

Sermon on the Mount part 15

Judging (Matthew 7:1-6)

Checklist:

- Actors and props for “Log and Speck skit” + copy of script for each actor. (If possible, the actors can practice ahead of time. Or, they can just run over it once before Sunday school or just read and act it out on the spot.)

Opening:

Ask:

- Who here likes to be judged? Why?
- Do people judge a lot at school or youth group? (don't give names!)

Matthew 7:1-5 (reading):

Read Matthew 7:1-5 (while everyone follows along in their Bibles)

Now we're going to do a little skit based on what we just read...

Log & Speck Skit:

Have the actors act out the skit, then...

Matthew 7:1-5 (digging in):

Okay, let's dig in more with what Jesus was teaching here, and we'll talk about our little skit a little bit as we do...

Have someone read Matthew 7:1-5 again (while everyone follows along)

Ask: In verses 1-2, why does Jesus say we shouldn't judge?

Make sure the youth understand:

- First of all, other people will be more likely to judge us if we judge others.
- And, it also may be saying that how we judge others is the same way God will judge us. The tense of the word “judged” could mean a “once for all” type of judgment like the judgment God will give at the final judgment. (And this could relate with what Paul says in Romans 2:1, “in passing judgment upon [someone] you condemn yourself, for you the judge are doing the very same thing.”)

If we have been forgiven by Jesus for our sins as Christians, we should not go around condemning other people for their sins and pretending we are better than they are.

Re-read verses 3-5.

Ask:

- What does a speck and a plank symbolize?
(A speck symbolizes sin and a log would then symbolize a whole lot of sin)
- How did our little skit relate with what Jesus says here?
(The guys with the logs in their eyes were being judgmental about the other guy even though they were sinful too - they were being hypocrites.)
- So, does Jesus mean we shouldn't judge whether what someone is doing is sinful or not? Why?

Make sure they understand:

- When Jesus says don't judge, He doesn't mean we shouldn't discern if what someone is doing is right or wrong.
- As Christians we should be discerning about what is good and what is sinful. For instance, since we are told to do good and not do evil, we must need to discern between them.
- We are also told to be discerning of false prophets in verses 15-20 of this very same chapter
- The word used here for "judge" in Greek is often used to mean "judge negatively" or "condemn"
- So, when Jesus says do not judge, He must mean something more like: "do not be judgmental" or "do not judge in a hateful or hypocritical way" or maybe better "don't condemn" or "don't sit as judge over another person."

Ask:

- What is the difference between judging if what someone is doing is sinful and being judgmental?
(We can determine if something is good or sinful based on what the Bible says – that is judging or discerning. But, we should not think we are better than someone else or judge in a hateful way – that is being judgmental.)
- What's the difference between judging if something is sinful and standing as a person's judge?
(We should not act as if we can pass judgment on someone or condemn them or be their judge. It is God's job to be people's judge and pass judgment on a person, not ours. However, God does have church leaders sometimes do church discipline, which involves taking people out of leadership or even having them leave the church if they refuse to stop sinning.)

Okay, let's read verse 5 again...

Read verse 5 (while youth follow along)

Ask: What does Jesus mean when He says to get the plank out of your own eye first, then you can see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye?

Make sure the youth understand:

- Taking the log out of your own eye would be dealing with the sin in your life. We should have God work in our lives to deal with our own sin. This should be a priority. (And we shouldn't pretend that we don't have sin in our own lives.)
- Then Jesus says we can see clearly to remove the speck in our brother's eye. So, we can help fellow Christians remove sin from their lives. (But dealing with our sin helps us see clearly to do this.)
- Jesus doesn't just say show them the speck, but that we can see clearly to remove it (we can lovingly help them deal with and remove the sin in their life – not just point it out).

Scripture Connection (James 5:19-20):

A verse that also shows the importance of helping a fellow Christian who is in sin is James 5:19-20...

Have someone read James 5:19-20 (while everyone follows along).

James says helping turn someone from sin is a blessing that saves them from death and covers a multitude of sin! (We can help save someone from pain and even death caused by sin and keep them from doing much more sin that will harm them.)

But, our attitude should not be judgmental! We should speak the truth with a humble attitude and with love!

Matthew 7:6 (Don't Give Pearls to Pigs)

Now let's read our last verse for today...

Read Matthew 7:6 (while youth follow along)

Ask: Would anyone here give a pearl necklace to a pig? Why?

