

## Matt. 7:1-6

### Intro:

In this passage, Jesus was giving more instructions on how to interact with other people. And, as usual, He addressed the outward actions by also addressing the inward attitudes that bring about the outward actions. In this passage, He dealt with the action of judging one another.

This passage is one of the most well-known, most often quoted, and most often misquoted verses of the entire Bible. It is often misquoted because it is taken out of context. The first verse of this passage is a general statement that, on its own, could have many different meanings. However, Jesus made it very clear in the following verses exactly what He meant in this verse. The problem is that many people quote verse 1 without looking at the surrounding context. And therefore, they misunderstand, and misquote what Jesus was really saying. Therefore, in order to avoid this mistake, we must be careful to take the entire passage into account in order to understand the first verse – what Jesus was saying, and what He was not saying.

When we take the entire passage into account, it becomes clear that Jesus was *not* forbidding the act of judging other people, or the act of determining and claiming some action to be right or wrong, and properly acting on that determination. Later in this chapter, He commanded His people to make judgment, pronounce judgment, and act accordingly (see vv. 15-23).

What Jesus was forbidding in this passage is the arrogant, hypocritical attitude that looks down on other people in judging them, as if we were perfect and not liable to the same kind of judgment. And He was forbidding a double standard of judgment that is hyper-critical of others while being extremely lax with ourselves. Jesus did not give any excuse to be lax in our judgment, either with ourselves, or with others. We are to uphold God's holy standards in all judgment. But we are to do it with humility and mercy, giving and forgiving, because we have received been forgiven. And at the same time, we are to resist those who would subvert or attack God's perfect, holy standards. It is not just a little ironic that many of the people who are quick to quote "judge not" are, at that moment, hypocritically claiming the moral high ground in order to judge others for being judgmental, without really understanding what Jesus was talking about.

### I. Don't judge with hypocritical/double standards (1-5)

#### A. Don't judge with a standard by which you don't want to be judged (1-2)

##### 1. Don't judge, so that you won't be judged (1)

###### a Do not judge (1a)

In this passage, Jesus forbade judging. However, the word "judge" has a wide variety of possible meanings.<sup>1</sup> And so, we need to look at the context to help determine which of those possible meanings Jesus intended (and did not intend) to communicate. "Judge" may mean simply to make a selection among possible alternatives. It may mean to make a judgment after considering evidence – to come to a conclusion, to reach a decision after a mental process. It may have a more formal meaning such as to engage in a legal/court process, where a legitimate authority exercises legal oversight and judgment, possibly including punishment. It is what God does when He judges the world. And this word may possibly mean to ensure true justice – to see to it that justice is actually done. The immediate context (as well as the wider Biblical teaching) probably rules out most or all of these meanings. Jesus was not forbidding any of these things.

The word "judge" may also mean to (mentally) pass judgment on the lives and actions of other people, and based on this, to try to influence them. This also has a range of possibilities. A parent may judge that their child is tying their shoes improperly and try to teach them the right way to do it. Someone may make a correct judgment and express their opinion about any number of topics. None of these things seems to fit what Jesus was prohibiting. Or this may also have the idea of passing an unfavorable judgment – to criticize or condemn. This seems to be a lot closer to what

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<sup>1</sup> All of the definitions in this section are loosely taken from the BDAG lexicon.

Jesus was intending to forbid. However, this also can be a legitimate and righteous action. We should all condemn things like murder and child exploitation etc. And there is something wrong with us if we don't.

From the context that follows, Jesus seems to have been forbidding this kind of negative criticizing and condemning others *if* it is done in an overly critical, fault-finding and hypocritical attitude. From the context, and the rest of the Bible, it seems that Jesus was not forbidding us to judge. But He was prohibiting us from judging *in a certain way* – with a certain attitude that will be illustrated and elaborated in the following verses.

b Purpose: in order that you will not be judged (1b)

Before Jesus illustrated and elaborated on the kind of judgment that He was prohibiting, He first gave the reason and purpose for us to obey His prohibition. We are to avoid judging in the way that He was talking about in order that we would not experience the same kind of judgment. We can refrain from doing the sinful, prohibited kind of judgment based on our intention of avoiding this same level of judgment from God.

