



**SERIES: A SEASON OF HOPE**  
**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**  
**Thursday, December 17, 2020**  
**Scripture: Matthew 7**  
**TITLE: Criticism and The Golden Rule**

A while ago, I was doing some shopping with my wife at a local store. As I was waiting in line to check out, I overheard a woman criticizing her husband. She kept going on, about how she keeps losing track of him, and he keeps wandering off. And I thought to myself, "Well, you wonder why he's wandering off? He is not in the mood, or ever in the mood, to be criticized by you."

I think oftentimes, it's easy to see criticism when it comes from other people, rather than when we are doing it ourselves. If you're struggling with being critical today, I think it might be wise to listen to the words of Jesus, as He gave us some great advice in Matthew 7:

<sup>12</sup> "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. (Mat. 7:12, NLT)

You probably know this passage as The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. We call it The Golden Rule, because if we all did this, the world would be a better place. In other words, if you don't want to be criticized, don't criticize other people. If you don't want to be robbed, don't rob other people. If you want a peaceful life, don't be a terror to others. The list could go on.

But I think we need to look back just a few verses, because this teaching on The Golden Rule actually follows a teaching from Jesus. In fact, listen to what Jesus said at the beginning of Matthew Chapter 7:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup>For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

<sup>3</sup>"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? <sup>4</sup>How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>Hypocrite! First, get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. (Vs. 1-5, NLT)

This is, by far, one of the most quoted, but also misunderstood, passages in the Bible. People from all walks of life and beliefs quote this passage. Jesus said, "You don't judge others, and you will not be judged." This ties directly back to The Golden Rule. But here's the difference: Jesus wasn't talking about using critical thinking, or calling out sin for sin. What Jesus is teaching here is, you as a human do not have the authority to judge a person's Salvation, or to know the condition of their heart. That is alone for God.

You see, being discerning, and wise, and willing to stand, and speak out for truth, is actually something we are called to do as believers. But Jesus does say, "Be sure before you call out someone, make sure you've evaluated yourself first: Are your accounts in good order?" He's not talking about perfection. He's talking about evaluating ourselves, and keeping in good standing with other people. So we are called to be discerning and helpful. But if we're not careful, that rightful discernment and healthy judgment can become critical and nit-picky.

I think if we can go back to The Golden Rule, that is a great way for us to discern whether we are being critical or discerning. When we use The Golden Rule, we know whether we are criticizing or helping.

My challenge to you today is, not to shy away from the truth. My challenge to you, is not to back away from helping a fellow brother or sister in Christ stay away from sin. My challenge to you today is, to ask yourself - before you speak - to ask: "Is this how I would want to be spoken to?" If you can't say yes, then it's better to stay quiet, and ask God to change our hearts.