



281.890.1900
TheMETonline.org

Jones Road Campus
13000 Jones Road | Houston, TX 77070

Fry Road Campus | Hopper Middle School
7811 Fry Road | Houston, TX 77433

[Introductory video with words and music background:]

Jesus said:

IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOU ON THE CHEEK,
TURN THE OTHER ALSO

IF YOUR EYE CAUSES YOU TO SIN, GOUGE IT OUT

IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE,
YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOU

NARROW IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE:
ONLY A FEW FIND IT

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM, AND
ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.

[Then displaying one at a time:]

RIGHTEOUSNESS

PURITY

FORGIVENESS

GENEROSITY

HUMILITY

PEACE

[Video concludes by displaying the series title:]

Really!?!*

*The shocking statements of **Jesus**

[Pastor Sal begins:]

Good morning, everybody. I'm going to show you my music video here in a second. So—only I don't have jeans that go up to here [indicates ribcage area]. Man, that was a cutting edge of fashion somewhere in Poland at that time. If you're joining us on our Cypress campus, we welcome you as well. Right here—if you don't know—that was (kind of) an inside joke at Jones. Because we just celebrated James Bonamy [*Interim Worship Leader*, who] is going to a big church in Palm Springs (Palm Springs?—Palm Beach/Palm Springs—left or right coast—one of the two) and we were just reminiscing James' time here with us [by showing one of his early music videos available on YouTube].

If you have your Bibles, you can open them to *Matthew 6*. If not and if you have the middle-age syndrome that I have, you can look to the screens where there'll be large-print Bible [scriptures] shown for you. If you need a Bible there at our Cypress campus, just raise your hand and we'll be glad to give you one as a gift from us.

We're talking about the shocking statements of Jesus. Things that make you go: Really!? Really, is that true?—yes, it is. What I love about Jesus—Man:

- He goes bottom-line
- He tells you like it is and like it should be
- [He] just cuts right into the middle of our heart

He only does that because He wants the best for us. Today we're talking about our judgmentalism.

OUR JUDGMENTALISM

Have you ever walked down the street and (just) looked at somebody and made some judgment calls real quick...because of:

- What they're wearing (maybe)
- The music they were listening to
- The color of their skin (maybe)
- The religious attire that they're wearing

—and all of a sudden you just started making these judgments? By the time you pass them, you hated them or you assumed a bunch of things about them that simply were not true.

Have you ever thought about: they may be thinking the same thing about you? If they were thinking that, you would go: Hey, hey, that's not right. Well, the same thing [happens] when we start judging other people. If they could hear what we were saying, they would say: Hey, hey—

- That's not right
- That's not my story
- That's not who I am

Jesus is talking to a group of religious people; they were judging a lot based upon appearances and what they thought—usually more highly [of] themselves than they ought to think. So He squares off with them and He says: Hey, here's My advice on judging—*chapter 7, verse 1*:

¹ "Stop judging others, {—end of story. That'd be a quick message today, wouldn't it? However, I want to give you the price of your full ticket, so—} and you will not be judged. ² For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. ³ And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a {Say it with me, Church:} [plank] in your own {eye}? ⁴ How can you think of saying, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the {Say it with me, Church:} [plank] in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! {Oh, that's pretty strong, isn't it?} First get rid of the {Say it with me, Church:} [plank] from your own eye; then perhaps {— maybe it would be possible for—} you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

Matthew 7:1-5 (NLT, 1996 e)

Now, that's pretty strong stuff. But we need to hear that, because we live in a world where people are judged instantaneously and—

- It goes to social media (or)
- It goes on the media (and)

—all of a sudden that person is something (perhaps/really) that they're not. We do that all of the time in our world.

In fact, the word for judging or for criticism is the word *kreno*, which means in your mind—

- You are condemning
- You are damning (or)
- You are trying somebody

—in the courtroom of your consciousness.

Now—do you know what it is?—judgmentalism is criticism gone crazy. So the walk-away for this message is a very simple phrase; it's:

YANK THE PLANK!

All right?—very simple phrase. Last week it was—what?—Who's... Y'all weren't here last week? Last week it was: Who's... [Congregational response: your Daddy?] This week it's: Yank... [Congregational response: the plank.] Let's say that together on three—one, two, three: yank the plank.

