Judge, Jury, and Executioner
I. Do Not Judge
   A. What is unrighteous judging?
      1. Putting someone else down in order to make yourself look good and feel better about yourself
      2. The desire to punish someone (punishment is different than discipline and different than setting boundaries)
      3. The failure to give grace and love to another person
      4. Closing off your spirit to someone
      5. The arrogance of thinking my discernment is always right
      6. The arrogance of thinking what I see and hear is 100% correct without searching out the matter
      7. The tendency to put people in a category and keep them there
      8. Based on a snapshot of time, I apply Biblical principles to someone without knowing the whole story
   
   B. What is righteous judging?
      1. Getting discernment about an issue in a person’s life and pursuing God’s will about that issue
      2. When I see sin or annoying things in people’s lives, I pursue healing, help, and grace to give to them
      3. When I sense something about someone else, I take the time to pursue the matter while asking God for His wisdom
      4. When people annoy me, I take the time to ask God what PLANK I have in my own eye. What do I see in them that I don’t see in myself?
Table Talk

Teens
Read Matthew 7:1-6

Question One:
A final illustration of the Pharisees practice pertains to judging. The Pharisees were then judging Christ and finding Him to be inadequate. He was not offering the kind of kingdom they anticipated or asking for the kind of righteousness they were exhibiting. So they rejected Him. Jesus therefore warned them against hypocritical judging.

- In your own words, describe what hypocritical judging means.

Question Two:
This passage does not teach that judgments should never be made; after all, some kind of judgment is required in order to obey the command in verse 7:6. The point of this verse is that a Christian should not have a spirit of habitually critical or a faultfinding heart.

- What does a critical heart look like?

Question Three:
Though judgment is sometimes needed, those making the distinctions must first be certain of their own lives or the plank in his own eye.

- Describe what a speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye vs. a plank in your own eye means.

II. The Judging Boomerang
A. I get in the same measure I give out
1. This is a natural law that is meant to bring grace, mercy, and awakening to my own sin
2. God lets us be judged to learn the pain of my own judging and to teach me to push into Him

B. I practice what I hate in others (Romans 2:1-4)

III. What to do when unrighteously judged
A. Discern
1. Do they have a point? Any point at all?
2. Is this just part of being treated like Jesus was treated?

B. Respond
1. Give Grace
2. Seek God’s will

IV. Confronting
A. Pursue God’s perspective
B. Pursue your own planks
C. Speak to them in humility and grace
D. Do not give what is holy to dogs
1. Some people should not be confronted
2. Do not avoid confrontation out of fear
Life Group Questions for
June 24, 2012
“Good News” Series
Message = Judge, Jury, & Executioner

Ice Breaker: Have you ever entered a contest of any kind? Tell about one such contest and the results of it.

Read Matthew 7: 1-6
1. What do you observe about this passage?

2. Based on this passage, what is a hypocrite?

3. Judging is based on a motive to punish others and to lift yourself above them. On a weekly basis, do you struggle with this? Please explain. (Leader, you may want to take time here to pray for those who struggle with judging others.)

4. Read Romans 2: 1-4 and make observations about this passage.

5. When you came to the Lord, was it through His harshness or through His kindness and grace? Share a little bit of the story.

6. Can you give an example of when you have judged others and were actually practicing the same things yourself?

7. Is there a time to judge others rightly and justly? What does that look like?

8. Pray for one another.

Table Talk

Elementary
Matthew 7: 1–6

Day 1 - Read Matthew 7:1-6. What do you think this passage means? Read this passage in the Bible translation called "The Message". Have you ever criticized someone for something? Sadly, we all have at some time or another. Describe the difference between a plank and a speck of sawdust.

Day 2 - What does it mean to judge someone or something? Why is judging such a dangerous attitude to have? Christians should never make a judgment. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Day 3 - An activity to help you remember what the Bible says about judging others. You will need to cut out a square piece of cardboard, a roll of tin foil, glue and a permanent marker. Build a mirror with the pieces listed. Take the marker and write the verse Matthew 7:3 on it. Use this as a reminder that we must first examine ourselves and our own "planks" before we judge others.

You got a speck in your eye!

The Speck & the Beam Matthew 7:1-5
**Preschool & Nursery:**
Read Matthew 6:22-34 with your child or tell them about the meaning in your own words.
Do you think God wants us to worry?
Can you be happy all the time?
We need Jesus’ help to rejoice about everything!

