Judge Not (Title Slide) Trevor message

Matthew 7:1-6

Good morning. Would you stand with me as we read todays' scripture. Matthew 7:1-6

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 "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? 4 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? 5 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.

6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

You may be seated

So if you ask people the most popular scripture they can think of, John 3:16 is usually the first to come to mind. You all know the verse. Well Matthew 7:1 comes in as a close second. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." Back in February, Pastor Kerry was out of town and he had asked me to teach on that Sunday. Well God had been putting on my heart a message about judging for some time, because it is something I have battled personally. So when Pastor Brian asked me to teach today, I wanted to take the opportunity to share this message here in Trevor.

As long as I can remember, I have always believed in God and was very religious. I went to a Catholic grade school, went to church every single day, and even came very close to becoming a priest. When I share my testimony, it is not one of hitting rock bottom and turning to Jesus. I followed the rules set out by not only the Bible, but by the Catholic Church.

Before I started studying God's Word and gave my life to Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I thought of myself as somewhat of a role model for being a good Christian. But there was one big problem. I was a Pharisee. I was intolerant. I judged everyone and unintentionally gave the impression that I thought I was better than everyone else. I always wanted to be the one that was singled out as not like everyone else. In fact, an example of that actually happened in 8th grade, The teacher walked out of the room and all of us started throwing paper airplanes and generally messing around. Unfortunately, the teacher came back unexpectedly and disciplined everyone in the class with an extra assignment. And then looked right at me and said everyone except Rick because I know he wouldn't do something like this. At the time, it was a dream come true. Now I look back at that incident with complete embarrassment. I know now that I was judgemental and self righteous and had little mercy or tolerance for what I considered to be inappropriate behavior, without even recognizing my own issues. And it's now an issue that God is continuing to work on in my life.

It was an affirmation of the need to talk about this when we visited my sister over Christmas and she was wearing this shirt.

Slide 1. Picture of Don't Judge me Santa shirt

We think about being judged often and yet we judge others frequently. Now, although this is one of the most memorable scriptures, it is also one of the most misunderstood and is often taken out of context.

Slide 2. Picture of redacted scripture

I found this graphic as I prepared for the message. When people read this scripture, they often read it as shown in this image. They stop after the words "Judge Not". It's very similar to the way that some men read Colossians 3:18-25. They stop after reading, "Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord". And they don't put that statement in context with the next verse that says. ''Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."

As I was preparing this message, I recalled that I had a friend who would read the last few pages of a book so he knew the ending in advance. It relieved his anxiety. Then he would read the book from the beginning, taking comfort in knowing how it ends

When we meditate and study the Bible, that's exactly what we experience. We know the entire story and the ending. We read in John 16:33 that Jesus told his disciples. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." But we know that in the end, God wins, creates a new heaven and earth and fully establishes His kingdom, and those of us who follow Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Savior spend eternity with God. So we can live our lives with peace and hope, no matter what we face, knowing the end of the story

So why am I telling you this. Because, today, we are going to unpack this scripture to understand what it means by judging and what it doesn't mean. But let me ease any anxiety by sharing the ending. So here goes. There is a difference between judging and spiritual discernment. Discernment is the ability to choose between what is right and what is false and wrong. So the ability to discern is synonymous with the ability to think biblically. As Christians, we are to spread the Gospel and help bring others to Christ as commanded in Matthew 28:18-20, The Great Commission. But Scripture also warns us not to judge others based on our own self righteousness because all of us fall short of the glory of God. So the concluding message today is that Jesus did **NOT** intend this verse to obliterate our ability to judge between behavior that the Bible encourages and behavior that the Bible forbids. Instead, He wants us to avoid rashly judging others with a hypocritical and unkind spirit. And to make sure that we correct our own transgressions so we have the clarity to help others overcome their sins.

