

Begin by praying and reading **Matthew 7:1**. This weekend Jamie talked about criticism. He began his sermon by looking at what Jesus is and *isn't* saying in Matthew 7:1. What do you think Jesus is saying? What do you think this applies to? Discuss.

Jesus is not forbidding spiritual discernment. Jamie said, *"Jesus isn't saying Christians should never be critical of sinful behavior. He taught His followers to make wise judgments about people."* Read **Matthew 7:16**. What is spiritual discernment? How do you get it? What fruit is Matthew 7:16 talking about? Explain. What fruit do you lack? Why?

Read **2 Corinthians 6:14**, **1 Corinthians 5:11**, and **Matthew 7:15**. How can we do what these verses say if we don't make moral judgements? Why is moral judgement crucial for the Christian life? Read **Luke 17:3**. What is Jesus saying here? Discuss.

Jesus is not forbidding constructive criticism. Read **Matthew 7:3-5**. How does this verse correlate with the saying, *'You can't help others if you first don't help yourself?'* What is the benefit of bearing the fruits of the spirit? What do the fruits of the spirit have to do with not only yourself, but others? Explain.

Jamie stated, *"Jesus is forbidding hyper-criticism. Jesus is forbidding the terrible habit of searching for little things wrong in other people and enjoying condemning them. He is forbidding focusing on the negative 2% and ignoring the positive 98%."* Do you struggle with this? Have you been guilty of this? Why do you think some people are this way? What is the damage of thinking this way? Name two. Then discuss what it can do to not only those around, but the person.

Guilt, envy and pride can cause criticism. Read **Proverbs 16:18**. Why is it wrong to criticize? Name two reasons. What have you seen criticism do to people? How can you overcome criticism? Discuss.

Read **Romans 14:13** and **Matthew 7:2**. Does Matthew 7:2 scare you? Does it make you think of how you treat people? Jamie said, *"When we stand before God, we want Him to be merciful to us. So, we better be merciful to others."* To control criticism, we need to admit the evil of criticism and repent of it. We need to quit rationalizing and excusing ourselves from it. *'Criticism is not a gift you find in the Bible!'* Before you criticize someone, walk in their shoes. Pray for them, be flexible and confront them in love. Close by reading **Philippians 4:8 & Matthew 7:12**.