



Discussion Guide

Date: 10/18/2026

Sermon Title: How can I be curious and not judgmental?

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-5

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, thank you for gathering us together. As we open Scripture, open our hearts as well. Help us notice the assumptions we carry, the judgments we make, and the ways we sometimes misunderstand others. Give us the humility to examine our own lives before pointing out the faults of another. Teach us to ask thoughtful questions, to listen with compassion, and to see others through the eyes of your grace. May the love of Christ shape our conversations and our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

OPENING QUESTION:

Start by sharing what do you judge people by?

BIG IDEA:

Following Jesus means learning to see others with humility, grace, and curiosity rather than rushing to judgment. Jesus does not call us to ignore harmful behavior or abandon discernment. He invites us to examine our own hearts first, recognize our need for God's grace, and approach others with the same mercy we hope to receive.

OPENING THOUGHT:

What if the next time someone frustrated us, disagreed with us, or made a choice we didn't understand, our first response wasn't to form an opinion but to ask a question? In a world that often rewards quick reactions, strong opinions, and assumptions about people who are different from us, Jesus invites us to practice a different way. To lead with love, we must learn to slow down, become curious, and remember that every person we encounter is someone God loves.

READ THE SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 7:1–5

Invite someone to read the passage aloud. If time allows, have a second person read it again slowly. As the group listens, invite everyone to notice a word, phrase, or image that stands out. A question to carry through the passage: What is Jesus trying to change—not just in how we treat other people, but in how we see them?

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT:

VERSES 1–2: What kind of judgment is Jesus warning against? “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.” in Matthew 7:1. Jesus begins with a direct command. But he is not saying that we should never make moral distinctions, recognize harmful behavior, or exercise discernment. He is challenging the kind of judgment that

condemns people, assumes we know their motives, or treats them without the mercy we would want for ourselves.

John Wesley makes this distinction in his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament. He warns against judging without clear knowledge, genuine necessity, and tender love. For Wesley, the issue is not simply whether we recognize someone's mistake; it is whether our response is shaped by love or by a condemning spirit.

1. What do you think Jesus means by “judge” in verse 1? How is making a thoughtful assessment of someone's behavior different from condemning that person?
2. Why do you think Jesus connects the way we judge others with the way we ourselves will be judged in verse 2?
3. What does the phrase “with the measure you use” suggest about the standards we apply to other people versus ourselves?
4. Why is it often easier to see someone else's shortcomings than to recognize our own?
5. How might our understanding of God's grace change the way we respond to someone whose beliefs, behavior, or choices frustrate us?

LEADER'S NOTE: Invite the group to distinguish between discernment and condemnation. Discernment asks, “Is this action wise, loving, or harmful?” Condemnation goes further and presumes to define the worth, motives, or whole character of another person.

VERSES 3–4: “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?” — Matthew 7:3.

Jesus uses a deliberately exaggerated image to expose our blind spots. Imagine someone offering to remove a tiny splinter from another person's eye while a huge wooden beam protrudes from their own. The image is humorous, but the spiritual truth is serious: we can become so focused on correcting others that we fail to examine ourselves. Notice that Jesus describes someone who wants to help. The problem is not necessarily the desire to correct a wrong; it is the hypocrisy of doing so without recognizing one's own need for correction.

1. What makes Jesus' illustration of the speck and the log so memorable? What does the exaggeration reveal about human nature?
2. Why might we be especially quick to notice faults in people who disagree with us or live differently from us?
3. What are some “logs” that can distort our vision—such as pride, fear, past hurt, insecurity, resentment, or assumptions?
4. Have you ever discovered that your initial judgment of someone was incomplete or mistaken? What helped you see the situation differently?
5. How can we tell when our desire to help someone has become more about proving that we are right than about genuinely loving that person?

A deeper question: What might we discover about ourselves if, before criticizing someone, we asked, “What is happening in me that makes this person's behavior so difficult for me to understand or accept?”

This does not mean that another person's behavior is always acceptable. It means that our own reactions are worth examining, too.

VERSE 5: “First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.” — Matthew 7:5. This verse is essential to understanding the whole passage. Jesus does not

tell the listener to abandon the other person or pretend the speck is not there. He says to address the log first. Self-examination is what makes it possible to see clearly enough to help someone else. The goal is not silence, indifference, or the avoidance of difficult conversations. It is a different posture: approaching another person with humility, honesty, and a genuine desire for their well-being.

