



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 6:37-42**

To understand the difference between being critical and judging sin.

**Hilariously Critical**

In his book *Unoffendable*, Brett Hansen shares a few humorous (and sadly true) stories of people being critical of his work at a Christian music station.

*One day, we talked about the local forecast. "It'll be warmer than it should be for this time of year," I said.*

*"Normally, the high is seventy-two, but today, a high of eighty-two." The phone rang.*

*CALLER: You know, I was really disappointed to hear your forecast. It's not going to be "warmer than it should be," because God ordains the weather, and it's going to be exactly what He wants it to be today. Very disappointing.*

*ME: I'm sorry you were disappointed by this.*

*A bit later, I played my accordion on the air. Some say this is artistically offensive, sure, but it's all in fun. It's a goofy karaoke bit where people get to pick a hit from our station, or an '80s song, and then awkwardly try to sing along with me. One day, we did both. The phone rang.*

*CALLER: You know, I noticed you sounded a lot more practiced when you played the '80s song.*

*ME: Uh . . . "Danger Zone," by Kenny Loggins?*

*CALLER: Yes, it was very disappointing that you didn't play the godly song as well as you play the worldly songs. You apparently don't want to practice unless it's a worldly song.*

*ME: Wait—so . . . I played "Danger Zone" too well?*

*CALLER: I'm really disappointed at what the station is doing, glorifying worldly things. You shouldn't glorify the world like that.*

*ME: With my accordion?*

Being critical is sternly warned against in Luke 6, but the warning is often misunderstood. Jesus says, “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned,” and usually this is taken to mean that Christians should never express concern or speak truth to another believer’s sinful actions. However, believers are not only allowed but commanded to exercise church discipline and speak truth to sin. The point of this passage is to understand how criticizing other Christians in order to make oneself feel superior is problematic because not only is it dishonoring to other people, but it also attempts to usurp the superiority that only Christ possesses.

## Understanding Judgment

Verses 37 begins with Jesus’ famous words: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned.” This verse has been the source of much confusion. An example of how this is often misused will be helpful. Imagine, a Christian who has moved into a sinful pattern of living. One of his friends notices this sinful behavior, and approaches him and appeals to him to repent. This confrontation attacks the person’s pride, and he doesn’t like it. He responds with something like: “Why are you judging me? Jesus said to judge not, unless you be judged!”

However, this is not consistent with the rest of the New Testament’s teachings, and even Jesus’ teachings on confronting sin. Below is a brief examination of some verses that advocate for Christians to hold one another accountable and call one another to repentance.

### **MATTHEW 18:15-20**

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus says: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” This is as clear as can be. If a brother (or sister) sins, go to them and call them to account. If they do not listen, Jesus continues by advocating for 1 or 2 more people to come along with you (v.16), and if still they are unrepentant the offense is to be brought before the church (v.17). If even that does not work, Jesus says “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17). This does not mean that you never speak to them again, but that you treat them as a non-believer who needs to hear the Gospel. They do not participate in the fellowship but are to be pleaded with to repent.

### **GALATIANS 6:1**

Paul says in Galatians 6:1, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” The idea here is simple - if someone is in sin, do what you can to restore him, and do it gently. However, remember that calling out sin, even in its gentlest form, is offensive to the offender.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 5:11**

Paul says in verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 5: “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler – not even to eat with such a one.” Again, the idea is clear - if anyone in the church is caught up in these kinds of egregious sins and are unrepentant, do not associate with them in any manner other than repeatedly offering to them the message of grace and forgiveness in Christ through repentance.

### **TITUS 3:10**

Paul says in Titus 3:10: “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.” In this passage, there are echoes of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15-20, in that Paul instructs believers to go once or twice (presumably first alone, and second with 1 or 2 more) before seeing them as tax collectors or Gentiles.

There are a number of other passages that advocate for a church disciplinary approach, but these are sufficient for making the point that Jesus' words in Luke 6:37 are not meant to be understood as never confronting other Christians in their sin. If that's the case, what does it mean?

## Avoid Criticism

Jesus is setting up a simple principle that could be summarized like this: "Don't attempt to make other people look bad in order to make yourself look good." It's not uncommon for people to criticize others in order to draw the attention to someone else's deficiencies and away from their own. However, when you criticize or condemn other people, you open the door for the same kind of criticism to be directed towards you. This is, in essence, a continuation of the Golden Rule Jesus mentioned in Luke 6:31: "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." He says in verses 37 and 38: "Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Whenever believers live with the Golden Rule in mind, it prevents this kind of critical nature from taking the wheel.

## Evaluate Yourself

Beyond that, Jesus gives more direction to help prevent a critical spirit from taking root by reminding Christians to evaluate their own shortcomings before they draw attention to the shortcomings of other believers: "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye" (Luke 6:41-42). The reality is, there is always some deficiency in our own lives that should limit our criticism of others, because we all fall short (Rom. 3:23). No one is above Jesus (Lk. 6:40).

## What About Now?

The applications of this passage are quite straightforward. Before criticizing others, first evaluate your own shortcomings. Don't be under the illusion that you are any better than the person you are criticizing. However, remember the difference between criticism and confronting sin. We are to hold one another accountable. The New Testament has given us a solid framework for how to go about calling one another to account.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 6:37. What actions are warned against in this passage? What happens in response to these actions?

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2. Read Luke 6:38. What does Jesus command us to do, and what will happen in response if we do?

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### Day Two

- 1. Read Luke 6:31. Re-read the Golden Rule, and summarize it in your own words. How does this rule correlate to verses 37 and 38?

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- 2. Read Luke 6:39. What is the main idea of this verse?

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### Day Three

- 1. Read Luke 6:40. Will the disciples ever surpass their teacher? What will they attain, at best?

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- 2. Read Luke 6:41. What is the big idea of the question posed in this verse?

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### Day Four

- 1. Read Luke 6:42. In your own words, summarize this verse.

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- 2. Is there a difference between being critical and confronting another Christian in their sin? If so, how so? Use Scripture to support your answer either way (Hint: See above notes).

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## Week 23 Discussion: Critical of Being Critical

In Luke 6:37-42, Jesus warns the disciples against being critical of others in order to be seen as superior on the basis that they too have shortcomings, and that none of them are as superior as He is. Talk as a group about the danger of living with a critical spirit, and how to overcome it.

- 1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself critical? If so, in a healthy or unhealthy manner? Why?
- 2. Has anyone ever accused you of being critical? Why?
- 3. Do you know anyone that is overly critical? How do they make you feel?
- 4. How does living by the Golden Rule prohibit a critical spirit?
- 5. Is it possible to be critical in a healthy manner? If so, how?
- 6. Why do you think people are critical in general? What motivates it?

## Takeaways:

- 1. Jesus warns His disciples against being critical of others, lest they be met with some kind of criticism.
- 2. Living by the Golden Rule shapes the way we treat others in profoundly helpful ways.