



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## Matthew 7:1-6 & 15-23 New International Version July 28, 2019

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 28, 2019**, is from **Matthew 7:1-6 & 15-23**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Matthew 7:1) “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.**

Jesus did not mean that we should not discern right from wrong or never conclude that a person has done something good or bad, legal or illegal. Rather, Christians need to avoid making harsh, hasty condemning accusations against others. We may not know the hearts of those we judge. They may have made an honest mistake with good intentions; they may be open to honest, truthful correction and happily receive suggestions from others. We may not know the mitigating factors that influenced their actions; such as, self-defense or actions to save a starving child. We must not personally judge someone in the sense of condemning them to punishment or to hell; if tempted to do so, we can pray for their salvation. Judges and juries are responsible for making decisions about someone's actions being legal or illegal (according to a government's objective, written laws or statutes) and what possible punishments or sanctions are legal according to the law that was broken. We should never judge and condemn

anyone on the basis of our personal opinions or those of our party or some other group; rather, the Bible, the revealed will of God, is the only infallible, objective standard by which we as Christians can prayerfully and lovingly call individuals, groups, churches, and nations to account and call them to repent. As Christians, we can stand before religious and political leaders and tell them when their advocacy of something is contrary to the revealed law of God in the Bible. Jesus Christ is Lord over all, so based on the Bible we can speak out when a nation's leaders or a church's leaders are doing wrong or pursuing policies contrary to the Law of God, but there may be consequences for us even as Jesus and Paul suffered the consequences for declaring the will of God.

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

Jesus did not mean that God will judge and condemn people based solely on the personal standards they have used when judging others while they themselves have violated the same standards (at least from the heart). People sometimes condemn others for doing things God wants done. Jesus, Peter, Paul and other disciples were condemned by religious leaders for doing what God wanted said and done. People do tend to condemn others for the very wrong things that they themselves are doing or are tempted and prone to do. From this verse, we learn that others will tend to judge and condemn us based on how we have judged and condemned others. If we are harsh, hasty, and unsympathetic in making judgments of others, others will judge and condemn us because we are harsh, hasty, and unsympathetic; furthermore, whenever we break a law, they will tend to judge us harshly, hastily, and unsympathetically—just as we have judged others.

**(Matthew 7:3) “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?”**

The “speck” may be smaller than a piece of chaff, which can get in someone’s eye while threshing wheat. Christians are not to always be looking for what is lacking or wrong in the lives of others and then condemning them or trying to correct them. Based on their own

perceptions of right and wrong or what is “proper” or “improper,” some people are judgmental, condemning, or unsympathetic toward others. A good person may be 99% right when doing something, but the “wrong” 1% part may open the door for someone else to point out to them the 1% where they were wrong instead of thanking God for the 99% that they got right. This problem becomes even worse when a person is always gossiping about the specks in the eyes of others. Some people always seem to be looking for and focusing on what is lacking or wrong in the lives of other people. They want everyone to be perfect, just as they are “perfect.” Though loving, supportive correction might be helpful to someone who needs or wants to be at 100%, no human can be 100% perfect 100% of the time. Many people are prone to focus on what is lacking or wrong in the lives of others while never doing anything about examining their own lives and correcting what is wrong within themselves. It may very well be that those who focus on the 1% wrong in others are 99% wrong within themselves.

**(Matthew 7:4) 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?**

No doubt some may think they are being helpful when they notice the sins of others, point them out, and try to help the person overcome their sins. However, it may very well be that we have plenty of sins in our own lives that we are refusing to deal with or do not even notice. Perhaps we need to spend more time reading the Bible and praying for the Lord Jesus to show us where we are falling short and need to change, and then praying for His help as we seek to change. Some would certainly have more time to pray for the divine help and courage to change if they spent less time trying to change the lives of those around them.

