



JUDGING A Tale of Two Judges

September 30, 2023

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV) • “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Romans 2:1-4 (NIV) • “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”

Romans 14:1-4 (NIV) • “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person’s faith allows them to eat

anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”

1 Corinthians 4:2-5 (NIV) • “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”

James 3:1 (NIV) • “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 (NIV) • “Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess

the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

Hebrews 10:30 (NIV) • “For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ ”

Matthew 7:1 • *Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, Electronic Database:*

“Judge not. . . . The habit of censoriousness, sharp, unjust criticism. Our word ‘critic’ is from this very word. It means to separate, distinguish, discriminate. That is necessary, but prejudice (pre-judgment) is unfair, captious criticism.”

(Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright © 1985 by Broadman Press.)

Matthew 7:3 • *Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament, Electronic Database:*

“Beholdest” or “see”—“Staring at from without, as one who does not see clearly.” (Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “JUDGING”

“Don’t judge” is a common response when people look down on or seek to correct another person who is out of line. But humans are constantly discerning and evaluating. On one hand there is no way we can avoid making judgments about others. On the other hand, Jesus warned His followers against judging others because of how dangerous and tender a work it is—a work better suited for someone who has complete knowledge and experience.

This lesson will examine what Jesus said about how we should relate to others who are in need of correction. Jesus’ example in Matthew 7:3 of the dust and the log does not simply mean to mind our own business; it reminds us that we need God’s forgiveness to deal with sin in our own lives so that we are able to help others. The key is not whether we should judge, but rather the way in which we all identify sin within ourselves and others. In order to do this well, we need to understand the difference between being judgmental and critical, and the difference

between condemnation and correction.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “JUDGING”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Discover what our role is when it comes to correcting other people.
2. Identify what makes people so ill-equipped to judge others.
3. Consider the ways we can restore others with grace-powered redirection.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) blindfold, sunglasses, reading glasses, needles, thread; (Activity B) 10 books.

Connecting • Bibles, pencils, paper, handouts.

Applying • White/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

Remember: Because the students now study their lesson prior to class, this review is for those sections in the current week’s lesson.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for

Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults
at www.realtimefaith.net
>> Service projects reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need a blindfold, sunglasses, reading glasses, needles, and some thread. The purpose of this activity is to get students to try to thread a needle (usually a challenging task with good vision) with their vision slightly impaired.

Get set • Ask for as many volunteers as you have materials for. You might ask others to give advice and coaching to those trying to thread the needle.

Go • Say: **I'm sure you feel as if you can see well enough to thread a needle. It is not a hard thing to do. But how well can you thread a needle wearing these?** (Show implements of impairment.) Invite the students to try to thread the needle first with the glasses or blindfold on and then have them try to thread the needle without the implements.

Debriefing • Ask: **To what degree did the glasses or blindfold make the job more difficult?** (not much, impossible) **In what areas of life do you need to see clearly to accomplish a task?** (surgery, nuclear physics) **In order to pass an eye exam for a driver's license the candidate needs to have only about 20/30 vision. In what driving scenarios do you think this would be problematic?** (parking, reading

street signs) **In what scenarios would this not be a big problem?** (You can still identify colors like the difference between red, green, yellow. You can still see shapes like a stop sign.) **When it comes to the way we perceive the faults of others, how important do you think it is to see their fault from as many points of view as possible?**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • This exercise is called "judging a book by its cover." Simply gather about 10 books you are familiar with that have titles that vary in the way they communicate the content of the book. The point of the exercise is to get students to experience firsthand how little a title can convey. Moreover, even though we think we understand people well, we don't ever know the whole picture that makes labeling, judging, and assigning blame to them a dangerous activity.

Get set • Set the books on a table so you can see the titles but the students can't.

Go • Say: **Some maintain that you should not judge a book by its cover. Can you always tell what a book is about by reading its title? Let's try this and see.** Begin by reading book titles that may be more obvious, such as *How to Raise a Puppy*. **Ask:** **Can we determine what this book might be about?** (yes) **Let's move on to another, shall we?** Continue to read the titles and ask students what they think the books are about. If their guesses don't come close to the subject of the book, try reading the subtitle, if any. Then try showing the cover picture. After several guesses, describe the contents of each book and contrast it with what the class members said.

Debriefing • Ask: **What does this exercise show us about being able to really know something at first glance?** (You can't always know. Sometimes it is easier than others.) **How much can you know about what is in a book simply by reading the cover?** (You can know

only some generalities.) **What scenarios can you think of in which people are often misjudged or judged too quickly by outward appearances?**

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

(A similar story has been told about doughnuts. If you used it recently with your students, you might skip this illustration.)

