



Growth Group Questions
November 5, 2023
“Hypocrisy and the Church”

Context

As we move into the final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns his attention to relationships and how believers are to relate to one another. He offers three things to be wary of. Judging others, living a life of hypocrisy, and tossing pearls to dogs and pigs. A follower of Jesus is to live a “disciplined” life within the community of believers.

Jesus is not telling the disciples that the court of law is somehow invalid, or that they are to turn a “blind eye” to their own faults, or the issues within their community. When Jesus tells them not to judge, he is talking about judging other people harshly. We are to avoid being fault finders who use destructive or damaging language in our critique of others. God will be the one who ultimately judges other humans.

Jesus says disciples need to focus on their own faults and issues, rather than focusing on the faults of others. Jesus knows people have a tendency to minimize their own shortcomings while at the same time exaggerating the faults of others. His followers are not to look down on others like the religious leaders did.

Jesus recognizes that other people do have their own faults (speck of dust in the eye), but the issue is that he doesn’t want his followers missing the plank in their own eye. We need to be as critical of ourselves as we are of others, and also, to be as generous to others as we are to ourselves. This teaching prepares us for the “golden rule” which Jesus will teach about in Matthew 7:12.

The section ends with Jesus talking about dogs and pigs and pearls. Jesus seems to imply that there will be people who simply will not know what to do with the gospel, just like a pig would not know what to do with a pearl. There are people who will not understand the “pearl of great value” that Jesus teaches about in Matthew 13:45-46. Yet, that should not keep Jesus’ followers - people who know the value of the great pearl - from sharing the good news with others, even if they are not able to fully understand it.



Scripture:

Matthew 7:1-6

¹“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For 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? ⁴How 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? ⁵You 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. ⁶“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 turn and tear you to pieces.

James 4:11-12

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister^[a] or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Mark 7:5-7

⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” ⁶ He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

⁷ They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’^[a]

Philippians 3:10-16

¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Matthew 13:45-46

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.



Questions:

1. What did Jesus mean when he said “Judge not, or you too will be judged? (Matthew 7:1)
2. What do you see as the difference between judgment and discernment?
3. Pastor Paul said that our task is to learn to be discerning but not damning. What does that mean to you? How do we do this?
4. What is hypocrisy and why is it so damaging for us as Christ followers?
5. Why do you think it is so much easier for us to see the faults in others than our own faults? What can we do to better understand our own faults?
6. Pastor Paul told us that our level of spiritual maturity has a lot to do with our ability or inability to recognize and admit our own faults while being more empathetic and less judgmental with others. What is spiritual maturity and what can we do to become more spiritually mature?
7. Pastor Paul quoted Anne Lamott as saying, “God cannot clean the house of you, when you are still in it.” What does that mean to you? What happens to us when we allow God to “clean our house”?
8. What does it mean to speak in both “grace and truth”? What happens when we speak only in grace or only in truth?
9. Matthew 7:6 says, “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 turn and tear you to pieces.” What does that mean to you and why do you think Jesus included this statement?
10. As you think back over the entire passage of Matthew 7:1-6 and the points Pastor Paul made in his sermon, what do you think we can learn about what God expects from us?