In the following verses, Jesus will elaborate on this standard – that we will be judged with the standard we use to judge others. Earlier in this sermon (6:14-15), Jesus warned that if we do not forgive others, our Heavenly Father will not forgive us. Later, in v. 12, Jesus commanded us to give to others as we would wish to receive. And later in Matthew (18:23-35), Jesus told a parable about a man who was forgiven a huge amount of money by the King. But who then persecuted another for a relatively small amount of money. The point that Jesus made by this story is that such a person will again be held liable for the things he had previously been released from, because he refused the same kind of grace to others. Throughout the Bible, we are told of God's poetic justice, where people fall into the same traps and misery they intended for others (e.g. the fate of Haman in the Book of Esther). And throughout the Bible, we are told to forgive others, as we have been forgiven (e.g. Eph. 4:32).

2. You will receive the same standard you use on others (2)

This verse is an elaboration of the previous proposition. Our judgment somehow takes into account the manner and standard with which we judge others. We will be judged by the same rules by which we have expected others to play. We will receive according to the same standard with which we have given to others.

a You will be judged with the same standard you use on others (2a-b)

1) For, with which judgment [standard/attitude] you are judging (2a)

This proposition is combined with the next to make one essential point. This one introduces the manner in which the action of the next proposition will happen. Jesus stated that the same internal and external standard will be used with which we are judging others.

Just like in Romans 2:12, Paul wrote that "all who have sinned without the law will perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. In the same way, those who judge others by lax standards will be judged by lax standards. And those who judge others by harsh standards will be judged by harsh standards. We all have some innate knowledge of right and wrong because we are created in God's image. And so, even the youngest child knows that some things are "not fair!" No one can, and no one does consistently claim that right and wrong are relative. Everyone judges others by inflexible standards, whatever those standards may be.

And those who argue that morality is relative are almost always just advocating that we replace traditional Christian morality with a different morality that is more to their liking (and is usually more inflexible and judgmental). It is never a question of whether we will live by a moral standard. It is only a question of which moral standard will we live by.

None of this at all suggests that God will alter His standards of right and wrong when judging individuals. We cannot hope to force God to be lenient on us by being lenient on others.

Everyone will be judged by God's perfect, holy standard, which will never change because God

never changes. Rather, what this means is that everyone will be held accountable, and proved to be guilty, no matter which standards they use. Because none of us can live up to our own standards, no matter how strict, or how lax they are. All of us will be confronted with the fact that we condemned others for doing the same kind of things that we have done (see Rom. 2:1-11). Jesus said that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees, we won't enter the Kingdom (Matt. 5:20).

So, if we are legalistic and hyper-critical of others, this will not make us any more righteous. It will only expose our own guilt and hypocrisy more starkly, because we are not able to live up to even the lowest standards, and are convicted of sin. How much more will we be exposed as a sinner by a more arrogant, prideful, and critical judgment of others. Not only will we be shown to fail by our own standards, but we will add the sins of arrogance, pride, hypocrisy and hatefulness to others, not to mention the laughable blindness to our own double standards.

We will all be judged. Much better to have the attitude that we are all sinners with no claim but to ask for mercy. When we look at others, we could look down on them for their sin, and despise them in our pride. But a more Biblical response would be to say, "apart from the grace of God, I would be like that, or even worse." We can have an arrogant attitude toward others, or a humble, sympathetic attitude toward others. And Jesus obviously was advocating for the latter attitude.

## 2) You will be judged (2b)

This proposition is the completion of the idea begun in the previous one, which told the manner in which we will be judged. We will all be judged. But the manner and attitude with which we judged others will have some kind of bearing on the manner in which we will be judged. But the point that Jesus was making is not that we can somehow beat judgment by being lenient on other people. The Bible makes it very clear that we cannot avoid judgment for our sin on our own (see e.g. Rom. 3:9-20).

