

ACTNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Cell Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Cell Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

Concerning Judging

Matthew 7:1-5

Rev Ming Feong Ching

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- Concerning judgement, people tend to have the knack of seeing the faults of others while overlooking their own. Some people make judging the sins of others as a way of life with their own standards, while minimising their own wrongdoings. "Do not judge, or you will be judged" is often used during contentious conversations when someone is confronted about his/her behaviour. These famous words of our Lord Jesus are recited by many, but profoundly misunderstood by both Christians and non-Christians.
- Jesus is not advocating a hands-off approach to moral accountability or refusing to allow anyone to make moral judgements in any sense, neither is this verse meant to be used by those looking to justify sinful behaviour. There are occasions in the Bible where Christians are called to make and exercise judgements such as judging with whom we share the precious word of God (Matthew 7:6), judging to test the spirits to see whether what is preached lines up with the Word of God (1 John 4:1), and discerning of false prophets and teachers by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-16).
- In Matthew 7:1, Jesus begins with a warning about judging at our own risk, because we need to discern when making judgements. Jesus is cautioning us not to judge when we have fault picking attitudes, when we intend to criticise, condemn with a mean critical spirit. We are cautioned against judging because we don't know all the facts, we all failed God and sin (1 John 1:8-10), we do not know the hearts' content, we are trying to assume the authority of God when we judge (Romans 14:4; James 4:11-12), and we will all go through God's judgement (Romans 14:12).
- Before we judge, we should first examine ourselves before we say anything. When our own heart and life has been fixed and our vision cleared, then we can help our brethren out of love, compassion and restoration (Galatians 6:1-2).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The word "judge" means to pronounce judgement; expression of strong disapproval or harsh criticism. It refers to act the part of a judge or to pass judgement on the words and deeds of another. What are some judgements that you make on a daily basis? What are the similarities and differences between God's judgements and ours?
[Children's Activity: Have different boxes some plain and "boring" looking, while others "fun" and enticing. Have different snack items available. The "fun" or "enticing" container should have something bland and boring like raisins, cotton balls, carrots, celery. In the other container, put cookies, candy. Explain that sometimes, things are not as they appear. We often make judgements about things without knowing all the details. This can end up hurting others and ourselves.]

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2. There are many instances in the Bible where God is described as a judge. What qualifies God to be a judge? What impact would we have on ourselves and others when we judge others with a fault-finding and condemning, critical spirit?

[Verses to help us go deeper: Genesis 18:25; Psalm 19:7-9; Revelation 16:4-6; James 2:8-13]

3. In Jesus' ministry, He reserves some of His harshest criticism for hypocrites. What sets hypocrites apart, and how do we avoid being like them? How should we exercise our God-given ability to distinguish right from wrong?

[Verses to help us go deeper: Galatians 6:1-3; 2 Peter 3:9; Ephesians 4:14-16]

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that He is the righteous judge of all the earth, because He is good and does good in all things and shows mercy on us through Jesus Christ.
- Ask for forgiveness for the times when we judge others harshly with our own human standards and sin-clouded eyes.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment and for God's love to fill us that we will be able to speak the truth in love to build others up as part of the body of Christ, that our walk and words be reflective of Christ.

MEMORY VERSE

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2, ESV)

PRACTICAL HANDLE

As you go about your week, reflect on situations where you are tempted to judge or criticise others. Firstly, choose to be slow in speaking criticism. Then discipline your thoughts to judge through God's eyes and not your own. Share your experience with your cell group member.