



series: [The Sermon on the Mount \(a continuation of There Has To Be a Better Way\)](#)

previous message: [Managing Your Portfolio -- Part 2](#)

formats: [mp3](#)

## DYNAMICS OF KINGDOM LIVING

### *SERIES: THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY*

**By Danny Hall**

---

In the Summer Olympics this year we saw a lot of controversies over judging. As in so many other parts of life, people were asked to make very fine judgments. Differences of opinion quickly developed into an “us vs. them” mentality. Things got politicized, of course.

This is also an election year, and we find ourselves bombarded by propaganda, counter-propaganda, and counter-counter-propaganda. We’re told more and more why those guys are evil and our guys are the good guys, why this is the right idea and that’s the wrong idea, back and forth. We’ll all be so glad when it’s over!

Our society is built more and more on an “us vs. them” mentality. It grates on you after a while. And if this judgmental, critical spirit and competitiveness were only part of the sports world or politics or even the popular culture that would be bad enough. But one of the discouraging things is that this same kind of thinking shows up in the church as well, so we need to be reminded once again just how important being the body of Christ is.

We are in a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ wonderful exposition of what it means to be a part of the kingdom of God. Jesus has challenged us by calling us to be a different kind of person, to live in a different kind of community, with a different kind of purpose and a different kind of values, in order to show forth God’s transforming and transcendent love for his world. We’ve been asked to trust Jesus radically for all that we could ever dream we’d need, trust that he will provide for us, as we seek his heart and seek to live completely for his glory.

But Jesus understands that for that to really work, he must actually call us out not just as individuals, although we play individual roles, but as a people. It is as a people standing together that we are called to make an impact in our world. Otherwise the witness that he wants us to bear, the light that he calls us to be to the dark world, will be greatly compromised.

We have come to a passage in the Sermon on the Mount that is quite easy to understand (except for one enigmatic verse at the end), but profoundly important to who we are as the people of God. In Matthew 7:1-6 Jesus builds on his call to draw near to him in intimate fellowship and to trust him for all that we need as we seek his kingdom’s values and purposes. He begins to instruct us now about what that means in our relationships with each other.

**Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.**

**Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.**

In this important passage Jesus gives one command in verse 1 and then an explanation in the verses that follow. The command is very simple: stop judging!

## What's wrong with being judgmental

Now, Jesus understands that it is the normal human experience to make judgments of one another. We look into each other's lives, and out of our own insecurity, sinfulness, and perhaps willingness to promote ourselves, we say, "I'm glad I'm not like that person," or, "Why are they like that!" Jesus assumes that his followers will be tempted to become judgmental and critical in spirit and will find themselves falling into that trap. But he simply commands us, "Stop it!" If we're going to be part of the kingdom of God, kingdom people who will shine as lights in our world, we can't have this judgmental, critical spirit.

So what is this command about? First, let me explain what it is not. It is not a call for tolerance in the contemporary sense, which obliterates all moral distinctions. We know this because later in verse 6, Jesus himself makes a moral distinction in fairly strong language, equating some people with dogs and pigs. In John 7:24 Jesus says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." In other words, we are to make moral distinctions. We are to understand that there are right things and wrong things; there is kingdom living and non-kingdom living; there are things that honor God and things that do not.

Jesus' command to stop judging is rather a call to end the judgmental, critical attacks that demean and bring down one another, which in turn serves to boost us up in relationship to one another.

In Romans 14:10-13 the apostle Paul deals with same theme. In that context, some believers were critical and judgmental of other believers over the controversial issue of whether it was acceptable for Christians to eat meat (which they had bought in the marketplace) that had previously been sacrificed to idols. Paul says this:

"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,  
And every tongue shall give praise to God.'

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way."

Echoing the words of Jesus, Paul is saying that the call for the body of Christ is to avoid causing each other to stumble. There is a legitimate reason for us to encourage other believers toward godliness, but not to discourage them. The whole idea that we need to be judging others with this critical spirit simply has no place in the body of Christ.

Jesus says in verse 2 that there is a consequence to having a judgmental, critical spirit: you yourself will be judged by the same standard. Or to use Paul's words, one day you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for your behavior. So you'd better be very careful, because if you have a judgmental spirit, it's going to turn right back on you on that day, because all of your faults and weaknesses will be revealed.

Jesus then goes on to illustrate this command in verses 3-5. You've got something wrong in your life, symbolized by the speck in your eye, and I make it my righteous job to get that out of your life. I attack and criticize you, doing whatever I can to make you the way I think you ought to be. But Jesus says that all the time I'm doing that, there is a huge log in my own eye! You see, one of the things that a critical and judgmental spirit does is allow me to focus on the issues in another person's life while ignoring the issues that God wants to deal with in my own life. It is going on the offense in order to deflect questions about my own heart.