I read somewhere that when it comes to judging, there are basically two kinds of people. There are those who will not make **ANY** judgements because they just want to live and let live or they love the word "whatever" or they are fearsome of being labeled as intolerant or inflexible. And there are those who are quick to judge because they have a critical spirit. Which means they judge lots of things, whether they are Biblical behaviors or not. But Christians can be a third

group that sits right in the middle… Those who do NOT judge wrongly, but have the spiritual discernment to help draw others closer to God. That's what we're going to talk about today.

So let's start out by talking about **WHY** we shouldn't judge

Slide 3: First Reason: We are not the Judge

There is only one true judge and that is God. We're not qualified to judge. God is omniscient and knows all things. When we appoint ourselves as judge, juror, and executioner, often we don't know the other person's motives, their heart, or their history. We simply judge what we can see from our limited perspective. And that often results in judging with condemnation rather than with compassion and understanding. Romans 14:4 says **"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls".** Only God can judge perfectly because He is both just **AND** merciful. He disciplines us, but He does it out of unconditional love for us. And He has self control and patience, but **WILL** reveal His wrath against the ungodliness of wickedness of man. These are characteristics that belong only to God, so we are not qualified to act as a righteous judge. Only God can **LOVE** and Judge. Romans 12:19 tells us Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"[a] says the Lord.

And James 4:11-12 says, "Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?" When we judge others, we are sitting in judgement of the law. Because the law tells us to love your neighbor as yourself and when you speak out against your neighbor with condemnation, you are no longer loving them, but rather judging them. When we set ourselves up as judge, we make ourselves to be better than others. And the problem with that is that **ALL** of us sin and fall short of God's glory.

Slide 4: Second Reason: God will judge you the same way you judge others

Matthew 7:2 says, "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you".

If you are harsh and overbearing to others, God will judge you harshly. On the other hand, if you show mercy and grace, God will show the same to you. God has forgiven us an unpayable debt. Now He asks that we forgive the comparatively smaller debts we are owed and extend the mercy and grace that we receive from Him. Jesus taught this principle in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy". And again in the Lord's prayer, when he said "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors"

We also find this same principle in Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans 2:1-3 says "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. **2** Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on

truth. [3] 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?"

Scripture makes it clear that we can expect to receive judgement on the same basis as we give it. In the flesh, we have this inherent desire to see "people get what they deserve". That's why we love vigilante movies. John Wick and The Equalizer. People get what they deserve even when the law can't catch them. Even Batman has gone from a superhero to a vigilante. But the truth is we certainly don't want what **we** deserve. Because without God's mercy and grace, none of us are saved. Romans 3:10 tells us that "No One is Righteous, not even one"

We live in a fallen world and **ALL** of us fall short of God's glory and sin. So if we're not careful, it's really easy to start judging others when we observe behavior that is inappropriate or language that is insensitive or offensive, without recognizing that others see that same behavior and language in us. It's easy to forget that as we appoint ourselves as judge, juror, and executioner, one day the judgements we lay on others will be laid on us by the only true judge…. Our God. And quickly we will become the defendant instead of the prosecutor.

Slide 5: Third reason: We should judge ourselves first

Look at Matthew 7: 3-5. "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?

As I read this scripture, I can see that Jesus has a sense of humor. Thinking about the image of a big plank sticking out of someone's eye. And I get this visual image of telling someone that they spinach in their teeth while I sit there with mustard and ketchup all over my face.

We can often be very good at judging others, but not so good at judging ourselves. Jesus does not tell us that it is wrong to help your brother, but rather before you try to do so, deal with your own issues.

The faults and sins of others sometimes have a way of taking our eye off the mirror and putting it on others. It can become easy to think that we are the observers of inappropriate behavior and not an offender ourselves. When we spend more time noticing others' sins than our own, we struggle to wear the spirit of gentleness and compassion and forgiveness.