So if you yank the plank—man!—your vision is going to be so clear:

- You're going to see God in ways you've not seen God in a long time—or maybe ever.
- You're going to see yourself the way you ought to see yourself (and)
- You're going to understand what God is doing in other people's lives on a different level than you've ever been able to understand before.

Criticism like this (in my opinion) is simply cold-blooded.

CRITICISM IS COLD-BLOODED

Now, maybe where you grew up you didn't use that term. But where I grew up, we used that term a lot. We said: Man, that's cold-blooded, which usually means that a person (or persons) is considered extremely wrong for an action they have committed—like (you know):

- You went and hit on somebody else's girlfriend. We would say: Man, that's cold-blooded; you shouldn't have done that. (Or)
- You talked about somebody when they weren't there in a very negative sense and he's all of our friends. We would say: Do you know what?—that's cold-blooded.

You have shown blatant disrespect for another person, usually that you don't even know well. You have made a judgment call on them. (And) we've got to keep in mind (I know this is hard to do):

- We're not God.
- We don't know that person.

- We don't know their story.
- We don't know what's going on in their life.

—but we *assume* certain things based upon certain things in our own life. Criticism is cold-blooded.

Do you know how Jesus said we need to deal with this?—*Matthew 7:1*— “Stop judging others...” (I mean) it just can't be any simpler than that. Stop doing that.

I had a personal coach for awhile. Somebody had hired him for me. Then they got to the point: Well, that's not working; I'm not going to waste my money any more. So this personal coach, the best advice he ever gave me (in fact, I have it framed up in my office):

He would say: Stop it!

I'd say: How much money do you make for this?—because, dude, I can do this, man.

[He'd say:] Stop it!

I would tell him something I'm doing that wasn't good leadership behavior (and)

He said—you know what: Stop it!

I went: Dang! Man, I need to get whatever degree you have, because I want to drive that car I see you in.

Stop it! This is something that isn't good:

- It's bad for you spiritually.
- It's bad for other people.
- It is bad for your relationships.

In fact, you will find your relationships will be disseminating—you're not going to have any after awhile—if you are a judgmental person.

Now, what are some of the reasons why we judge people? Let me give you just three quick ones. There [are] a whole lot of other [ones].

First of all, let me tell you—personally—I judge people. I struggle with that. I criticize people who criticize me. If you criticize me—

- I'm going to line you up in my sights.
- I'm going to start pulling specks out of you like you cannot believe.

I criticize people who criticize me. Now it may not always be verbally that I do it, because I've learned to do it professionally. (You know) I'll just judge you and damn you inside of [the] courtroom of my consciousness. I will start mistreating you or treating you how I perceive you and how I have judged you. I judge and criticize my critics.

Do you know what? I also judge and criticize my peers as well—other preachers. (You know) we really don't do that—you would think we wouldn't do that—but we do. If—

- Somebody is better than me (or)
- Their church is bigger than mine (or)
- They're on TV (Oh—ahem—oh, I'm on the Internet anyway and)
- They have these big/giant international ministries

—do you know what I begin thinking in my mind? I say: Do you know what? You just have something I don't have.

Because if I had what you had—

- I'd be doing the same thing (or)
- You have an unfair advantage
- That was given to you
- You've been elevated to that position
- I really deserve that

When I tear someone down, I start feeling better about myself. So when you send me a criticism letter—get ready—I'm going to pray and ask God to help me not criticize you. But you can't help it sometimes when someone criticizes you; can you?

Scott [Rodgers, *Jones Road Campus Pastor*] and I received an email sometime recently. And in it this person was saying:

- Man, the church is great.
- The preaching is tremendous.
- [The] music blah-blah-blah...but—

Basically he said: But you're sinning against God and you are doing wrong, because your shirttail is untucked.

You (just) cannot imagine what went through my mind when I read that. Scott was much more diplomatic and Christian than I was in my response to the guy. But when you get judged like that, it's like: Really...my shirttail?! (I mean) come on.

But when you judge someone else and you make a judgment, if they could hear you they'd go: Really? You have no clue, do you? (You know) you can't see the plank that is in your eye that's causing you to see a little speck like that. We do those things every single day—why?—number one, we get jealous of people.

1. JEALOUSY

Proverbs 14, verse 30, says:

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Proverbs 14:30 (NIV)

It's a cancer inside of us. When you are envious of something that somebody has and you are jealous (boy!) you're just (you're) eaten [up inside]. Nothing you have makes you happy; and you'll do everything you can to tear whatever that person has down.