The story is told of a woman who was waiting for her plane and purchased as a snack for the journey, a bag of those cute miniature cookies. She sat down to wait for her plane and rested her belongings in the empty seat next to her. On the other side of the empty seat was a man reading the paper and sipping a cup of coffee. He smiled at her and continued reading. She opened up the bag of cookies that was on the seat and began eating a few as she watched the news on the airport TV terminal. She was visibly shocked and slightly embarrassed when the man next to her had the audacity to reach into her cookie bag and begin eating some of the cookies. She didn't want to say anything, but this was odd, absolutely absurd. *This man is eating my cookies!* she thought to herself. He continued to eat a few at a time, and as the bag began to empty she grabbed several herself, the whole time wondering in disbelief how a person could be so clueless of common social graces. As he reached for the last cookie she grabbed the bag and took the miniature cookie for herself. The man smiled politely and sipped his coffee and read his paper until the plane began to board. Sitting in her seat, the woman still couldn't get over the audacity of that cookie thief, until she opened her purse to get a pen and saw the unopened bag of cookies she had purchased still in her purse.

Debriefing • Ask: What ways can we check ourselves before leaping to early conclusions? When has something like this happened to you?

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

It is not uncommon for Jesus to say things that are difficult to hear. Some of the most difficult things Jesus ever said had to do with the way people relate to one another. When it comes to His kingdom God is adamant about protecting people from those who are judgmental. Jesus' command not to judge each other comes from a keen awareness of how damaging it is for an unjust person to judge another. It's especially dangerous for the one who is doing the judging. Jesus says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1, 2, NIV). Think of a scenario in which someone you know sat in judgment on someone else. How did such a position hurt the one being judged? How did it hurt the one who was judging?

Say: There are a few different ways to look at the "speck" and the "plank" in Jesus' illustration. In groups of two or three, write out your own interpretation of this passage explaining why you think Jesus used this example and what the speck and the plank signify. Then think of another analogy or illustration that communicates this truth and share it with the class.

After students have shared their analogies, discuss the following interpretations of the parable with them. **Ask:** Which one is closest to the way you understand Jesus' words?

- This passage is about perspective. What does a speck look like when it is in your eye? It clouds your whole vision. You simply can't see, even though the speck is tiny. When we are looking at our own shortcomings, we see enough to cloud our entire vision. When with clear vision we see other people struggling, their shortcomings are

a speck, a problem, but not the end of all things.

- Even though I may see that someone else is wrong about something, with my limited vision I may see very little compared to what I know to be wrong in my own life. Jesus is saying, “Don’t look at others—you have enough to worry about in yourself.”
- Jesus is talking about how to help others. He says, “First, take the plank out of your own eye—then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s/sister’s eye.” Before you get indignant about other people who make mistakes, make a list of your own mistakes. And when you get tired of making the list and get to the place where you realize that only the mercy of God will help you, then you can go to the other person with a merciful heart to help them receive what you have received and overcome for their own good.
- After discussing these three perspectives on the parable, **say: Look at the verses in the student lesson and choose one or two that really speak to you about how you relate to people who are in the wrong. Pair up and share the passages you chose and why you chose them. Be ready to report to the class your conversation with your partner.**

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Ask: In the “Tale of Two Judges,” with whom do you identify the most? Would you be the judge who reacted, or the judge who reached out? Can you think of similar stories? When have you misjudged someone?

Ask students whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: *It is better to let someone learn the hard way about their faults than to point them out to them in an unmerciful manner.* Explain your answer.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Say: Let’s say that you are given the task of making a list of five questions for people to ask themselves before approaching another person about something wrong in their life. (You can even use the dilemma portrayed in the student lesson as an example to get them started.) **What would those five questions be?** Have the students work in groups of three or four. When they are finished, have each group share their five questions and compare the lists as each group reports.

Give students a copy of the “What’s Worse?” handout (p. 149) and allow a few minutes for them to complete it. When they have finished, discuss how these actions and attitudes hurt both the person who does them as well as the person who insists on pointing it out. **Ask: How many of you have done these things before? How many could easily see yourself doing these things? How does this exercise shape the way you might approach someone who is in the wrong?**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Write the following words on a white/chalkboard: “judgment,” “condemnation,” “rebuke,” “correction.”

Say: Before we move further we should define some words that get misused. I’m going to give you four words, and I want you to define them in your own words as well as tell how the words are similar and how they are different. You can do this in pairs or small groups.

As students report, comment on how the differences in these words have a big impact on the way we approach those who have acted wrongfully.