So why is it so important that **we** examine the plank in our own eye? First of all, no one knows your own sins better than yourself. You know your heart, your thoughts, your motives and your weaknesses. Focusing on someone else's faults allows us to take the focus off our own. Secondly, We start playing the comparison game. How many times do we look at someone else's sin and say well at least I have never done that. Remember the parable Jesus told about the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18**:** 10-14

[10] "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—

robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

If we’re not careful, we can get into the sin comparison game. Well I’ve made mistakes, but I have **NEVER** done anything as bad as that person has done. Before I became a Christian, I remember thinking things like maybe I lie a little or cheat a little, but I’ve never killed anyone. And yea, maybe I looked at other women when I was married, but I never had an affair. Sin is sin and we don’t get to grade sin and judge which sin is worse than another. **ANY SIN** disqualifies us from Heaven. God doesn’t grade on a curve.

Slide 6: Fourth reason: If we love our neighbors, we should want to help them overcome sin, not condemn them for it.

Jesus tells us that we can’t help others until we help ourselves. He tells us to deal with our own issues and then you can help your neighbor. And He tells us that if we truly love our neighbor, we will want to help him with his sin. Not judge or condemn him, but help him overcome that sin.

So let’s talk about what this scripture says about judging others **wrongly.**

Slide 7: Judging with a hypocritical or unkind spirit

We should never judge out of jealousy or bitterness or selfish ambition, or to make ourselves look better, but rather to seek to build the person up in Christ. If we judge with a critical, judgmental spirit, we tend to condemn **people**, rather than behaviors. What you are thinking or saying could in fact be true, but if you’re sharing it to make yourself look good and slander the other, it’s a problem.

It can become a manifestation of pride and the appearance that we think we’re better than others.

In the past, I just felt compelled to tell people when they were doing something wrong. My father always told me, Ricky, one day those lips of yours are going to get you into trouble. And it happened a lot. I remember once being downtown with my family having dinner and when we left the restaurant, some guy who was clearly facing hard times stopped us and told us he was hungry and asked for help. I didn’t read in between the lines and offered him our leftovers. He didn’t take that well and started using really foul language in front of my wife, mother and sister. So I couldn’t stop myself and started telling him that he had a lot of nerve asking for help and then talking like that in front of my family. The last thing I remember is him walking away

continuing to curse at me and saying, fine… I'll just go rob someone. I often wonder if I had shown love and compassion and maybe even shared the Gospel, would things have turned out differently. I had the wrong motive. I was scolding him out of condemnation instead of trying to help him change inappropriate behavior.

Slide 8: Judging without knowing the facts

A number of years back, Jan and I had hired a landscaper to do some work around the house. He was supposed to show up a certain week and didn't. Week after week passed and I didn't hear a word from him. So my intolerance was building and after about 3 weeks, I called him to give him a piece of my mind about being inconsiderate and irresponsible. Imagine my embarrassment when he apologized and told me that his mother had passed away and he was unable to meet his obligations. Judging without knowing the facts.

Have you ever judged someone on physical appearance without knowing anything about them? James 2:1-4 warns us about this. He says "Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. **3** If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

I have a neighbor who was an union iron worker, drives a harley, and talks like a drunken sailor. When we moved into the neighborhood, I created an assumption about his character based on his physical appearance and demeanor. But that year, we hosted a bbq and I got to know him. And as it turns out, he has a heart of gold. Always helping those in the neighborhood in need. He just went through prostate cancer and our prayer team was praying for him. One day, he was driving by and rolled down his window to say hi. I told him we were praying for him and this big Harley iron worker reached across the seat, started crying, and grabbed my hand and wouldn't let go.

How many times have you judged someone as being unfriendly or rude when you don't have any idea what they may be going through in their lives. How often do we allow ourselves to think the worst about someone rather than admitting we don't know what we don't know. When I have done that in the past, more often than not, I found out I was totally off base. Someone once told me, give someone the benefit of the doubt. They may surprise you.