You see it happen all of the time, especially—(you know) I'm not trying to be sexist here (but)—among women when they find the right man. (It's in movies all the time anyway.) In the movie the girl will find the man, [thinking:] Oh, I found him; he's the man of my dreams. And she goes and tells her girlfriends and says: Girl, you've got to meet him. He is the best thing in the world and [pantomimes being delighted as with a favorite food]. So they meet the guy. And right after they meet him they get in that girl-huddle and they start picking that poor man apart:

- Yeah, girl, well he may be good looking but he's shallow.
- Yeah and he might have a good job; but when you marry him, he's going to quit his job.

- I had one just like this, and blah-blah-blah.

Pretty soon they're just tearing that poor man down. But as they are tearing him down, they are tearing her down.

- They're judging her capability of finding the right man.
- They're judging her taste in men.

They're saying everything bad about him so they can get to her. The problem is: she's got a bunch of jealous, single hags for friends.

When you criticize somebody like that and you can't be happy for somebody, you have a judgmental spirit inside of your heart.

We were watching some football last night. Here's what I've noticed about football: no matter what the score is, the cheerleaders are always cheering. I mean it could be 52 to nothing and the team is getting drummed and the cheerleaders [pantomimes their arm movements]:

- Go, guys!
- Yay!
- Fight for the touchdown.

They are getting killed! (You know) ESPN is cutting away to hockey scores it's so bad. But the cheerleaders are hanging in there and—man!—they're cheering them on.

Why can't we be like that? Why can't we, when good things happen to people, actually cheer them on? Rather than sitting back and condemning and judging why someone has something or why somebody doesn't have something.

(You know) next time that jealousy starts to come out of your mouth, just stop and say: You know what? I thank God that God gave you that. Man, I am so happy for you. Even if you've got to push down that big, green-eyed monster, you say it. You cheer them on because—you know what?—you're going to want someone to cheer you on. Aren't you?

Second reason why is: sometimes we just get negative.

2. NEGATIVITY

Luke 6:45—

...For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Luke 6:45b (NIV)

(I mean) if you're negative, guess what's in your heart?—a negative dark cloud. After a while—I'm going to tell you something—people don't want to be around that; because that is an infectious disease that ruins a nice, sunny day in someone's life.

Don't be negative. I'm going to tell you what: you can find anything to be positive about. [If] you listen to a good coach after a game—even after his team got drummed—he will say a couple of positive things about what his team did right. Everybody knows—hey, listen—it doesn't take a genius to find something wrong. But it takes a motivated person, who is not negative and can

see God in things, to find the stuff that's right. I've seen lots of things torn down before they ever got a chance to get going because somebody got negative on it.

Third thing, and this is the worst:

3. SARCASM

Sarcastic spirit—*Ephesians 4:29*—

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up...

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

(Man!) Sarcasm is that funny way of cutting people down. (Look!) When I was growing up we would just have cut-down contests. (Man!) We'd get on somebody and unfortunately I was very good at it. I could get somebody so frustrated they'd either walk away cussing me or they'd try to hit me; because I could get on them so good and say things that frustrate. But—you know what?—it hurt them. Because when someone did [it to] me—

- They always would get on my nose (or)
- They'd get on something that was pretty obvious (Right?)

And then—you know what?—I'd laugh and stuff and I'd get them back, but it hurt. I'd go in [the house] and say: My nose isn't *that* long, is it? (I mean, come on. I mean) I'm Italian anyway. My feet aren't that big anyway, are they?

When you do that to people you are hurting people. You are judging people for physical appearance or whatever it is that you are jumping on and you are being critical and sarcastic about. It goes like this:

Well, your father said he's going to take some time off this weekend.

[Response:] We'll see about that.

That's sarcasm. That's disrespect.

Well, the boss says that we are going to—in the second quarter—

[pantomimes reading from a memo in his hand then responding:] Ha, ha,

ha; we've all heard that before!

That's sarcasm. That's disrespect. And if you're not careful, all those sarcastic people start hanging [around you]—

- You're funny
- They like to laugh at your stuff

In their minds they're thinking: I wonder what he's saying about me when I'm not here? We're sarcastic.

So look what Jesus says—knowing all that—Jesus says (now):

⁴ How can you think of saying, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye.' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? {You're a} ⁵ Hypocrite!...