In the same pairs or groups, have students make up a scenario similar to the story in the student lesson in which someone has an appar-

ent basis to judge someone else. Then have them present those dilemmas to the class without giving the rest of the story.

After each presentation **ask: What is your initial, gut response to this problem? What could be some alternative reasons for this wrongdoing? How do you think the story ends up?**

Then have students tell the rest of their stories and comment on how we should go about restoring people in a spirit of mercy.

Debriefing • Ask: How do you think you would respond best to someone seeking to help you with a problem?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Who do you know with whom you could practice this approach?
2. In what way does personal prayer become an important part of judging or not judging others?
3. Agree or disagree: Most people who are judgmental of others are suffering miserably under the guilt of their own sin.
4. How would you approach someone who is judgmental of others and doesn't really realize it?
5. How can you apply these principles to the way you and your friends view students, pastors, and other leaders?

6. Take some time this week to pray for people you don't think highly of because of the way they behave. Spend some time thinking about the things that may make them act in the way you do not like.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Applying this section of the Bible may be the most difficult thing that citizens of God's kingdom ever do. To be judgmental is out of the question. To be merciful and helpful is a non-negotiable rule. Have you ever found yourself between these mandates—struggling to help each other with mercy? I guess the best way to respond is not to, at first. Maybe the best way is to pray, wonder, and search your own heart, as well as pray for the other person until you have the right spirit. And then reach out to them. If you find the perfect way to do this, maybe you should write a book, start a TV show, or do something to share the how-tos with the rest of the kingdom! If we could get good experience with this exercise in grace, can you imagine how different life might be in the church? in the world?

FOR LESSON ONE:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE "CONNECTING TO LIFE" ACTIVITY.

What's Worse?

In column A, rank the following in this order: 1 for what you think is the most wrong to 5 for the least wrong or bad.

A

B

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | Lying to your friend. |
| ___ | ___ | Talking about someone behind their back. |
| ___ | ___ | Making fun of someone who is different from you. |
| ___ | ___ | Feeling satisfied when others you don't like experience hardship/justice. |
| ___ | ___ | Pretending to be spiritual when you aren't really living that way. |

Now go through the list again, and in column B rank them in the following order: 1 for the one you are likely to do/or have done and 5 for the one you have never done or are least likely to ever do.

What's Worse?

In column A, rank the following in this order: 1 for what you think is the most wrong to 5 for the least wrong or bad.

A

B

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | Lying to your friend. |
| ___ | ___ | Talking about someone behind their back. |
| ___ | ___ | Making fun of someone who is different from you. |
| ___ | ___ | Feeling satisfied when others you don't like experience hardship/justice. |
| ___ | ___ | Pretending to be spiritual when you aren't really living that way. |

Now go through the list again, and in column B rank them in the following order: 1 for the one you are likely to do/or have done and 5 for the one you have never done or are least likely to ever do.



STUDENT LESSON

JUDGING

A Tale of Two Judges

September 30, 2023

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10-12, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 4, The Son:** “God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 125-127

A TALE OF TWO JUDGES

Sitting in an airport waiting to board her plane sat a very tired woman with two small children about 3 and 5 years of age. The 5-year-old was racing around the walkway, while people shook their heads at the lack of control this mother had over her child.

Meanwhile, the 3-year-old wrestled around on her mother’s lap reaching for a soda cup to get another drink. While the child was drinking, the cup collapsed, and the dark liquid splashed all over the mother and child as well as a few

well-dressed people nearby. The mother lost her temper at that point and swatted the little child on the backside while asking loudly, “Can’t you drink anything without spilling it?”

At this point people began to shake their heads in disgust at such a poor display of parenting. A woman nearby stomped away to call security. Soon two men in airport security garb came and began talking to the woman, along with one of the airline attendants. The woman who had made the report plopped down in her seat and stated to no one in particular, “Someone had to do something for those children.”

Just as she did that, an amazing thing happened. A kindly woman in business clothing put her briefcase down and joined the discussion. By this time all eyes were on this development, and everyone was wondering what would happen. The frazzled mother explained her plight to the security officers and the flight desk worker as they smiled compassionately at her and nodded with looks of concern. The businesswoman opened up her briefcase and pulled out paper and pens and began drawing pictures of animals while the 3-year-old named them out loud: “pig,” “cow,” “horsey,” “dog.”

As the call to board was announced, a look of relief swept over the mother’s face as the security officers and the attendant helped her gather up the family’s bags to get on the plane. The businesswoman, obviously distressed over the mother’s plight, could be heard to say: “She is raising those children alone. She and the children have been awake for 32 hours. The airlines lost their luggage and their baby stroller. Every

flight she was taking to get back home has either been delayed or canceled. Her ATM card won't work for some reason, and on this trip she has just learned that her mother (the children's grandma) is dying of cancer. I have had my children on planes before, and it's a nightmare. I don't know how that woman is surviving."