**Bible Verse:** Rejoice in the Lord always. Philippians 4:4

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help me leave every worry at Your feet where it belongs. Cleanse my mind of worry. Fill my mind, instead, with the knowledge of how much You love me and how strong Your power is to protect me. Amen.

**Activity:** Allow your child to go outside and blow big and little bubbles and have a fun discussion about the bubbles representing all the 'worries' of our lives but "see how they pop and disappear." Let children blow more bubbles and see how long each bubble can last! You can explain to your child that our "worries/bubbles" disappear when we live by FAITH in GOD.

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**Personal Devotion Pages**
The following pages are designed to help you enjoy a regular time alone with God. We have divided up the curriculum to help us grow wherever we are at in our relationship with God and in our knowledge of His Kingdom.

**LEVELS:** Since we are a Colorado church, we use skiing imagery to communicate the different levels of intensity and time involved in relating to God.

**BEGINNER:** If you are new in your relationship with God, we encourage you to try the exercises under this symbol:

**INTERMEDIATE:** If you have walked with God for some time and would like a little more challenge and more time involvement, try the exercises under this symbol:

**ADVANCED:** These exercises are for people who have walked with God for some time and display maturity in their relationship with Him.

These exercises provide a practical way to encounter God and His truth on a regular basis. There are no rules here. Please don’t hurry through the process. Slow meditation and memorization seems to soak in better than cramming.

Enjoy!
Day One

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Matthew 7: 1-6 over several times and write down what you observe about it here.

3. Take time to ask God if there is anyone in the past week that you have judged unrighteously. Ask His forgiveness.

- Memorize Matthew 7: 1-5.

Day Five

At its heart, unrighteous judgment is an attempt to wrest from God two things: the place of ultimate judge and the ability to change people.

When I judge others, I take on the mantle of judge, something set aside only for God. At the foot of Jesus’ cross, there is no status. We are all equal there. No one can be raised above another. My desire to judge another is really a desire to be as God (the sin of Adam and Eve).

When I judge others, I seek to change them. As a child of God, I have one objective in response to others: LOVE. I heard a great preacher say once, *When people irritate you, God deals one card to you and one to Himself. They are the LOVE card and the CHANGE card. If you take the LOVE card, He will change the other person. If you take the CHANGE card, then He will love them.* The wise choice is to love the person who annoys us. Through my love, God will change them from the inside out. It may not be on my time table and it may not happen fast enough for us, but in the meantime, I am learning grace, mercy, and long-suffering.

At its heart, unrighteous judgment places me above someone else. It is an outright rejection of grace and a return to law. It basically says this, *because of some intrinsic strength that I have or because of some deeper spirituality, I am a better person than you are.* Grace reminds us that we are all such an incredible mess without Jesus and His love elevates us to the place of great value, but none of us is better than any other.

Father, I give you my judgmental attitudes. I surrender my desire to change others. You are God and I am not. I rejoice that I am your child! Thank You for Your grace!
Day Five

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Meditate again on Matthew 7:1-6. Why do you think Jesus told the disciples not to throw pearls before swine while teaching on judging?

3. Take time to pray again for people who annoy and irritate you. Ask God to show you your own heart as you pray for them.

4. Finish your Bible memorization today.

Day One

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

~Matthew 7:1, 2, NAS

Few of us have read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7 in depth enough to understand that He is trying to save us from a world of hurt and trouble. Take a look at the first phrase. Do not judge so that you will not be judged. Did you notice the so that in that sentence? My 9th grade English teacher helped me to understand how important conjunctions are... Well, frankly, Schoolhouse Rock probably had a greater influence, but I digress. The so that means it’s in my own self interest not to judge others.

Jesus strongly encourages us not to judge others because He wants to save us from being judged ourselves. Being the object of unrighteous, unfounded judgment is extremely painful. Jesus points out that there is an unwritten law written into creation. The law works like this: to the degree I judge others, I will be judged in return. If I use a thimble to measure out my judgment, I will get a thimble-full of judgment in return. If I am a critical person and I measure out my judgment by the truck-load, I will receive judgment back in the same measure.

I’ve come to realize that receiving judgment in return is in itself a gracious and merciful plan on God’s part. When I feel the pain of being judged unrighteously, I learn how my critical spirit affects others. God means it for my good; for my repentance and transformation.