Jesus's point in this passage was similar to the point He was making in His parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector (see Lk. 18:9-14). Jesus told that parable to those who "treated others with contempt" and "trusted in themselves, that they were righteous" (Lk. 18:9 ESV). The Pharisee prayed, glorying in how much better he was than the tax-collector. And the tax-collector mourned his own sin and pleaded for mercy. Jesus said that only the tax-collector went away justified. No matter what standard we use to judge others, we will be condemned as sinners and hypocrites by that same standard. And so, our hope is not in beating judgment, but our hope is in God's mercy and forgiveness. Jesus made the point throughout the Sermon on the Mount that we should not depend on our own innocence or our own righteousness. Rather, we should seek God's mercy and rely on a foreign righteousness that can only come from God's work in our lives. And that dependence on mercy will make us merciful to others. And a lack of mercy on our part is evidence that we are not trusting in God's mercy

## b You will receive with the same measure you use on others (2c-d)

This section is parallel to the previous two propositions. Jesus had a very similar point. He just made it with a different illustration. We will receive according to the same standard with which we have given to others.

1) And with which measure, you measure/apportion (2c)

This proposition refers to the standard practice of measuring goods for sale or trade with some sort of measuring cup or bucket. At that time, there were standard measures (like gallons or liters today). But there were not mass manufactured and standardized measuring instruments like we have today. Therefore, the measuring bucket they used could actually be (for example) a little more than a gallon, or a little less. And dishonest merchants would use a different measuring device depending on whether they were selling or buying, in order to pay less for more product and sell less product for more money. This kind of thing was condemned in the Old Testament Law (see Deut. 25:14, Prov. 20:10). Jesus used this as an illustration for the way we treat others. If we give to them with a large measure, filled to overflowing, then God will give to us in an overflowing manner. If we give to others with a small, stingy measure, then God will repay in kind.

2) It will be measured to you (2d)

This is the continuation of the idea from the previous proposition, and is parallel to the idea in 2a-b. We can expect to receive from God commensurate with the way that we have given to others, whether generously or stingily. This is true, but not the entire truth. Like the previous proposition, we cannot use this to try to manipulate God into giving to us. He is much too wise to be fooled by our selfish hypocrisy. Neither does this leave us hopeless if we have been less than generous, because God is a good Father (see vv. 7-12). Rather, more likely, Jesus was saying that the way we treat others is a good indication of the relationship that we enjoy with God. We are generous because God has been generous to us, or we are stingy because we are not yet trusting God and receiving His grace to the extent that we could or should. But this is also a clear warning to live out to others from the grace we have received, or God will scale back our experience of His graciousness as discipline for our instruction, leading to repentance.

But like in the previous propositions, the greatest point that Jesus was making is about our inability to earn or deserve anything from God. We are forced to recognize our lack of sufficient generosity to others and confronted with our selfishness. No matter how high or low the standard is, we all fail. This throws us back into the position of being undeserving recipients, relying solely on God's mercy and grace, and having no ground to rely on our own merit.

B. Don't judge others without first judging yourself (3-5)

This section is the famous illustration of the speck and log in someone's eye. In this illustration Jesus gave an exaggerated, humorously ridiculous story in order to illustrate the tragic silliness with which we can treat others in our hypocrisy and blindness to our own sin. With this story, He confronted the hypocrisy of judging others for small things when we are guilty of big things. In using this illustration, Jesus was not saying that we can never judge. Rather, He was saying that we need to judge accurately and impartially. And we will never be able to do that without first being honest about ourselves and our own guilt, and dealing with our own sin. It is similar to what the airlines tell passengers – in an emergency, put on your own oxygen mask first, and then you will be able to help others with theirs. You can't help others if you are suffocating. In the same way, we cannot help others with their sin while we are still strangled by our own sin. In order to help others repent from and overcome their sin, we must first be truly repentant of our own sin. And it is arrogant blindness to think that we are in a position to judge others when we are, in fact, just as bad or worse than they are. So, Jesus commanded that we examine ourselves and deal with our own sin in order to avoid a condescending attitude in dealing with other people.