Slide 9: Judging according to human standards rather than God's Word

As I grew up, some of the things that I was judgemental about were not Biblical principles, but man made ones. The Bible does not make smoking or drinking alcohol in itself a sin, but I was very judgemental of people who were engaged in this behavior. I even remember in Catholic school being absolutely furious that some people actually ate meat on a Friday. When I was around 16 years old, I was in the car with my brother and his girlfriend and during a conversation, she used the word HELL in a very casual manner. I went ballistic and told her that she shouldn't use that kind of language and even dug a deeper hole by telling her that in particular, women shouldn't talk like that. Before I knew it, my brother was turning around from

the front seat, grabbing me by the shirt and throwing me out of the car. It was cold out there thinking about what I had just done.

Last year, we just went through an interesting election process. People had some **VERY** strong opinions about policies and positions on a number of issues. As I prayed about the outcome, I realized that I had to separate those issues or positions that were tied to Biblical Truth and those that were not. When it came to issues like marriage, sexual identity, and abortion, I realized that I had to take a stand when I considered a candidate. But when it came to things like economic policies or climate policies, I had to be careful to not let my personal convictions become the standards by which I judged others who didn't share those convictions.

This was one of major sins of the Pharisees. They had a number of man made rules and then judged those who didn't keep them. They neglected God's commandments and instead held to the traditions of men and their man made rules. Matthew 23:23 tells us "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.

It's one thing to advise someone not to smoke because of their health or to not eat certain foods that are unhealthy and quite another to judge them as sinners

Slide 10: Judging without Grace or Mercy

There is no question that people do in fact exhibit behavior or use language that is not aligned with God's Word. But again, all of us fall short of the glory of God. I love Pastor Kerry's observation that we are all just a bunch of messed of Christians trying to mess up less. And again, this scripture tells us that we will be judged with the same measure that we use. When we mess up, don't we want mercy or grace for our mistakes? Our salvation is because of God's mercy and grace, not because of anything we do. So if we judge without mercy or grace, we will be judged the same way. How many relationships have been broken when someone offends us and we don't extend any grace or mercy?

So let's switch tracks now and talk about what this scripture telling us **not** to judge does **NOT** mean. And this goes back to the conclusion I shared earlier. There is a difference between judging and spiritual discernment. While we are not to judge… that is to belittle, punish or condemn, we are to use sound judgement in being discerning when it comes to Biblical Truth and God's Word. That means that often we have to respectfully rebuke the sinful behaviors of others and point out the path back to the Lord.

So what does spiritual discernment look like

Slide 11: Being Discerning regarding recognizing someone's character or Teaching as a problem

Matthew 7:6 says "Do not give what is holy to the dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine. " Dogs and swine refer to dangerous people. Jesus isn't talking literally about animals. We would not be able to obey either of these commands unless we were allowed to make moral

judgements as to what is right and what is wrong. We have to be able to recognize who we are dealing with. So some think that Matthew 7:1 is saying you can't call sin sin, that you can't comment on moral behavior, and you can't judge someone else's actions as wrong. The problem is that if you can't judge something to be wrong, then you can't judge it to be right either. So clearly Jesus cannot mean that we cannot judge wrong or right in accordance with Biblical principles. John 7:24 says "do not judge by appearances, but judge with RIGHT judgement". And right judgment is all about spiritual discernment.

Matthew 7:15 says "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." How could we possibly look out for false prophets unless we recognize them. Again, it takes character discernment to identify the wolves in sheep's clothing, It requires us to identify when someone's teaching is false.

Unfortunately, we currently live in a culture in which you are accused of being unloving and judgmental if you dare to confront sin or if you expose a false teacher. Someone was once talking to me about same sex marriage, transgenders, and abortion and told me that Christians are supposed to be loving, forgiving, and tolerant. I had to tell that person that I agreed with them. But we are **NOT** supposed to accept behaviors and thoughts that contradict God's Word. The reality is that you are unloving of others if you allow false teachers or wolves to prey on the flock or to allow sinning to infect the flock without exposing them.

