jesus, often referred to as the Golden Rule. While similar moral principles exist in other philosophies, Jesus' version is unique because it is proactive. Other teachings say, *Do not do to others what you wouldn't want done to you*, but Jesus commands us to *actively* do good to others. It requires initiative, effort, and love.

Personal Application:

- Treat others with the kindness and respect you desire.
- Go beyond avoiding harm—actively seek ways to bless others.
- Use this as a daily guide in relationships, business, and ministry.

The Narrow and Wide Gates (Matthew 7:13-14)

Jesus then describes two paths:

- The broad way—easy, popular, and leading to destruction.
- The narrow way—difficult, unpopular, but leading to life.

Following Christ requires commitment, sacrifice, and discipline. Many prefer the broad way because it offers immediate gratification, but it leads to ruin. The narrow way is harder, but it is the way of life and eternal joy.

Personal Application:

- Examine your life: Are you walking the narrow way or the broad way?
- Be willing to stand alone if necessary, knowing that truth is not determined by majority opinion.
- Count the cost—true discipleship isn't always easy, but it's worth it.

False Prophets and True Disciples (Matthew 7:15-23)

Jesus warns against false prophets who appear harmless but are inwardly wolves. How do we recognize them? By their fruit. A good tree produces good fruit; a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Jesus also issues one of the most chilling warnings in Scripture: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* (v.21).

Many will claim to have done great things in Jesus' name, but He will say to them, *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."* (v.23). The key issue isn't outward activity but a genuine relationship with Christ.

Personal Application:

- Test all teaching against Scripture; don't be deceived by appearances.
- Look for the fruit of godliness, love, and truth in teachers and ministries.
- Ensure your faith is not just profession but a true relationship with Jesus.

The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-29)

Jesus concludes with an illustration of two builders:

- The wise man builds on the rock (Jesus' teachings). His house stands when storms come.
- The foolish man builds on sand (hears but does not obey). His house collapses in the storm.

Storms in life are inevitable. The difference is in the foundation. Are you grounded in Christ, or is your life built on unstable ground?

Personal Application:

- Obey Jesus' words, don't just listen to them.
- Build your life on the solid foundation of Scripture.
- Prepare for life's storms by deepening your walk with Christ daily.

Final Thoughts

The people were astonished at Jesus' teaching because He spoke with authority (v.29). His words still have power today. The challenge for us is not just to admire His words but to apply them.

Will we follow the narrow way? Will we bear good fruit? Will we build our lives on the Rock? These are the questions Jesus leaves us with. May we respond in faith and obedience.