1. You can't be a good judge unless you first judge yourself (3-4)
  - a Why do you see other people's problems, but not your own? (3)
    - 1) Why do you notice the speck/splinter in your brother's eye (3a)

This proposition must be understood in connection with the next one, because Jesus was making one point with these two statements together. In this first statement, Jesus was inquiring why someone would notice a speck or splinter in someone else's eye. But He was not at all suggesting that doing this, in an of itself, is a wrong thing to do. It can be very helpful to notice an irritant that is harming someone else and helping them with it. And (applying the point of this story) it can be very helpful to point out someone else's sin and help them to overcome it. Later in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus will give instructions how to do this very thing (see 18:10-20).

A "speck" refers to any relatively small piece of foreign material that, in this case, can get into someone's eye. We have all probably experienced how uncomfortable that can be. And when it happens, we often need the assistance of someone else to see it and help get it out.

Jesus was not at all suggesting that we can't help someone remove the speck from their eye, or that we can't confront others with their sin and help them to forsake it. Later, in 5c, He will suggest that we help our brother in this way. But this proposition is a setup for the next one. We should not presume to help someone else when we are in worse shape than them.

- 2) And you are not discovering the beam in your eye? (3b)

This proposition is a continuation from the previous one to complete the idea that Jesus introduced there. He challenged His hearers why they noticed a relatively small particle in their brother's eye but did not notice a relatively huge piece of lumber in their own eye. This is a cartoonish, exaggerated comparison to make a strong point. A "beam" is a significantly large piece of lumber such as the one used to hold up a roof or above a door. It is laughably absurd that anyone would have such a large chunk of wood in their eye and not notice it.

And the word "discover/notice" which Jesus used in this proposition is a contrast with the term He used in the previous one. In 3a, He used a more generic term that means to see or notice something. This has the connotation of a more casual glance and notice than the word used here. The word used in this proposition is a more specific word that means to observe carefully through direct observation and thorough examination. It is as if Jesus said the speck just happened to be noticed in a random glance, whereas the beam was not seen even though meticulously examined. By using such hyperbole, Jesus was accusing His hearers of total spiritual blindness concerning their own sin not to notice it. We all make excuses and exceptions for our own sins. And we have all manner of self-deception mechanisms to protect ourselves from having to admit them and deal with them. But here, Jesus rips off our blinders and says, in essence, "You are ignoring a huge, obvious problem."

And Jesus was also accusing His hearers with total arrogance to think that they were better than their brother with a speck, when they had a log in their own eye. We also, often nitpick at the sins of others while ignoring our own sin. Jesus challenged us all to stop doing this. Of course, not everyone does this to the same extent. But we all do this to some extent. So, Jesus's accusation to us may be a harsh rebuke, or it may be a mild correction, as the case may be. But we still need to hear and heed this admonition to whatever extent is appropriate in our own situation.

b How can you help with other people's problems without fixing your own? (4)

In this verse, Jesus repeated and elaborated the same point as He made in the previous verse. Like any good communicator, Jesus often used repetition and gave more interesting details in order to drive home His point in a memorable way.

In this repetition, He took the story to the next level. Not only does someone notice the speck in someone else's eye, while having a log in their own. But they also presume to be able to help their brother remove the speck, while still ignoring the log. And they are oblivious to the fact that they need help more than they are able to give help.

1) How can you help your brother to see? (4a-c)

a) Or how will you say to your brother (4a)

This is an introductory discourse formula in order to introduce the content of what is said in the next proposition. But in this case, the audacity and arrogance needed to say such a thing in the particular circumstances is part of the point Jesus was making. This question shows disapproval, as in "how dare you say this?"

b) Let me take the speck out of your eye (4b-c)

(1) Permit (4b)

This word is a preliminary request for permission. It is request that the brother allow the action to be described in the next proposition, as in "Let me do this..."