1. Why does Jesus say “first” take the log out of your own eye? What does that order teach us about humility?
2. Why do you think Jesus still expects the person to help remove the speck after addressing their own log?
3. What is the difference between correcting someone to demonstrate superiority and offering correction because you care about them?
4. What might it look like to approach a difficult conversation after first praying, examining your own motives, and listening to the other person's perspective?
5. How can a person speak honestly about harmful behavior while still treating the other person with dignity and grace?

JOHN WESLEY: TENDER LOVE AND HONEST SELF-EXAMINATION

In his sermon Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse Ten, Wesley explores the danger of judging others. He identifies several forms of sinful judgment, including assuming faults that may not exist, attributing motives without sufficient evidence, and reaching a conclusion before hearing the other person's perspective. Wesley's insight is especially relevant to our question this week: curiosity creates space for information we do not yet have. Instead of assuming we understand why someone acted a certain way, we can listen, ask, and seek a fuller understanding.

For Wesley, Christian maturity is not simply avoiding outwardly unkind words. It involves the transformation of our inward dispositions so that our thoughts and actions increasingly reflect love.

1. How might Wesley's emphasis on “tender love” change the way we talk about people who are not in the room—or people with whom we strongly disagree?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. The sermon Pastor Allison opened with a lighthearted question: what is your favorite way to judge people? Take a moment to share yours with the group. What does your answer reveal about what you value or where you feel confident?
2. Why do you think judgment comes so naturally to people? What do we get out of it, even when we know it is not good for us or others?
3. The sermon described two specific forms of judgment: discrimination, which is judgment based on group identity, and condemnation, which is judgment based on a person's actions or choices. Can you think of examples of each from your own life or from the culture around you?
4. In Matthew 7, Jesus uses the image of a log in one eye and a speck in a neighbor's eye. This image would have struck the original audience as genuinely funny. How does humor function in that teaching? Does it change the way you receive the message?
5. The sermon drew a distinction between judging a neighbor and helping a neighbor. In your own experience, where is the line between those two things? How can you tell the difference in your own motivations?
6. The sermon suggested that when we are honest about our own failures — our own logs — we become more naturally curious and compassionate toward others. Do you find that to be true? Can you think of a time when your own experience of struggle made you more understanding of someone else?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

1. The poster above the pastor's desk reads: "Be curious, not judgmental." Think about a person or a group of people you tend to judge quickly. What would it look like to approach them with curiosity instead? What questions might you ask? What assumptions might you need to let go of?
2. The sermon connected the practice of confession to freedom — not guilt, but liberation. How comfortable are you with confession as a spiritual practice? What makes it difficult? What might make it easier?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Loving God, thank you for your patience with us. You know our hearts, our struggles, our assumptions, and the times we have judged others without understanding their stories. Forgive us when pride keeps us from listening and when fear causes us to see others as opponents instead of neighbors. Through your grace, help us become people who are quick to listen, slow to speak, and generous in our love. Give us the courage to examine our own hearts before trying to correct someone else's. May we lead with love in our homes, our workplaces, our church, and our community. Continue shaping us into the likeness of Christ, that others might experience your grace through the way we see, hear, and treat them. In the name of Jesus, who meets us with both truth and grace, we pray. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Notice for the next seven days the moments when a critical thought about another person arises. Do not push the thought away; simply notice it, and ask yourself: what does this judgment say about me and what I am afraid of or what I value?
2. The next time you find yourself frustrated with someone in traffic, in a meeting, online, or in your neighborhood, pause before forming a conclusion and ask one curious question about them instead. You do not need to say it out loud; just let it exist in your mind.
3. Set aside ten minutes this week to write down honestly the areas of your life where you know you have fallen short. This is not an exercise in shame. It is an exercise of clarity. After you write, read it over and remind yourself: in Christ, there is forgiveness and freedom.
4. Identify someone you have written off because of a political sign, a lifestyle choice, a past conflict, or a difference in background. Find one small way to extend genuine curiosity toward them this week. It does not have to be a dramatic gesture. It might simply be a question asked in good faith.