

Sermon on the Mount, Part 8: Examine Yourself

For parts 1 through 7 of this series, see “Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 2: Salt and Light”; “Sermon on the Mount Part 3: Dealing with Anger”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 4: Love Your Enemies”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 5: Quit Being a Showoff!”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 6: Store Your Treasures in Heaven”; and “Sermon on the Mount, Part 7: Stop Worrying” on the Bible Studies page at www.ChooseJesusToday.com.

In parts six and seven of this series, Jesus taught against being materialistic and obsessed with money and full of worry and anxiety. Jesus now turned his attention to something that is of great importance to Christians: self-examination. Jesus explained:

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV).

This passage is widely misunderstood as a blanket prohibition on judging other people. That interpretation misses the mark. What Jesus wants us to understand is that we must judge ourselves first and clean up our own lives before we can effectively help others to do the same. The most important part of judgment is self-examination.

There are several important reasons why we must examine ourselves carefully and faithfully. First, verse one tells us that we will be judged. By examining and judging ourselves and making changes and improvements to our lives, we are preparing for the day when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ where Christians will have their works judged by the Lord. This is not judgment

for our sins because our sins were forgiven when we chose Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rather, this judgment takes place after the Rapture and we will have to give an account of our Christian works and service for the Lord. Romans 14:10-12, I Corinthians 3:13-15, II Corinthians 5:10.

Second, we must examine ourselves constantly because other people are observing our lives to see if we “walk the talk.” In other words, people watch us to see if our lives measure up to the standard of holiness and righteousness that the Bible teaches. If we show people the love of Jesus Christ by living for the Lord with all of our heart, then we will help other people through our example of holiness and we will receive blessings. We will reap what we sow. Luke 6:37–38.

Lastly, we must judge ourselves and clean up our own sinful filthy lives before we can help others. In his “Wiersbe Bible Commentary”, Dr. Wiersbe explains, “The purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to serve others. Christians are obligated to help each other grow in grace. When we do not judge ourselves, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hurt those to whom we could minister.” The Bible shows us time and time again how the Pharisees judged others to make themselves look good and never saw their own faults. Jesus chided them for their self-righteousness and unbelief, but they were blind and deluded and rejected Jesus’ message. Luke 18:9-14. Jesus asked, “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they both not fall into a ditch?” Luke 6:39. If we refuse to examine ourselves and confess our faults, then we become blind to our sins and are useless in leading and helping others.

Verse five tells us that once we clean up our own lives, then we can help someone else in their spiritual walk. The eye is an extremely delicate part of the body, so it is fitting that Jesus used it as an example here. An eye surgeon would not be rough and heavy-handed in performing delicate eye surgery. Likewise, Jesus wants Christians to help one another in our spiritual walk gently and lovingly and with patience and kindness.

It is important to understand that Jesus is not telling Christians never to judge another person. While we must be careful not to judge someone’s motive because only Jesus knows the heart, some level of discernment and discrimination is essential in the Christian life. The Apostle Paul prayed that Christians would abound in love and discernment and be able to distinguish things

that are of God from things that are not of God. Philippians 1:9-10. Dr. Wiersbe further explains, “Christian love is not blind. The person who believes all that he hears and accepts everyone who claims to be spiritual will experience confusion and great spiritual loss.”

Self-examination is critical. Jesus loves us so much that he, in his grace, has given us an opportunity to judge ourselves and get our lives together so that our works will prove acceptable to God. Choose to take a good look in the mirror and see how you are measuring up against the Word. Choose to examine yourself. And most of all, choose Jesus today!

God bless!