Matthew 7:4-5 (NLT, 1996 edition)

Now, to understand what Jesus is saying, we're talking about a speck—

- Like a fleck of pepper (or)
- Like a tiny/little bit of sawdust

—compared to—the word that He uses here is for the supporting beam of a building. So, you're walking around all day long with [something] like a dad-gummed sequoia coming out of your eyes! And you're so—[pantomimes head tilted back as if balancing a large tree trunk in his eye and pointing accusatory fingers] at everybody and judging all the wrong with everybody. How can you even see? And so it's meant to be even kind of funny. You've got the big log jam and you're going after a tiny-tiny-tiny little speck? Jesus said when you do that you are a hypocrite.

Don't you love Jesus? (I mean) He gets right to it; He says: Let me tell you what your problem is; you're just a hypocrite.

Now, listen. I've had to deal with hypocrisy all my life. Now, inevitably I'll be somewhere socially and someone will say: Well, Sal, what do you do? Oh, God, I think. (You know) I love what I do but, I know what's going to happen here.

I say: I'm a pastor.

[They say:] Oh, really? Where do you pastor?

[I say:] I pastor The MET in Houston.

[They say:] Oh, really? You know, I haven't been to church in years!

I say: Really?

And then they say: Yeah, because of all—

And I finish the sentence: —hypocrites in the church.

[They say:] Yeah, man, how did you know?

I said: Because I'm one!

In fact, let's see. Everyone put your hand up. Put your hand up. Everybody that has their hand up right now is a hypocrite. The ones that didn't put their hand up are liars! We all have this level we're trying to live to that we don't live to at times, which makes us hypocrites. Everybody is a hypocrite.

Jesus is saying: In this area of your life, I don't want you to be a hypocrite.

You can stop this right now. Because a hypocrite is somebody who takes on a roll—assumes a roll—that isn't theirs. Actors were hypocrites. They'd come out on stage—in the first century—and they'd have a giant mask in front of them. And they said: This is who I am. But behind there that really wasn't who they were; they were acting the part.

Let me tell you the part that's real dangerous when we are dealing with—hang on Fry [Road] I'm still here [as he walks off stage to get a chair]. (For you guys to know—*Fry/Cypress Campus*—when I walk out of the camera shot, they think the rapture happened.) All right, so here's the deal: All of this is [indicating the stage around him] my life out here, right? And this right here [indicating the chair] is the throne. This is who controls my life and on this is Jesus; and) Jesus controls all of my life. But when I get judgmental, here's what I say (I say): Now, Lord, there [are] some things that I'm seeing a little bit different here than You. So what I'm going to do is, if You would just excuse me, just get up and come right over here for a second. [Pantomimes guiding Jesus up out of the chair and standing beside it:] Thank you, Lord. I'm

going to sit here for awhile [sits down in the chair/throne] and I'm going to be Lord of the universe called *Me*. And as so, I've got the right (now) to judge people (and)—

- If you criticize me, I'm judging you.
- If you don't like what I do, I'm going to judge you.

In fact, Lord, since You and I are peers now, then when You do some stuff that I don't like (then) I'm going to judge the reasons why You did that. If I can't understand something I'm just going to blame You for not being good.

I now am the ruler of my universe. The problem with that is: it gets increasingly smaller as you continue to be critical and judgmental. And that's not the way you want to live. And how do you know that Jesus really is on the throne in my life and overseeing my universe? It's because I'm not judging you in your universe.

Every servant stands or falls in his master's eyes, not in the servant's eyes. That's what the bible teaches. You say: How can you say [that]? Look, I... Don't assume the role that isn't yours. When you are consumed by criticism, you are a hypocrite. You can't do that.

(You know) at this church—let me tell you something—we're all hypocrites. We accept all other hypocrites here. We accept people; because churches need to be known as communities of compassion; not communities of criticism.

But you look on any news network, when they want to stir something up, they go find some fundamentalist person—(and) who is a religious leader somewhere—and they ask him his opinion on something; and out comes—

- Judgment
- Criticism
- Negativity

And we become known for—

- What we're against (and)
- Who we don't like (and)
- What we hate in this world

One of these days, they're going to interview somebody and—

- Mercy (and)
- Grace (and)
- Jesus

—is going to pour out them, and they're going to have to stop tape. What was that?

That's grace and mercy because that's what we've received. You think about it. How does Jesus treat me? Regardless of my behavior—at times—Jesus accepts and loves me. And so He doesn't agree with my behavior at times, but He doesn't judge me. He loves me and gives me mercy and is accepting of me.