Father, I receive all your grace You have for me. I choose to lavish your grace on others.
Day Two

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Matthew 7: 1-6 again several times today. Ask the Lord to reveal deep things to you as you read.

3. Read Isaiah 11: 1-4 slowly. What do you think it means to judge by what you see and hear?


5. Continue memorizing and meditating on the scriptures for this week.

Day Four

Do you think that God will judge and condemn others for doing them and not judge you when you do them, too? Don’t you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don’t you care? Can’t you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

~Romans 2:3, 4, NLT

When people do things that irritate us, we tend to respond in ways that we hope will teach them never to act that way again. It’s kind of like a natural desire inside of us to parent others. If we work with the person and are not close to them, then we will tend to share our frustrations with other co-workers.

If it’s our parent, we will give them the ol’ eyes-upward-in-frustration look, which basically communicates, you are stupid and out of touch, but I’m powerless to do anything about it.

If it’s my spouse, I’ll either give them the ol’ silent treatment or I’ll use some sort of voice inflection to intimidate them.

All these responses are based in a desire to punish. We intuitively think that if we punish the person, they will stop doing the things that irritate us (punishment differs from disciplining someone like a child or subordinate. Discipline is done to help someone grow, but punishment conveys rejection and lack of love).

Have you ever tried punishing your spouse for things that irritate you? Have you ever tried to punish a friend or co-worker for annoying you? To quote Dr. Phil, How’s that working for you? Typically people reject my attempts at punishing them. Paul points out that the way people are changed is through grace, not punishment. As I forgive and bear with others, praying for them, God changes them.
**Day Two**

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

~Isaiah 11:1-4, NAS

In his magnificent prophecy about the coming Jesus, Isaiah teaches us the difference between unrighteous judgment and righteous judgment. When I judge another unrighteously, I base my critical remarks on what I see and hear. An ignorant, foolish perspective tells me that what I see and hear, what I sense at this snapshot of time, is a completely reliable perspective on what is really going on.

Jesus, says Isaiah, will judge righteously. He will judge based on what He KNOWS to be true. He will judge with wisdom (God’s perspective) and with humility and grace. This is the kind of judgment we are encouraged to practice. This requires listening before judging and searching out the truth before handing down a sentence.

At the end of the day, judging others unrighteously is based on our own attempt to make ourselves look and feel better. When we put someone else down, we think it lifts us up - but to the contrary, it brings us lower than them every time.

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**Day Four**

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read John 5: 30. Meditate on it. Why was Jesus’ judgment righteous?

3. When you think of times in the past when you have judged others, were you seeking God’s will for that person when you made that judgment? Explain here.

4. Take time to pray for people who annoy and irritate you. Write down their names here.

5. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.
Day Three

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Romans 2: 1-4. Can you think of a time when you judged someone else, but as you look back at it, you were practicing the same thing?

3. Look at Romans 2: 4. It’s God’s kindness that leads us to repentance, not His harshness. When you look at when you came to Jesus, was it because of God’s harshness, or His love and kindness that you came to Him?

4. Write down some of your recurring sins. Ask God to give you His kindness and grace to overcome those sins. Hold your hands out, palms up, and receive His grace which overwhelsms your sin. Now ask Him to enable you to lavish that grace on others who deal with the same problems this week.

5. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye?”

~Matthew 7:3, 4, NAS

The problem with judging others is that we are usually critical of something in them that we are guilty of as well - and we can’t see it!

Paul says it well, Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. (Romans 2:1, NAS.)

I remember being at a prayer meeting one time and doing what I do many times when I’m praying... I open my eyes and look at people’s feet (I know this is incredibly unspiritual of me, but it’s the truth). While we were circled up and praying, I noticed the college professor across from me was wearing brown socks with his black shoes and black suit. Being trained carefully by my wife in the basics of fashion, I immediately snickered to myself and to the Lord. Just like a professor type, isn’t it! I said to the Lord. The Lord then instructed me to look at my own feet. I had dressed in the dark that morning because my wife was still asleep when I left for the prayer meeting. My feet were beautifully adorned with bright purple socks. I thought they were blue, but, alas, I was woefully inaccurate.

God did not let the situation get by without reminding me that when I judge others, I am guilty of the same things. My first objective when I see things that bother me in others... is to look at myself.