Jesus says we should be careful not to share what is sacred with dogs or give “pearls” to pigs...

We should make that kind of judgment of being discerning! We should be careful not to give what is sacred or holy to someone who will mistreat it.

This verse has often been interpreted to include that we should be discerning about sharing Jesus with others, and if someone continues to reject the sacred truth of the good news when we share, then we shouldn't give it to them anymore. This could be a good interpretation.

But, in the context of talking about judgment, it might also mean: be wise about who you speak to about their sin (or be wise about who you share the pearl of truth from Scripture about their sin). In other words, be careful to share with someone who will take it well and won't “rip your head off.” (Or perhaps, if you have shared and they don't receive it, then don't give it anymore.)

Summary:

- When Jesus said “Don't judge” he didn't mean we should never make judgments on whether something's right or wrong. We should be discerning.
- But, we shouldn't be judgmental (hateful or comparing, etc.)
- And, while there are sometimes church leaders need to follow God's judgment and do church discipline, we shouldn't act like we are another person's judge. God is the judge.
- We should be honest with our own sin and take it to God and have Him work in our lives and deal with it!
- And, if you do see sin in someone's life – especially a fellow Christian – you should talk to them if you can help them in a loving way.

Personal Application:

Give kids a minutes to think about areas of sin in their own life (the planks in their eyes) that they need to have God deal with and pray about that silently with Him. Encourage them that if any of them is not a Christian, when God judges them, they will be condemned and go to hell because of their sin (even if they think they have done better than others). Encourage them to pray for God's forgiveness and trust Jesus' death on the cross to pay for their sin. (Tell them to talk to you or their parents if they've made that decision for the first time today or if they want to talk more about having Jesus save them.)

Then tell them to think about people they know who may be doing something sinful

- *If they have had a wrong attitude, tell them to ask God to forgive them for being judgmental.*
- *But also encourage them to talk to the person about that sin, if they can do it in a loving and respectful way, so they can help bring that person back to where God wants them to be.*

Closing Prayer

Reference:

Leon Morris, Comment on Matthew 7:1-6, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Eerdmans, 1999 printing).

John RW Stott, Comment. On Matt. 7:1-2, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1978).

Warren Wiersbe, Comment on Matthew 7:1-6, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament, Volume 1* (Victor, 2001 printing).

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Plank and Speck Skit

Actors:

Plank guy 1 (PG1)

Plank guy 2 (PG2)

Speck guy (SG)

Props:

2 “planks” (foam pool noodles). Log guys should always hold these over their eyes.

“Swimsuit magazine” (paper folded in half with “Swimsuit magazine” written on it).

The Skit:

Begin with Plank guy 1 and 2 on stage together. Speck guy standing on stage a little bit away from them (holding the “swimsuit magazine” behind his back out of sight from the audience).

PG1: *(Pointing at speck guy)* Oh man, look at that speck in that guy’s eye!

PG2: What a loser. People like that make me sick, just walking around with specks in their eyes. How do they live with themselves?

PG1: I’m glad I’m not like that!

PG2: I’d never want to be like that loser! Do you know what I heard about Speck guy?

PG1: What?

PG2: I heard he’s been gossiping about us.

PG1: No way... What a loser. Why do people have to gossip. Can’t he find anything better to do?

PG2: Yah, I’m glad we’re not like that. I can’t believe people like him who go around gossiping about people!

PG1: *(Points and pretends to see a girl)* Wow! Look at that girl over there! She’s got one hot body!

PG2: Big time!

PG1: Oooo. She’s fine!

PG2: Yah, she’s hot!

SG: *(Pulls out the “Swimsuit magazine” and walks over to plank guys)* Hey guys! What’s up?

PG1: Oh, hey Speck guy. What you got there?

SG: It’s a swimsuit magazine... You wanna to see?

PG2: *(Acting shocked)* What?! Don’t you know it’s a sin to lust?

SG begins to look hurt.

PG1: Yah! Don't you ever listen when our youth pastor's talking?

PG2: I'm glad we don't look at stuff like that.

PG1: Yah. You ought to throw that trash away. What are you, some sort of super-sinner?

SG walks off with his head down looking hurt.

PG2: Man, that guy is such a sinner!

PG1: Hey, look at that girl! Wow!

PG2: Yikes! (*Whistles*)

Actors bow heads and pause.

The End