That's what we should do with people. When we don't understand what they do, we don't have to condone their behavior; but we shouldn't condemn them. Why is it the religious people didn't like being around Jesus? But sinners—like me and you—we love being around Jesus. We need to be a church that is consumed with people compassionately, not critically.

- When Jesus accepts me (and)
- [When] He loves me (and)
- [When] we treat people that way

Then—I'm telling you as your pastor—that's how we're going to treat people at this church. And if somebody doesn't treat you like that, you tell Scott Rodgers, he'll get right on it.

CRITICISM IS A HIGHLY INFECTIOUS DISEASE

When you judge people it's highly, highly infectious. Do you remember what happened to the children of Israel? When they were getting ready to go into the Promised Land, they sent the spies in—

- Ten came back and said: Oh, we're going to get killed!
- Two of them—Joshua and Caleb—said: No way! We will overcome! Remember God! These people—they're going to be like drinking a glass of water. We are going to clean up and take all of this just like God has said.
- The ten said: No, man, we're going to lose our children. There are giants in the land. We are like grasshoppers.

And they spread that word of negativity to the entire nation of Israel and—do you know what happened?—they never went into the Promised Land. It kept them from getting what God had for them.

It's a virus that spreads. And sometimes, when we get negative about what God is doing or what God wants to do and you share your heart—

- Your vision for your life (or)
- Your vision for your church (or)
- Whatever it is

—and they're [saying:] Oh, but-but-but-but... The but-brothers come out [saying:]

- But, but, but, but, but (and)
- This-this-this (and)
- That-that-that

And all you can see is negativity and what's going to go wrong—you're right (you're right). And if you listen to that kind of stuff; your life is going to have nothing but a dark cloud over it, for all of your days.

Israel spent 40 years doing donuts-in-the-desert because of this—40 years!

Do you know what? I'm good at spreading this infection at times. If—

- I'm critical of somebody (or)
- I judge somebody (and)

—I go into a room and I want to know if people feel the same way that I do about that person (or this particular thing), I'll just drop a little criticism bomb in there—boom!—just a little bit of bait almost.

It's just like when you're fishing [and] you throw bait out. Why are you throwing bait out?

- You want to see if there are some fish out there.
- [You] want to see if what you've got they like.

And (you know what?) if I throw something out there—just a little snide remark—just a little:
[Someone says:] Well you know so and so; they had 15,000 people in their church service.

And I'll say something [like:] Yeah they had 15,000 people, but (you know) did he really preach the Gospel?

Just a little negativity—just a little seed—somebody will pick up on: Oh yeah! Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah! And someone else: Blah-blah-blah. Then I know I'm in a room of friends! And then we spread that virus. And pretty soon this guy's a child killer, for heaven's sake.

[It's the] same thing that happens in your circles or your friends. When you walk in and someone throws the bait, don't take the bait! Yank the plank! Take it out [pantomimes removing a log from his eye] and say:

- Whoa-whoa-whoa! Who are you talking about?
- Why are you talking about him?
- Do you know that person?
- Were you there when that [happened]?

[And they'll say:] Well no, I just assumed.

That's just it:

- You assumed (and)
- You judged (and)
- You sinned against that person
- You sinned against God (and)
- Now you're trying to make me sin.

I choose to yank the plank. It also just may [mean] you need to yank the friends, too. I wouldn't hang around people like that—I sure wouldn't. In fact—the people that you're hanging around:

- Is it more of a negative conversation? (Or)
- Is it a positive, godly, encouraging conversation that makes you want to charge hell with a water pistol?

Is it? Because if it isn't, get (you) some new friends. You're going to be doing donuts-in-the-desert for the rest of your life if you don't. That negativity is a virus.

(Speaking of which—it has nothing to do with the sermon, but—let me warn you: I had a flu shot the other day and I got the flu! Can you believe that? I'm just now starting to feel better. Don't get worried; we'll stop on time.)

Here's what Jesus says:

For others will treat you as you treat them. {Uh oh!} Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. {Huh uh-uh!}

Matthew 7:2 (NLT, 1996 edition)

I want to quote *Mama 1:1* here, “If you can't say anything [nice] about somebody, don't say anything at all.” Because it's going to come back to get you; I promise you.