The size of the problem to be dealt with is a matter of perspective. If something is a speck in someone else's

eye, and I take that same speck and put it in my own eye, it looks like a log. We don't want to see how big the issues in our own lives are. Sometimes the issue is the same thing we see in another person's life, perhaps manifesting itself in a different behavior. We all have our issues, because none of us have yet fully matured in Christ. We are all on the journey toward spiritual maturity.

Notice, however, that Jesus is not saying I am to ignore the issues in your life, just that I have to get the right perspective on them. He goes on to say that when I first take the log out of my own eye, then I will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your eye. We must deal with the issues in each other's lives properly.

Once again Paul echoes this idea in Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." In the community of faith, we all need each other in order to grow into the kind of people that God wants us to be. I'm going to have issues in my life that I need help with, and so are you. Rather than adopting a critical, judgmental spirit toward you whereby I allow myself to distance myself from you and then live in denial about my own issues, Jesus calls us both to a very different, radical involvement in each other's lives. We are to be committed to helping each other grow in faith, dealing properly with the issues that we struggle with as brothers and sisters in Christ.

## **Gone to the dogs**

Verse 6 is a rather enigmatic word of caution: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." "What is holy" and "pearls" probably represent the kingdom message that Jesus has been preaching. What I think Jesus is saying is this: "Although I don't want you to have a critical, judgmental spirit, I also don't want you to stop being discerning. This is a hostile world. There are people who are definitely going to oppose what you do, who have hardened their hearts. So there will be times when you will have to withdraw from an encounter with someone. You will not be able to share the kingdom of God with them, because they're antagonistic and destructive."

But that's very different from being judgmental in how we live out our faith. Let's further consider this command to stop judging one another. We are called to be the people of God, and that is a high calling. We have been called to live out our faith in such a way that we demonstrate to this world that there is something better than the highly critical, competitive, "me first" way of our culture. Putting myself before everyone else, being self-protective and aggressive, doing whatever I need to do to get ahead, springs out of the sinful nature of humanity. But Jesus wants to be able to say through us to the world, "There is help and hope! There is transforming power in me, which is displayed through the lives of my followers as they live in community with one another." Our ability to demonstrate the greatness of God's transforming love depends in large measure on the quality of our community life. If we are indeed going to be lights to the world, if we are going to show forth God's glory to the people who need to hear that message, we have to be willing to live out our faith in radical submission to Christ's lordship, which in turn calls us to radical submission to one another and caring for one another.

Nothing rips apart the fellowship of the kingdom of God like a spirit of criticism and judgmentalism. Now, we all engage in that in different ways. Sometimes we do it doctrinally. We have a set of doctrines that we believe reflects the way God wants his church to live. A lot of us have a long, long list of all the things that we believe the Bible teaches, which others must agree with or surely there is something wrong with them. But over time my list has gotten a little bit shorter. There are more and more things that I once thought people who love Christ and seek truth would have to believe, which such people simply disagree with.

Certainly, there are some core teachings about Christ that we can never compromise. The person of Christ is one—that he is the Son of God come in the flesh, and he has died for our sins. Salvation comes through him as his gift, and through no other, because of who he is and what he has done for us. There are essential doctrines like this about the nature of God and God's work in our lives, without which we would cease to be Biblically Christian. But it's also true that there are many things, which we might even believe very deeply, but which

other sincere, loving Christians who seek God with their whole heart have a different point of view on. So how will we approach them? With a judgmental spirit, thinking they are less of a Christian than we are, or perhaps even outside the kingdom of God, because they don't line up with us on everything? We have to be careful of that kind of judgmental spirit.

We might be judgmental and critical about issues of lifestyle and obedience. When Ginger and I first went to Vienna back in the 1980s, we lived in the missionary headquarters for most eastern European ministry. One of the things we noticed was an underlying judgmental spirit in the missionary community over two things. One was how well you lived. It was subtle, but it seemed that the more Spartan your lifestyle was, the more spiritual you obviously were. The other issue was how much you disciplined your children. People were criticized for not disciplining their children when they were just being children, not rebellious. We were introduced very starkly to some ways believers could be highly competitive and critical of one another, often to mask their own insecurity that they weren't living as the people God wanted them to be.

Sometimes believers display an unhealthy, judgmental spirit toward the outside world. We certainly see that in election times. I am not afraid of the outcome of this election, but I'm very much afraid of the election process. Are we as Christians going to adopt an ever more shrill voice in all of this? There are issues on which it is extremely important for us to reflect God's values, but we seem to feel we should demand that those who do not know God at all behave just as we do! We have come to think in "us vs. them" terms. We no longer have a redemptive attitude; we regard those who oppose our cause as the enemy. We have to win politically at all costs, so we tend to let this judgmental, critical spirit rise up within us, and we hide behind a façade of righteousness that allows us to do what we want to champion our causes.