(2) I will take the speck/splinter out from your eye (4c)

This is simply an offer to remove the speck. By itself, this is a reasonable, even gracious and helpful offer. There is nothing wrong with offering to help someone in this way. And we should try to help others in this and similar ways. What makes this an arrogant and hurtful request in this situation is the fact that the one offering is in no position to be truly helpful because of their own problems, as highlighted in the next proposition.

2) And behold, the beam is in your eye? (4d)

This is the conclusion of the hyperbolic scenario that Jesus was describing in these two verses. It is an intentionally silly picture of someone trying to help a delicate removal of a speck, while having a large beam sticking out of their own eye. Jesus was describing something we could imagine seeing in a Three Stooges movie – like someone leaning in and hitting the other person over the head with the log protruding from their own face. The picture Jesus painted was farcical and satirical in its extremes. But it was done for an extremely serious point.

It would be extremely silly for someone with a log to try to help with a speck. But the point Jesus made was that this would be arrogant and condescending much more than it would be funny. Someone doing this would be displaying a grossly exaggerated sense of their own importance and a "better than you" attitude, especially in light of their blindness to their own problem. And this arrogant condescension is made much worse, because it is not warranted. Not only is this person not "better than" the other and is not qualified to help them. But they are much worse, and completely disqualified by their own problems.

And by this hypothetical story, Jesus confronted all His hearers not to have this kind of arrogant attitude in standing in judgment over others when we have no reason at all to think we are superior to them. And if we are honest and self-reflective, we will admit that we deserve judgment and need help as much as, or more than, they do. And so, the arrogant, judgmental attitude Jesus was condemning in this entire passage is shown for the rank hypocrisy that it is.

2. Fix your own blindness first, in order to help with your brother's (5)

This verse is the solution Jesus gave to the problem He had just described in verses 3 and 4. The solution to the arrogant, hypocritical judgment is to stop being a hypocrite. Notice that Jesus gave a “both/and” solution. He did not say to stop judging, but He said to stop being judgmental. He did not say to not confront and help others with their sin, but He said to not do it hypocritically. He did not say we should not deal with our own sin, nor did He forbid helping others deal with their sin. Rather, He taught that we should do both, in the proper order. We should actively work to deal with our own sin first, and then help others deal with theirs. Both of these activities are necessary (and commanded), but they must be done in the proper way, and in the proper order. We must fix ourselves (submitting to God's power and finding His gracious provision). And then we must aid in fixing others (also only through God's power and provision).

a Hypocrite! First take the beam out from your eye (5a)

In this proposition, Jesus first labeled the behavior described in vv. 3-4 for what it really is. He addressed His hearers (to whatever level the story of vv. 3-4 applied to them) as “hypocrites.” The word “hypocrite” means a person who pretends to be something different than they really are. It was used in a neutral way for stage actors, because everyone knew they were pretending/acting. But here it is used in a negative sense for people who are pretending in a dishonest way. They are deceitfully hiding who they really are and claiming to be something else. They are pretending to be sinless and better than others, when in truth they are not. Sometimes a hypocrite is conscious of their own deceitfulness, and they are doing it on purpose. And other times, a hypocrite is self-deceived, and they are fooling themselves as much or more as they are fooling others. In the hypothetical story of vv. 3-4, it is hard to believe that if someone was walking around with a beam in their eye, no one would have mentioned it to them. But the story implies that they were unwilling and unable to acknowledge that they had a log in their own eye. And Jesus tells the truth about them (and us) in order to make them/us own up to the problem, and be more willing to follow the solution.

And the solution which Jesus proposed is to remove the beam from your own eye first. This means that we must acknowledge the beam, and the sin that it represents. We must own up to our own sin and need of righteousness which we don't have, and cannot have, on our own. We must confess and forsake all known sin, and ask for forgiveness, and trust in God's given process to receive atonement and reconciliation. This, naturally, is humbling, and does not allow us to continue with pretense or arrogance toward others. This humility is a key benefit that will allow us to be free, and then to help others.

