

Out of Context Do Not Judge- Session #1 Small Group Notes

Introduction:

Did you ever get a splinter as a child? After receiving the splinter, what did you do first? How painful was the process? Did you ultimately remove it on your own, or did someone help you?

What might have happened if you had chosen to leave the splinter where it was? How much more painful would it have been to deal with later on?

If you carried that same splinter today, would you still be able to use that body part to its full capacity?

We can all relate to the feeling of having an eyelash or other irritant in our eye, or a splinter in our hand or foot. This object may be painful to remove, but if not done immediately, it can fester and manifest more deeply—leading to an infection. In the same way, following Jesus requires a self-awareness that identifies and acknowledges the sin in our own lives and works to remove it immediately before it becomes rooted there, spreading to and disabling the rest of us in the process. Only then will we have the humility and grace to spiritually encourage and challenge others—not in judgment, but in love, grace and truth.

Discuss:

1. Read Matthew 7:1-2

Explain: In the command not to judge, Jesus calls us to question the motivation behind our often, misplaced focus. To judge is to reach a conclusion about something or a situation. When applied to individuals, it can be that we decide either for or against someone just based upon what is seen. Therefore, He wanted His followers to beware of the natural tendency to exhibit a harsh, judgmental spirit or to engage in destructive criticism against others. These are what Jesus condemned. Whenever we fall into the trap of petty fault-finding and finger-pointing, we shouldn't be

surprised when we are judged by those same people. The measure you use in evaluating others' actions is exactly the same measure you should expect will be measured to you. Thus, as Jesus' disciples, we always must be doubly wary before we criticize others as it could reflect a hypocritical or self-righteous spirit.

How can you tell that someone is judging with the wrong motivation? What can this lead to regarding how we relate or communicate about the gospel?

Where are platforms that we often see people make swift judgements? How can this be more damaging than helpful? What other sins and errors could judging someone incorrectly lead to?

Everyone at some point is a hypocrite. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What are things that you try to do to battle hypocrisy in our lives?

2. Read Matthew 7:3-5

Explain: Calling attention to someone else's sin, be it ever so small, often avoids the task of removing the log from one's own eye. Verses 3-5 indicates that we do have a responsibility to help our fellow believers overcome temptation and sin in their lives, but our motive for doing so is important. If the motive is to make ourselves feel more righteous, then we are in no position to speak truth, and are guilty of replacing God's righteousness with our own. Instead, our motivation should be rooted in humility and a desire to help our brothers and sisters in Christ stay in right relationship with God.

How difficult would it be to spot an actual speck of sawdust in another's eye? Would it be possible to do so without intentionally looking for it to begin with?

What stories about Jesus interacting with people do you remember and value most? Did He seem to be judging them?

On the other hand, did He ever compromise truth by sweeping sin under the rug as if it didn't matter? How would doing so actually have been uncompassionate?

3. Read Matthew 7:6

Explain: At first glance, this verse is difficult to interpret because the terms what is sacred, pearls, dogs, and pigs are not explained. But the verse does guard against our tendency to oversimplify the do not judge (7:1) statement, instructing us to be discerning about the character of other people. Ultimately, judgment over all of our lives rests with God whether someone is a believer or non-believer (Read Isaiah 33:22). For the believer, we will all stand before God and be judged by how we were fruitful in our lives and honored Christ (Read 2 Corinthians 5:10). However, for the unbeliever, they are not held to the same standard as Christians as far as obeying and living a life reflecting Christ. Therefore, when we offer the priceless teachings of the kingdom to those who do not value them the same way, we may end up cheapening the gospel or judging them for something they may not know.

How can we gauge whether someone is open and receptive to hearing gospel truth? How do we apply grace and truth together?

How should we speak and act differently when talking to a non-believer vs a believer about sin? How can we speak differently about sin with someone that is in our small groups (or in close relationship with) as compared with all Christians?

After this discussion, what are ways that you admit you have taken the action of judging someone out of context?

What was discussed today that you still have questions about? How do you feel that you understand and will apply this passage better from this discussion?