But the kingdom of God is to be different.

### **What to do with one another**

We are supposed to be so radically committed to one other that our desire is to have a redemptive love relationship with one another. That requires me to be vulnerable and humble before you, because there are all kinds of things that I need help with in my life. Am I willing to do that, so you can speak into my life and help me deal with my issues? Then in turn I can help you deal with the things you struggle with.

The New Testament has a certain phrase that is used over and over and over again to describe the body of Christ: "one another." It is the phrase that perhaps best describes kingdom living. Consider the list of "one anothers":

- "Be at peace with one another" (Mark 9:50).
- "Be devoted to one another" (Romans 12:10).
- "Give preference to one another" (Romans 12:10).
- "Be of the same mind toward one another" (Romans 12:16).
- "Let us not judge one another" (Romans 14:13).
- "Pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" (Romans 14:19).
- "Be of the same mind with one another" (Romans 15:5).
- "Accept one another" (Romans 15:7).

- “Admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).
- “Care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25).
- “Serve one another” (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10).
- “Bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2).
- “Show tolerance [forbearance] to one another” (Ephesians 4:2).
- “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted” (Ephesians 4:32).
- “Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19).
- “Be subject to one another” (Ephesians 5:21).
- “Regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).
- “Do not lie to one another” (Colossians 3:9).
- “Bear with one another” (Colossians 3:13).
- “Forgive each other” (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).
- “With all wisdom teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16).
- “Increase and abound in love for one another” (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
- “Comfort one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
- “Encourage one another and build up one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- “Encourage one another” (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25).
- “Stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).
- “Do not speak against one another” (James 4:11).
- “Do not complain against one another” (James 5:9).
- “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another” (James 5:16).
- “Be hospitable to one another” (1 Peter 4:9).
- “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” (1 Peter 5:5).
- “Love one another” (John 13:34; John 15:12; John 15:17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11; 2 John 5).

These are powerful things that require a level of commitment to each other that far too many of us have never experienced. But it is the nature of the kingdom of God for us to be so radically connected and committed to

one another that our lives show forth the glorious, redemptive presence of Christ among us.

Now, I know this is not easy. There is so much that gets in the way of this. Human nature hinders this. It's so much easier to be self-protective and accusing than it is to be vulnerable and redemptive toward one another. Unless God's spirit transforms us and our church, it's not going to happen. Our schedules also get in the way. We're all too busy to do this. Some of the busy-ness is legitimate, of course; we have to make a living, and we have families to provide for. But how much of the busy-ness is self-imposed because we pursue the things of this world rather than the things of God's kingdom?

I challenge us to consider how we can become more and more radically connected to each other. Look for opportunities to do that. It will be different for each of us. Don't rush out of church on Sunday mornings. Take a few moments to connect with people. Consider taking one weekend out of your life each year to go to a church retreat just to spend time with people and connect on a deeper level. Look for service projects you can be part of. Look for a Bible study or home fellowship or other small group you can join. Invite somebody over to your house for dinner and spend the whole evening talking and praying together. Be creative! However it may work out, I challenge you to think about how God wants to draw you close to other people in the body.

And one last challenge: try to connect with some people you don't like, or at least people who are very different from you. As long as we maintain a distance from some people, it will be so much easier to continue disliking them and what they stand for. Reduce that distance.

In Vienna there was a man I connected with. He was someone with whom I would never, ever have had any affinity in any natural way. We were so radically different. In fact, he used to tell people that he was the only really true friend I've ever had who does not care who is in the World Series! But God threw us into the pot together and we forged a sweet friendship during those years. I learned so much because he was so different from me.

Jesus' command is really simple: Stop the judging. Put away the critical spirit. So again, I challenge us to think out of the box, get out of our comfort zone, and ask God to help us to be people who are radically committed to being involved in the lives of others for the glory of Christ.

---

Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE ("NASB"). © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Catalog No. 4913  
Matthew 7:1-6  
Thirteenth Message  
Danny Hall  
August 29, 2004

[Back to Index page](#)



series: [The Sermon on the Mount \(a continuation of There Has To Be a Better Way\)](#)  
previous message: [Managing Your Portfolio -- Part 2](#)  
formats: [mp3](#)

Copyright © 2004 [Discovery Publishing](#), a ministry of [Peninsula Bible Church](#). This data file is the sole property of Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain the above copyright notice. This data

file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.