And Jesus did not say that we need to be perfectly speck-free and sinless all at once, or that we could ever achieve sinless perfection in this life. But this signifies that we would be honest with ourselves about our sin, and fight all known sin, and be open to correction on unknown sin. We learn from the rest of Scripture that this fight against sin is a lifelong process. But it is a process in which we are more and more victorious by the power of God's Holy Spirit in us, as we participate in the fight.

And notice that Jesus used the word “first” in this proposition. Our removing of our own log is the immediate action we need to take, but it is not the last action. It is the most important and necessary action, but it is not the only action Jesus was commanding. And we don't need to wait until we are speck-free before we can move on to (also) doing other righteous and helpful things, as Jesus will command in the next proposition.

b Then you will see clearly to take out the speck (5b-c)

1) And then you will see clearly (5b)

In the previous proposition, it was clearly implied that removing the log from our eye is for our own good – that we would no longer be hypocrites walking around with lumber filling our face. That we would no longer be arrogant sinners blind to our own sin, and therefore, still living in our sin.

But in this proposition, Jesus also taught that a result of our removing the beam from our eye is that we would be able to help others. Specifically, in this statement, that we would be able to see clearly, and then in the next statement, that we would be able to help our brother with his speck. It is obvious from the exaggerated story which Jesus told that if someone had a large beam in their eye, that it would somehow block their vision. And so, it is just as obvious that removing that log would improve one's ability to see. Therefore, as a result of heeding Jesus's command to remove the log from our own eye, we will be able to see (and thereby to judge) more clearly and accurately and righteously. Because part of the purpose of removing the log is to better be able to help others, as Jesus will state in the next proposition.

2) Purpose: In order to take the speck/splinter out from your brother's eye (5c)

This proposition tells a major purpose of removing the log and seeing clearly – that we would be able to help others more successfully. Helping others with their own sin, including gracious, righteous judgment, is part of the goal of our own personal repentance and growth. We should forsake our own hypocrisy and sinfulness for many reasons. And this will bring many benefits in our life and the lives of those around us. But one goal that Jesus highlighted here is that we will better be able to help others by more accurately exercising the godly kind of discernment and judgment that He wants us to do for the sake of building others up, not tearing them down. Remember that this entire section about specks and beams in eyes is really about avoiding an arrogant, condescending, hypocritical attitude of judgment. But the solution to such an attitude is not to avoid judgment altogether. The solution is righteous judgment with a godly attitude. And removing the sinfulness and hypocrisy from our own lives is a critical step to seeing clearly and judging rightly. And the right attitude will “judge” in a way that works to lovingly rescue others from things that are harming them, and to help bear their burden in finding freedom and forgiveness. And this will help others find the righteousness that can only come from Christ and God's Kingdom, and not from ourselves.

## II. Don't submit to the judgment of fools and beasts (6)

This verse warns against the opposite mistake from what is addressed in vv. 1-5, yet it is closely connected with the previous verses. The previous verses warned against a hypercritical, hypocritical judgment. But this verse warns against a completely uncritical lack of discernment and discretion.

Interpreters differ on the details of what Jesus was pointing to in using these metaphors. Many take “holy thing” in 6a and “pearls” in 6b to refer to the Kingdom and its proclamation. This is a plausible interpretation, especially in light of Jesus's use of pearls to symbolize the Kingdom in 13:45-46. And then some conclude that Jesus was making a point of how and to whom we should proclaim the Kingdom. There is some truth to this. We all have a limited supply of time and energy and we need to use them in the manner that is most profitable, which means not wasting them in unfruitful ways. There seems to be some people who are so unreceptive to the truth that continuing to attempt to teach them about Christ and the Kingdom would not only be a waste of time, but could be counterproductive in that it risks hardening them and making them more hateful toward the truth. We all need to use wisdom in determining which battles to fight. And that includes discerning when speaking with certain people will be more fruitful and speaking with others would be less so.