(Do you know what?) It's like a yo-yo. [Pulls out a yo-yo.] Y'all ever play with a yo-yo? Didn't somebody have a song—like in the '70s—*Like a Yo-Yo*? Who was that? Huh? Who?—*The Osmonds*. I hope that wasn't a dude who just said that (by the way). I trapped you—my bad. I judged you—my bad. What's a yo-yo do? [Demonstrates using the yo-yo] Whatever you do, it comes back to you. And if you really know how to work a yo-yo (man) it'll pop up. I was trying to practice a while ago inside the green room and I almost put a knot on my head. I said: Look at that—bam!—oh, hey [staggers as if knocked senseless]. Because the energy you expend—it comes back even more powerful. It spins down to the bottom, you yank that and—boom!—it'll come up. (Let me tell you:) It is a spiritual principle.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down,
[and] shaken together...shall men {pour} into your {laps with
whatever measure you use}.

Luke 6:38 (KJV)

So if you're measuring up judgment and criticism, guess what's going to come back with a vengeance in your lap:

- People are going to be talking about you.
- They're going to be judging you.
- They're going to be criticizing you.

And what you have done is just cast your bread on the water, and it's coming back in a tsunami, baby! [*Ecclesiastes 11:1* (paraphrased)] You don't want that.

Find where Jesus condemned anybody in the Bible. Now, I can tell you where He got after some Pharisees; He called them a bunch of "whitewashed tombs" and empty sepulchers. [*Matthew 23:27 (NIV)*] But you go find somebody [coming to] Jesus who genuinely had a problem and whom Jesus dealt with. Find any sinner He ever condemned. What did He tell the woman caught in adultery? They were going to stone her—the religious people were—and Jesus said this: Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Now (you know what you heard?) you heard the rocks drop [pantomimes rocks dropping]. All of a sudden, they're gone! And what did Jesus say to the woman? Where are your condemners? I don't see them, Lord. "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." [*John 8:11(NKJV)*]

Stop it! (Stop it.) Stop condemning people. Stop—you don't know what their story [is]. And (you know) I always found it interesting: the guy wasn't in the stoning party. He wasn't the one going to be stoned. It was just the girl. She was (being) judged (judged). For others will treat you just the way you treat them. *Verses 14 and 15, chapter 6:*

¹⁴ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

You are never going to *enjoy* the forgiveness of God until you *give* the forgiveness of God.

That bitterness, that anger, that hatred that makes you judge people—you need to let some things go—because they are squashing your soul and it's doing the same to other people.

Finally...

A CRITICAL SPIRIT IS BLINDING

When I'm critical, when I'm consumed, [and] when I'm judgmental:

- I can't really see you the way God sees you.
- I can't understand you the way God understands you.
- I can't love you the way God loves you.
- I certainly can't accept you and know how much you matter to God

Until I yank the plank.

And when I yank the plank, there [are] two things that happen:

(1) I CAN SEE THE MERCY OF GOD [Repeated for emphasis]

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matthew 5:7 (NIV)

Do you know what mercy is?—not getting what I deserve. [Repeated for emphasis]

Now I have been praying with people before where [they've said:] God, I believe I deserve this; and I believe I deserve... I just step back [mentally] and go: I don't deserve anything. He's going to get in trouble. I don't want to be—when the lightning comes, I don't want to be next to him.

Do you know what I deserve?—what we all deserve—instantaneous death and eternal damnation. Do you know what I got?—not what I deserve. I didn't get that, therefore, (if I didn't get that) the second benefit of yanking the plank is: I'm not going to give that to people.

(2) I CAN EXTEND THE MERCY OF GOD

Because I'm not getting what I deserve from God, I have the power now to communicate with my words:

- Blessing (and)
- Mercy (and)
- Grace (and)
- Forgiveness (and)
- Edification (and)
- Encouragement

I can become a counselor and a friend to those who need one because I did not get what I deserved. Why should I give that person what I think they deserve [when] I don't even know what God knows about them?

Hebrews says:

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)

(Do you know what?) We need food to survive and thrive. [If] we don't have food, we die. We need that nourishment. Do you know what our souls need more than anything else?—encouragement. (Encouragement)

Do you know how many negative things you hear a day compared to positive things? And how one positive thing that you hear can be totally destroyed by one negative thing? It almost takes 10 positive things to erase the 1 negative thing. And in our world it is a very critical and negative place.

