

## Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

### Luke 6:37-42

Way back in I Samuel chapter 16 we read the story of Samuel anointing David as (future) King of Israel. The selection process was quite interesting. Jesse (David's father) paraded each of David's older brothers before Samuel, while Samuel, presumably, was listening intently for the voice of the Lord to select one of Jesse's son. As Samuel was considering Jesse's first 7 sons the Lord reminded Samuel, *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (I Samuel 16:7 NIV) Finally came the youngest, and almost forgotten, because David was out tending sheep...surely the Lord wasn't going to pick the youngest one? And we all know how the story turned out...

This same David wrote in Psalm 26:2, *"Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;"* This is good to keep in mind as we continue to examine the teaching of Jesus from the "Sermon on the Plain."

6:37-38

We are commanded to NOT judge and NOT condemn; rather we are to forgive and give. And Jesus warns that *"For the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

There are a couple important realities we need to (humbly) come to grips with as we wrestle with this passage. The first is the recognition that we don't know everything. We can't see the heart and mind of a person. Most people we are tempted to criticize or judge we haven't the faintest clue of their inner processes. We often don't know their stories/histories well enough to adequately judge their present behavior/decisions. Before we are quick to jump to a conclusion about someone, we need to remember, very soberly, how much we really DON'T know. This draws us back to a point made in last week's passage...that we want to be like God. But only God is in the rightful position to judge. Only He sees all.

- Q. How/when do you find yourself "judging a book by its cover"?**
- Q. What are the triggers, the characteristics, observations, that cause you to look down on someone?**
- Q. Describe a time when you felt "lesser than" or devalued.**

Now let's get a little nerdy/geeky for a moment. The Greek word for "judgement" is a rather general/neutral word simply meaning to "divide, separate; make a distinction; come to a decision." ...sort of like discerning (judging) between good and evil, right and wrong. In fact, the apostle Paul admits to judging in this general/neutral manner and encourages the Corinthians to do the same (see I Corinthians 4-6). In fact, in the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus said *"by their fruit you will recognize them."* (Matthew 7:16, 20). Strictly speaking, it takes "judging" to

make that sort of distinction/recognizing. We are just so accustomed to seeing/hearing the word “judge” as negative, when in fact it’s rather neutral...or perhaps better stated, it’s context dependent. The context helps us understand how it’s being used. And in this particular context its linked to “condemning”, which is a far more specific word; meaning to judge against, pronounce a (guilty) sentence. Linked in this manner, we see how out of place it is for us to “judge”...this is the type of “judging” that only God is in the position to do.

The second reality we need to face in this passage is more psychological in nature...it has to do with our propensity to “project”. I’ll try to explain. I’m sure we’ve all “felt” judged by someone before. But were we actually “being” judged or just “feeling” judged? In a previous church I was a part of there was a young lady who constantly felt like she was being judged. Ironically, she was one of the most judgmental people I’ve ever met. Always finding fault with people; always being nit-picky; being very critical of shallow/superficial petty things. And all the while suffering from the perceived judgements of others. And that’s how “projection” works. Deep down (maybe even on a sub-conscious level) she knew how critical/judgmental she was. And she assumed everyone was just like her...thus she assumed everyone looked at her the way she looked at them. (We all naturally have a tendency to assume others think/view/act as we do...we all suffer from a certain amount of myopic-ness.) As much as we tried to help her, she lived her days haunted by the perceived judgement of others...only because she, herself, was so judgmental. So when Jesus said, *“For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* (6:38b NIV) at least part of what He meant was that we sort of pick our own poison. He, as our Creator, knows how we’re mentally, emotionally, psychologically put together. If we’re the kind of person that constantly is negative, critical, judgmental, we will naturally live in a state of constantly thinking people are negatively critical and judgmental of us. It’s just how we’re made. But if we can view others more charitably/positively, we’ll naturally feel others do the same toward us.

While it’s not specifically mentioned in this passage, it can be implied that we shouldn’t live with the concern of how others view us. There is but One Judge. And His opinion is the only one that matters. To live with the concern of how others view us is a form of bondage, and what God wants for us is freedom. So we want (and God wants for us) to be people of such deep love that we don’t easily think negatively or ill of others. And at the same time to be people who are strong/secure enough to not worry about what others think of us.

**Q. In what ways do you concern yourself with how others view you? Or, how has being concerned about what others think of you affected your life?**

Now a quick word about verse 38...because it is often taken out of context and thus misinterpreted and misapplied. It is easy, if we were to pull verse 38 out and sit it by itself, to think Jesus is talking about giving money or material possessions. (In fact I’ve heard and read this verse used this way many times.) The problem is, in context, Jesus isn’t talking about money. He is certainly promoting the idea of being generous, and it is good to be generous with money (we can find other Scriptures to support that...but this isn’t one of them). This is

speaking of a generosity of spirit toward our fellow humans...acknowledging their great worth as image-bearers of God.