But there is a danger in this interpretation as well. Jesus spent much of His time proclaiming to sinners, and prostitutes and tax-collectors (but I repeat myself). These people might have seemed completely uninterested in spiritual things. If we were in Jesus's situation, we might have concentrated more on the already religious people. But the religious people were (for the most part, with many exceptions) less receptive of Jesus. And the people who might have appeared uninterested in righteousness were very receptive to Jesus, and were changed by their encounters with Him. Likewise, in His parable of the soils (Matt. 13:1-23 and parallels), Jesus clearly taught that some people would be more or less receptive and fruitful. However, in that parable, the shallow soil seemed the most receptive and productive at first. But in the end, it turned out to be bad and unfruitful soil. And many people, who seemed unreceptive of the Gospel at first, after the patient and persistent witness of people around them, became genuinely converted. And they are thankful that their friend persevered in witness even when they were unreceptive.

The consistent teaching of the New Testament is that we should proclaim the truth of Christ to all nations and all people (e.g. Matt. 28:16-20). We know that some will be receptive and others will not. Jesus even told His disciples to move on from unreceptive places (see 10:14). But it is impossible to discern with any certainty whether people and groups will indeed be receptive and fruitful until after we have given a level of persistent testimony over time. In other words, to use Jesus's metaphor, we won't know whether the pigs will like the pearls until we have thrown them to the pigs. Or to say it in a different way, we won't know whether the people are the kind of people Jesus would characterize as "pigs" until after we have offered them the pearls.

Therefore, even though this verse may have a limited application to the strategy for missions and evangelism, this is probably not what Jesus was primarily teaching in this verse. But that leaves the question of what He was intending to communicate using these metaphors. The two best clues to understand this verse lie in its connection to the previous context of verses 1-5 and in the inability of the dogs and pigs in this verse to truly understand and judge the value of what they are being presented.

Just as in the previous verses, Jesus is still addressing the topic of making judgments. God's people are not to judge with a hypocritical, arrogant attitude. Neither are we to surrender judgment to those who are more unqualified to judge because they lack the right standard of judgment. They are usually just as hypocritical and arrogant in their judgments. We cannot surrender the standard of judgment to those without godliness, wisdom, and discernment. We cannot submit our worldview, beliefs, standards, and lifestyle to their judgment, because they are beasts and fools. This is an important concept for our time. Many of those who insist on "judge not!" are also very quick to judge those they disagree with and to contend against Christian standards. It is never a question of whether we will judge and be judged (and often by hypocritical people not living up to their own standards). It is only ever a question of which standards will be considered the ultimate standards used in judging. Will it be the true, eternal standard of God's character and revealed will and Law? Or will it be the changing, subjective standards of human whim and emotion, usually ultimately based only on carnal desires and pleasures? We should never submit to those standards. Neither should we submit anything, especially not the truth of the Gospel and the Kingdom, to the judgment of beasts and fools who judge only by those deficient standards.

## A. Don't submit precious things to the judgment of beasts unable to understand them (6a-b)

### 1. Do not give a holy thing to the dogs (6a)

"The holy thing" or "that which is holy" is undefined in this verse, and therefore is ambiguous. Jesus may have intended it to be ambiguous and therefore refer to anything that is genuinely holy. Some interpreters have suggested that this refers to the meat sacrifices offered in the temple, because they are also referred to as "holy things" (see, e.g. Lev. 6:17, 25). This would make sense, because that is something that might plausibly be offered to dogs. However, that interpretation goes beyond what Jesus stated, and cannot be confirmed with any certainty. It is probably best to understand this term as intentionally generic to refer to anything that is holy, because the point is about how the dogs are unable to appreciate its holiness and value. Even if we think of this as the holy sacrifices, the dogs would only see tasty meat and would have no concept of the holiness connected with this meat being used in a holy offering to the Most Holy God. Its significance would be totally lost on them. If this is true of holy meat, which they would at least appreciate the meat, how much more is it true for all holy things, which they may not appreciate at all. In that culture, dogs were not kept as pets. Rather, they roamed in scavenging packs. Dogs (and pigs) were considered unclean and despised. But they were also wild, vicious and dangerous, and so they were usually avoided and chased away. In this verse, dogs are used to symbolize bad people. The point in this metaphor is that dogs were brute beasts, living only for their animal appetites, and therefore, they (and the people they symbolized) had no ability to recognize the importance and value of holy things. They are completely unqualified to judge holy things, and therefore these holy things should not be entrusted into their judgment.