**(Matthew 7:5) 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.**

A hypocrite condemns others for doing the wrong that they themselves are doing (if not outwardly, then within their hearts). Unhappily, perhaps many of us have heard of someone who crusaded against a specific evil who was

later arrested and convicted of a crime involving that same evil. There is something to say for the old notion that when we point a finger at someone else for doing something wrong that we have three fingers pointing back at ourselves. Perhaps some hypocrites they condemn others because within themselves they know how very wrong their behavior is and they want to change, but they do not seek the help of the Lord Jesus to free them from slavery to that sin; instead, they point out the sin in others that they so easily recognize in someone else. On the other hand, those being condemned by someone else may readily see that the condemning person is knowingly or unknowingly committing the same sin, then use that as an excuse for not making some needed changes. If we are prone to condemn others for something, at that very point we may need to spend some time in prayerful self-examination to see if we are guilty of practicing the same sin too and need Jesus forgiveness and help to change.

**(Matthew 7:6) “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.**

Without condemning, correcting, or criticizing someone, Jesus indicated that Christians do need to examine and discern the thoughts and actions of others as best as possible to know whether or not sharing the gospel faith (what is holy) with them will result in their rejection of Jesus Christ and persecution or not. In Matthew 10:16, Jesus warned, “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” When considering when, where, and with whom we should share the gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to show us when someone may be ready to receive the good news of Jesus Christ instead of violently rejecting Jesus and persecuting us (or endangering other Christians by our testimony). Christians will be persecuted, but Jesus did not command Christians to invite persecution upon themselves or others, especially when there are still many people who need to hear the gospel and who would rejoice when they learn about Jesus from our testimony.

**(Matthew 7:15) “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.**

To avoid throwing their pearls of Christian faith and wisdom to those they have discerned are dogs and swine, Christians must examine and differentiate those who hate Christianity and disparage the Bible from those who appear to be open to hearing the good news of Jesus Christ and who might accept their testimony. Similarly, Christians must pray and study the Bible to examine and differentiate those who appear to love Jesus and the Bible, but who are false prophets who would destroy their faith in Jesus and the Bible if given the opportunity, from those who truly love the truth and want to teach them the truth of Jesus and the Bible. Preachers and teachers who secretly hate (do not love) Jesus and the Bible are just as dangerous (if not more so) to believers than those who openly hate Jesus and the Bible. False prophets can slowly and quietly lead believers away from God and the truth; whereas, atheists, unbelievers, and persecutors can almost force believers to draw closer to Jesus as their only hope of salvation. In either case, regular, prayerful Bible study with the help of the Holy Spirit and trustworthy teachers remain essential for Christians to avoid walking into traps or being misled by false teachers.

**(Matthew 7:16) By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?**

Sometimes believers can distinguish false preachers and teachers from those who truly seek to teach the truth of the Bible and Jesus by looking at their fruits, though some false prophets are very subtle and persuasive. False prophets and teachers can draw large crowds and make people feel good; so, these phenomena should not be considered reliable guides for evaluation or fruit testing. Christians must use the Bible, rightly interpreted (for many false teachers and prophets misuse and misinterpret the Bible), as the standard by which to test whether someone is preaching or teaching the truth. Historically, the Church has upheld certain key doctrines or teachings as essential to believe and remain Christian in thought, word, and deed; those doctrines based on the clear teachings of the Bible can be used as a measure for testing. Another test can be seeking to discern what motivates a teacher or preacher. Sometimes we can see that a preacher or teacher is motivated by greed, selfishness, and self-seeking; rather than by supreme love for God, Jesus, and the Bible as well as love for others, and

these sins will have a detrimental impact on their teaching. Finally, to discern true from false teachers, though this can be more subjective and a sometimes fallible guide, we can ask ourselves some of these questions, “Does this teacher or preacher increase my faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and in the Bible as the infallible Word of God written or does this person sow seeds of doubt in the trustworthiness of Jesus as Lord and Savior and the Bible as the trustworthy Word of God written? Is this teacher or preacher trying to convince me that some other book or teaching is the word of God or a new revelation from God or Jesus? Does this teacher contradict the Bible or the clear teachings of Jesus? Does this teacher emphasize what the Bible does not emphasize?” Spiritual thorns and thistles can be doubts or temptations for us to sin in thought, word, or deed that are sown by false prophets and teachers.