I read a study by David H. Fink, who is a psychiatrist with the Veterans Administration. He published it and he said he studied over 10,000 cases of people who had severe nervous tension. And he said one common trait every one of them had, "They were habitual fault finders." They were judgmental [and] critical people. And so the result of that report is that, "A critical spirit is a prelude to being mentally unbalanced."

- You lose your mind.
- Nothing is ever going to make you happy.
- You're not going to be able to trust anybody.

And [the last] finally...

JESUS DOES NOT JUDGE, HE SAVES

That's what Jesus does. In fact *John 3:17*—right after the famous *John 3:16*, "For God so loved the world..."

God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:17 (NLT, 2004 edition)

When Jesus died on the cross, what He was getting was the judgment of God that we deserved. And what we got from God was not what we deserved—we got mercy—we got forgiveness and grace.

- **Vertically** we got right with God because Jesus took our judgment; therefore, we're not under God's judgment. We're under God's mercy. We're under God's grace. (And)
- Because we are (have a good vertical relationship now because of what Jesus did)—**horizontally**—relationally (with other people) we can have great relationships with them; because—
 - We didn't get what we deserved.
 - We're not judged anymore.
 - We're free in Christ.
 - We have the Spirit of God inside of us.

- We have Him encouraging us all the time.
- We have the Word of God—that's Truth.
- We're discerning and we're wise
- We don't have to judge people because we weren't judged.

And if you look at the cross:

- It gets us right with God vertically
- It gets us right with one another horizontally

And if [either] one of those [is] missing, [then] you haven't been to the cross of Christ yet. Because at the cross of Christ we got mercy; we didn't get what we deserved.

(You know) there have been several times—especially in my younger life—that I did things that I got away with *because* I got away with them. I didn't get what I deserved because I got away with them.

(Let me tell you:) With God, you don't get away with squat! He knows it before you do it. He doesn't have (like)—He's not an old man that forgets stuff. But in Jesus, because of the blood of Christ, He chooses to remember our sin no more. [Isaiah 43:25] Therefore, I can go and freely embrace people.

The reason so many relationships are messed up is because your relationship with God is messed up. (And) you're never going to love and accept people the way you need to and the way they need it, until you are loved and accepted by God. (And) the only way you do that is through Jesus. Next verse:

"There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him....
John 3:18 (NLT, 2004 edition)

Woo! Can I get an *Amen* there?

- God's not going to judge me.
- I am His son.
- I'm in Christ.
- I'm seated in the heavenlies.
- I am going to go (one day) to whatever it is He is preparing me for (and)
- ...whatever it is up there that He's going to give me (and)
- I am going to live eternally with God (and)
- There is no judgment (and)
- Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.
- Nobody can stop me from being what God wants me to be.

I can do all things through Jesus Christ because I am not judged; Jesus has been judged for me.

...But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged
for not believing in God's one and only Son.

John 3:18 (NLT, 2004 edition)

There is only one thing God can't help. There is only one thing God's going to judge you for: Do you know Jesus or not? Because if you *don't* know Christ...the only way *not* to be judged is

to accept what Jesus has done. And if you haven't—I'm sorry—you're judged already. Not by me; by a higher authority than anybody in this room, Almighty God, who said: If you don't come to my Son, I have no other choice.

If you won't let Him pay for your sin, you've got to pay for your own. And you are never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever-to-the-tenth-power ever going to be able to pay for your sin. You will be judged for eternity. And (do you know what?) if I were you, I'd take the mercy part—God, give me what I don't deserve—and give your life to Jesus. Let's pray together this morning.

Lord, we're all hypocrites. I judge. We all judge. Lord, You told us to stop judging people. So we are committing to You this morning with all of our being. We ask You to forgive us for the sin of judging and being overly critical. And God, fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we can act like Jesus acts and we can think like Jesus thinks and respond like Jesus responds.

And if you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, there is not going to be any other help for you but by coming to Jesus. And if you haven't done that, I'm going to say a prayer out loud—I'm going to ask you to say it silently in your heart—and the prayer goes like this:

Dear God, I don't want to be judged. I trust Jesus, who was judged for me, and I ask You for mercy. Give me what I don't deserve: forgiveness, love, grace, acceptance and mercy.

And Lord, may our church always be the church of compassion and not the church of criticism. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

The MET
Metropolitan Baptist Church
13000 Jones Rd
Houston, TX 77070

Sermon Transcript Ministry
resource@TheMETonline.org

Even his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

John 6:60
(New Living Translation)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea
[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher
{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*