### 2. Neither throw your pearls before the pigs (6b)

Obviously, pearls are precious things. And, as mentioned earlier, Jesus used a pearl to symbolize the value of the Kingdom (13:45-46). And pigs, like dogs, were considered unclean and potentially vicious animals.

Likewise, pigs are unable to appreciate the value of a pearl. If someone were to give a pearl to a pig, they probably would, at first, think it might be food because that is what they are primarily concerned with. But after investigating, they would find it inedible and think (if they were capable of this kind of thought) that they had been given a stone instead of bread (to steal a saying from the next passage). They could not appreciate that they had been given a precious stone that could buy a lifetime supply of bread. And that is the point Jesus was making – pigs are unable to make the appropriate judgment about precious things, and therefore, they are unqualified as judges. And therefore, we should never submit to their skewed judgment about holy and precious things.

**B. Purpose: So that they will not harm them and you as well (6c-e)**

**1. In order that they will not trample them under their feet (6c)**

The purpose which Jesus gave for not entrusting holy and precious things to people who could not appreciate them is twofold. First, in this proposition, is that they would not trample them under their feet. In 5:13, Jesus said that salt which has lost its saltiness is not good for anything and is trampled under foot. That is, it is completely rejected and treated with contempt. In Luke 8:5, in the parable of the soils, Jesus said that the seed (symbolizing the good news being proclaimed), when it falls on hard ground (symbolizing people unwilling to hear it), it is trampled under foot. That is, it is completely ignored and treated with contempt. Because dogs and pigs are unqualified to understand the value of the mindset and morality which Jesus taught, they will ignore it, reject it, and treat it with contempt. However, this does not prove anything about the worth of Christian truth. It proves the lack of wisdom, and beastliness of those who reject it.

**2. And turn and harm you (6d-e)**

This is the second part of the twofold purpose which Jesus gave for not entrusting holy and precious things to those who cannot understand and appreciate them.

**a And turning around (6d)**

This proposition is a subordinate, preparatory action for the next, main action. The beasts turn in order to tear. This is possibly a picture of the swift change from appearing harmless to showing their true, wild and dangerous nature. This is similar to the phrase of a person or animal “turning on you,” which means that they suddenly attacked you.

**b They will tear you to pieces (6e)**

This is the completion of the warning against entrusting precious and holy things to beasts and fools. Not only will they reject and show contempt for holy things, they will also attack and harm those who know their true value. The picture is obviously taken from the metaphor of dogs, and how they attack, bite, and tear their prey to pieces. Just like dogs bite and tear, the beastly people try to destroy those who differ from their opinion. Everyone has an ultimate loyalty – a “god.” And all ultimate “gods” are jealous gods. People will either submit to the true God or they will hate and fight against Him in the service of their idols. And if they hate and fight against God, they will hate and fight against all those who stand for and serve God (see Jn. 15:18-6:4). People can rarely be trusted to give fair, impartial judgment unless they have been strongly influenced by a strong Judeo-Christian cultural influence. Historically, the ideas and practices of impartial justice have only flourished in societies with a decisive Christian impact. Without this foundation, people and societies have treated people according to the selfish desires of those who have the most power, and treated them in beastly ways. Christians are never to submit to the judgment of these kinds of people under these kinds of influences, because it will only end in harm and bloodshed – sometimes literally. History has shown that the morality and character of the people entrusted to enact justice is as important as the laws which they are administering. When beastly and foolish people make judgments, justice is destroyed and people are harmed.