Slide 12: Not just recognizing, but actually addressing a believer's sinful behavior or false teaching

As we said at the beginning of this message, this scripture is often misunderstood. People will say that they should never confront someone about their sin because they would be judging them. But if our goal is to help them overcome sinful behavior instead of condemning them, it is in fact **loving** to confront them. If you see a brother or sister in Christ sinning or believing in false teachings, Love should motivate you to do everything possible to warn them rather than allow him or her to suffer eternal consequences from not following Jesus. James 5:19-20 says, "My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, **20** remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

We all sin, but when we see patterns of behavior, we are called as Christians to address it.

Last year, I delivered a message on becoming a reflection of Jesus and imitating the way HE spoke, thought, and acted. We talked about the fact that Jesus had no problem rebuking people for wrong behavior, but He always did it with compassion and love. When we speak to someone about sin in their lives or about false teaching, our goal should always be to restore the sinning believer, as well as to honor God and protect others from that sin.

So whether it's judging or spiritual discernment often depends on our motive and the way we say things. Like Jesus, our motive should be to correct the behavior, not condemn the person. Ephesians 4:29 says "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

As I draw this to a close, I want to return to the conclusion I shared at the beginning. Matthew 7:1-6 does not prohibit us from spiritual discernment, but rather judging others with a hypocritical and unkind spirit. And our foundation for spiritual discernment is the Word of God

Timothy 3:16 says that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

So as we consider correcting or rebuking someone, the first thing we should do is pray about it. It's always better to pray and think about what we want to say rather than just react to something in the moment. That's why James 1:19 tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Next, we need to make sure that our motive is right. And we also need to make sure we have our facts right and assess the source of our information. Finally, ask yourself if you are you addressing the issue from a spirit of condemnation or to help someone else correct inappropriate behavior. The answer to that question determines if you are judging or using spiritual discernment.

Jesus teaches us to approach others with humility, kindness, and self-awareness. He challenges us to avoid hypocrisy, examine ourselves before criticizing others, and apply fair Biblical standards in our judgments, always advocating for compassion and love over condemnation.

Think about that the next time your tempted to judge someone and ask yourself if you are doing this to make yourself look better or to condemn the person or if you are doing it to help them overcome sinful behavior and draw closer to God

In saying "judge not less you be judged", Jesus is reminding us to avoid the damaging cycle of harsh judgement. Instead he invites us to build relationships based on love and understanding, while at the same time, recognizing our own need for growth, and to approach everyone with genuine care and a desire to help them overcome sinful behaviors.

Of course, it goes without saying that for us to use spiritual discernment, we have to stay in the Word so we know what is true and what is false. What is Biblically right and wrong in all areas of life. A discerning person keeps his reasoning aligned with God's Word so he or she steers clear of false teaching. **We need to study Scripture and pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us with discernment.**

I know I've shared this with some of you in the past, but it's worth repeating. There is a comedy team called Penn and Teller who are known atheists. Penn made a statement once that he doesn't understand Christians. He says that if he saw a person standing in the way of a speeding car, he would do everything in his power to move them out of the way so they were not injured or even killed. So if Christians truly believe what we say we believe, why would we not be doing EVERYTHING in our power to share the Gospel and draw people to God so they spend eternity with Him. Think about this the next time you avoid sharing God's truth for fear of being labeled intolerant or judgmental.

Let me pray for us.

Father, thank you for your Word today. We know that you are the one and only righteous Judge. We all sin and fall short of Your glory. So we are not qualified to judge others But you do call us to use spiritual discernment and lead others to you. Help us to understand the difference between judging others with a critical and unkind spirit and helping them to correct behavior that is not aligned with your Word so they can draw closer to you. And give us the courage to address the plank in our own eye before attempting to help our brothers and sisters remove the speck in theirs. And help us to address spiritual discernment with humility, kindness, love, compassion, and self awareness. We pray this in Your Holy and precious name. Amen.