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 18:15-17.
- » Kenneth gets straight As in school. He is respected by the teachers and other students as one of the smartest guys in the class. Randy, who has to work hard just to do better than average, observed Kenneth using a cheat sheet during a major science exam. He was shocked. He kept the information to himself, but he watched during every exam, and sure enough, Kenneth cheated every time. When Kenneth got an award at assembly for academic success, Randy wanted to stand up and expose this cheater for the fraud that he was. One of Randy's friends, Craig, commented on how he wished he could get good grades like Kenneth. That was all Randy could take. He coolly replied to Craig, "You can get good grades like Kenneth, if you cheat." And then he walked off in a storm.
- » How should Randy, as a Christian, deal with his anger toward Kenneth and his outburst at the lockers with his friend Craig? What would have been the ideal response when he first noticed the cheating? What should he do about it now?
- » Log on to www.guidemagazine.org/rtf to post your responses. Be up-front and honest. Say what you think.

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON GOD THE SON

- » Read John 5:22; Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19.
- » It is not our place to judge others. Jesus by His life and death has earned the right to be judge. He is our example in how to love the sinner and work to reconcile (reunite) them back to a relationship with Him.
- » What are some things you can do to help someone into a relationship with Jesus?

- » Fill in the blanks. The verse is from the New King James Version.

"Let this _____ be in _____ which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and _____ in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He _____ Himself and became _____ to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus _____ should _____, of those in _____, and of those on _____, and of those _____ the earth, and that _____ should _____ that _____ is _____, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read John 7:24.
- » If you have ever been on the receiving end of judgment, you know how painful it can

be. Receiving a rebuke tends to put us on the defensive, which doesn't help us grow. But don't walk away from the challenge of helping others grow. It's hard, but it may be one of the greatest tools in the spreading of the gospel, because it models the way Jesus won people to Himself while He was here on earth. He called sin for what it was, but the sinner was joyfully restored to a better life. People were drawn to the way He told the truth.

- » How can we help others choose a better path, as Jesus did? The key might be in the way we react. First, we check ourselves and remember every time we have done something similar. Next, we ask God's mercy and ask Him to help us see clearly enough to help someone else. Help won't come through judgment, but through grace. Finally, thoughtfully and prayerfully write that note or say those words that will point your friend to a better way.
- » Whatever you do, don't walk away from this challenge. Think about where the church would be if we just left one another alone with our problems.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the verse with the text. All verses are from the New King James Version.

1.	Luke 6:37, 38	
2.	Romans 14:10-12	
3.	Matthew 18:15-17	
4.	Romans 6:23	
5.	John 3:17	
6.	Ezekiel 7:27	
7.	John 7:24	

A.	"... 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ..."
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B.	"... God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world ..."
C.	"... judge with righteous judgment."
D.	"... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
E.	"... Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. ..."
F.	"... according to what they deserve I will judge them. ..."
G.	"... For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ..."

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read John 3:17.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Walking into the courtroom to pay for a traffic ticket, a young man noticed, to his joyful surprise, that the judge was his former soccer coach. Whew! While the young man knew the judge well enough to know that he would be driving differently as a result of this time in the courtroom, he was at least confident that he would be shown mercy.
- » Everything has to do with being confident in the one who judges us. We know that Christ loves us and has paid with His life to lead us to a better way. His correction, even though it might be strong, will always be loving. That isn't always the case with those who judge us on earth—the critics and the gossips.
- » Before we write off those who have judged us, however, we had better check the list again and see if our name has ever been on it. We might find that there have been times we have stabbed people in the back with our words. There are probably times we have been unkind and didn't feel a bit sorry. And likely times we have judged others unkindly and wrongfully.

- » If you find that your name might be on the list, erase it with the blood of Christ. By faith we can have this assurance, but remember that by faith others have the same right to the mercy of God.

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read Luke 6:41-43.
- » Try a quick judgment check. In the table below, write some common things that really

bother you about other people. Avoid the extremes—superficial things such as wearing socks with sandals or horrific crimes in which someone is abused or killed. Instead, focus on the things that you meet up with every day that are wrong—such as gossip, exclusion, dishonesty, arrogance, etc. Note how often you’ve done the same thing.

- » Then look at your list and ask yourself: How many times have I helped someone overcome this problem? If I did so, did I show the kind of love and mercy Jesus showed?

Briefly state your judgments below	Check the box that applies		
Things that I think are offensive	I never do that	I sometimes do that	I do that a lot
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			