Additionally, we could/should view this section as adding more specifics to the instruction of *"Do to others as you would have them do to you."* (6:31) from last week. None of us like or want to be considered "less than". So then, we shouldn't act (or even think) in such a way that makes others feel "less than" or inferior, unworthy/insignificant. The measure we use to value others is the measure that will be used on us...so let's measure graciously/generously.

Really, we could simplify this passage down to this: are we going to be people of condemning judgement or people of charitable judgement? When wronged, are we going to be people who forgive or be people who get even (tying into the previous passage)? Let's keep in mind the greater context of this entire sermon, which serves as a "Kingdom Manifesto"—Jesus came to bring new life through Him—so are we going to go the way of the old way of life that leads to death, or toward the new way of life He is birthing in us that leads to life?

6:39-40

It might seem on the surface that these two verses are disjointed from those that precede them and follow after them. But the question they are designed to draw to mind is: who are you following; who is your leader/teacher? More than likely this was a jab at the religious leaders of the time (the Pharisees, priests, and teachers of the law/scribes). In Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus specifically says, *"I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20)

**Q. (Outside of Jesus) who has had the greatest impact on your life? Who has influenced and shaped you the most? How so?**

So from whom have we learned how to view others? This is an important question because the reality is that we become like those we learn from. Let's use racism as an example. People aren't born racists. Rather it's something people learn. Valuing (or not valuing) certain people, being fearful of certain people, looking down on certain people...these are all learned. So who we chose to follow is very important.

Now the reality is that we all learn a lot from our parents...good and bad...whether we want to or not. As we get older we chose who we will allow to influence us...and we can often look back and begin to critique what we learned from our parents. In verses 39-40 it seems that Jesus is inviting us to reflect on the influence people have had on us...to do the hard work of introspection/self-reflection and ask ourselves "Who shaped me, and how?". Toward the end of this message (spoiler-alert) Jesus is basically going to say (in so many words) that He should be the One that has ultimate influence on us (see 6:46-49, which we'll get to in a couple of weeks.)

6:41-42

The main thrust of this section regarding the speck in the eye vs. the plank in the eye is our tendency to minimize our own flaws while focusing on the flaws of others. This can be done on an individual/personal level or on a communal level toward other groups. The reality is (on a personal/individual level) we all have flaws, but each person is primarily responsible for their own. Now that's not to say we shouldn't try to help others if/when possible. But each of us will be accountable for our own issues. On a communal (or even societal) level, no group has their act perfectly together. We tend to focus on what's wrong with "them" while failing to see what's wrong with "us".

**Q. Can you give an example of how you tend to minimize your own flaws/faults, and focus upon (or even magnify) the flaws/faults of others?**

Jesus may again have the Jewish religious leaders in His sights with this section (though obviously it's applicable to any and everyone). AS N.T. Wright states, "How did the rival teachers in Jesus' day fit this model? Perhaps because, with so many of their rules and regulations, they were trying to fine-tune obedience to the law down to the last possible detail, while missing the law's major point. They were trying to make Israel holier and holier as a way of separating their nation FROM other nations; but the point of the law and the prophets was to make Israel the light TO the nations. They were hunting for specks in each other's eyes with magnifying glasses, but couldn't see that there was a plank—a single massive disobedience—in their own."

Time to get geeky/nerdy again. The word "hypocrite" in this passage is the Greek word "hupokrites" (so really more of a transliteration than a translation) means "actor", and was a rather neutral term. But from an etymological (study of the origin of words...see, told ya...geeky/nerdy) angle Jesus seems to be the first person (or the Biblical writers attributing it to Jesus) to give it the negative spin we understand of it today. By saying, "*You hypocrite...*" Jesus was calling out acting more righteous on the outside than is warranted by the inside. Jesus is saying, "Don't put on a false appearance of virtue and goodness, when the reality is evil and ugliness." Or in other words, don't be fake.

**Q. When are you tempted to try to impress people? (And how so...or in what way?)**

**Q. How/when or in what ways are you tempted to "put on airs" for others?**

**Q. Deep down, are you afraid that people wouldn't like you if they knew the REAL you? As a Home Group, are we being real with one another? And if not "faking/acting" for others, are we perhaps "guarded" out of fear? How, as a HG, can we be a community/family where people can be/feel safe to be themselves?**