**(Matthew 7:17) Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.**

A good tree will over time bear good fruit in season. A good tree will grow spiritually and increasingly bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23 — “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Among other things, a good tree will produce Christians or help at least some Christians become stronger in their faith in Jesus Christ, believers who increasingly trust the Bible, who show greater love for God, who want and seek the will of God to do the will of God, who seek to love and serve others with Jesus being their example, and who increasingly bear the fruit of the Spirit themselves as Jesus delivers them from slavery to sin. A bad tree will produce works of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-21). However, some bad trees can appear outwardly good and seem to serve as examples of good behavior, but they do not produce works that flow from love for and faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (many of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day can serve as examples of a bad tree).

**(Matthew 7:18) A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.**

A good tree that loves and honors God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and that seeks to promote living according to the Bible as the Holy Spirit interprets and leads will help other good trees do the same. In this world, even the best Christians will make mistakes and sin sometimes, but when they do, they immediately repent and return to Jesus. A bad tree cannot do any of the above and has no desire to do any of the above.

**(Matthew 7:19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

Bad trees represent people who are enslaved to doing the works of the flesh, the world, and the devil instead of the works of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:13-26). Since bad trees are committed to producing bad fruit, all they are useful for is burning. This verse serves as a warning to repent and turn to Jesus for salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit to do good works of faith that are acceptable to God.

**(Matthew 7:20) Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**

Having seen from the Bible the difference between good trees and bad trees, we know that bad trees need to come to Jesus Christ in faith for salvation from slavery to sin and to receive His gift of eternal life. Bad trees can become good trees only by the grace of God and by receiving the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Good trees can prayerfully seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on if, when, and how to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

**(Matthew 7:21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

In the Bible, people sometimes used "Lord" as a term to honor someone or to show respect for someone in a greeting. In the Bible, "Lord" can also be used as a respectful substitute for the name of God in the Old Testament, which was used as an official title for Jesus in the New Testament because Jesus is the Son of God. Those who honor Jesus in the first sense; perhaps as a great prophet or wonderful moral teacher, but not as the Bible truly

reveals Jesus, will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Likewise, those who honor Jesus with “theological correctness,” but do not honor Jesus by their behavior, who do not do the will of God the Father or obey the commands of Jesus, will not enter the kingdom of God. In the Beatitudes, Jesus described some of the characteristics of those who would live forever in the kingdom of God.

**(Matthew 7:22) Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’**

In His sermon, Jesus revealed that it is possible for a heretic, a false prophet, or a false teacher to prophesy or preach in His name (such people Jesus warns us to avoid). In the New Testament, people other than Jesus and His disciples could cast out demons. In Matthew 12:26-27, Jesus told the Pharisees and the crowd, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.” Exorcists in many different religions can cast out (or claim to cast out) demons. Therefore, we should not follow a leader (or a religion) just because it appears they (or the religion) has the power to cast out demons or work miracles. Some false preachers and teachers will use the name of Jesus as they cast out demons, perhaps thinking they are doing good; however, they are not doing the will of God by loving and serving Jesus as their Lord and Savior or by following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**(Matthew 7:23) Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”**

Even today, a lot of people “name drop” to impress others. Someone might meet a movie star at a movie preview and later claim to know them, while the movie star would probably say they do not know the person. Another way to know someone is for the two people to actually meet and develop a close personal relationship, where either one could be asked and reply, “Oh yes, I know so-and-so, and they are a personal friend of mine.” Jesus expects His true followers to become personal friends of His. In John 15:13-15, Jesus described knowing Him and having friendship with Him in these



terms – “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” Evildoers use the name of Jesus and pretend to be His friend if they can achieve some personal selfish advantage by doing so. Jesus will send people such as this away from Him and say He never knew them.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What is the difference between “the measure you give” in Matthew 7:2 and the law of love as expressed in the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ teaching?
2. What did Jesus mean when talking about “the speck” and “the log” in someone’s eye?
3. If you are not supposed to judge, how will you know when or if you can give something holy to someone without being mauled?
4. Do we have “false prophets” today? If so, what standard would you use to judge whether someone was a false prophet or not?
5. How can you judge whether a person is a good person or a bad person?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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