Series	Sermon on the Mount
Study	Study 15
Topic	Judging
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Welcome back to another edition of Gamma, looking at the Sermon on the Mount. Today, we're going to be looking at a very important topic, which happens in all our lives, is a topic of judging. We're not the judge. The chapter is chapter seven of Matthew verses 1-6. Now in this particular chapter, these particular six verses Jesus is talking about two sets of people. One set of people is the more common one, always having an opinion on other people, judging. Way across on the other side of the spectrum, we have a group of people who are naïve with actually no sense of discernment, hardly judge.

Let's start with a more common set of people. People like us who love to judge others.

In 2014, the famous singer Cliff Richard's house was suddenly raided by the police and before he even knew about it, the media were tipped off by the police and his name was all over the internet within minutes. Before an informal charges were laid, and in spite of Cliff Richard's denial of any wrongdoing, Twitter user starting sharing their judgments online. Immediately one of them said, "Can't say I'm surprised". Another one said, "I knew he'd be the next celebrity to turn out to be a rapist or pedo". Last one said, "Why do all these celebrities have to live like beasts?" One British MP really lamented, "People have zero percent % of the facts and a hundred percent of the opinions. It's quite wrong for people to prejudge.

We of course prejudge all the time. Our brains are hardwired to jump to conclusions way before the evidence comes in. We see homeless people lie on the streets and the first thing that comes to our mind, what kind of father is this to have neglected the care of his poor son? He must be useless, good for nothing, loser or a bum. What about the current black lives matter protests all over the world? Isn't racism due to the presumptuous judgment? In the case of, in the eyes of the white policeman the average black man is dangerous, threat to be dealt with harshly. What about the coronavirus pandemic? The world looks at the average Chinese man and thinks that they are dirty. Michael Caputo Trump undersecretary of the Public Affairs for Health and Human Services of the US tweeted, "Millions of Chinese suck the blood or rabid bats as an appetizer and eat the ass out of anteaters."

The Chinese now face a backlash in the Western world simply because of judgmental attitudes like this fueled by unethical politicians who want to whip up fear and tribalism to gain support. The problem is judgmental behavior is the default mode all over the world. According to psychologist, the main reason we judge others is because our brains are wired to keep us safe. The brain wants the ability and certainty, so it makes quick judgments to help us do that.

For example, when your brain judges someone and labels them rude, you will know to stay away from them in future, so you won't get hurt. We are also wired to understand our status in our social hierarchy as means to survive.

Psychologists have established that there are small things that people use to judge our personalities. In a study of 2015 study from the Academy of Finland found the people who avoided eye contact were thought to be introverted, was those who held eye contact were judged to be confident and extroverted. People with warm hands were perceived to be more warm and generous. There is a 2008 study that showed people who held a cup of hot drink were perceived to be more warm and generous while those who had a glass of cold drink were thought to be cold and unemotional. In a 2018 study from New York University, they found that people who often make judgments about personality based on facial expressions. For example, people of babyish features were thought to be agreeable or harmless.

Researchers from Syracuse University conducted a study of 500 college kids and found female names are more associated with warmth than competence. Male names were found to be opposite, competence they are not warm. Names are found to be both highly competent and warm included Anna, Caroline, Elizabeth, John and Matthew.

Although we have seen that judgmental behavior is universal in secular society, judgmental behavior is thought to be particularly rampant among churchgoers. There was a 2007 Barna Study of 16 to 29 year olds, which revealed that, that a greater degree of criticism towards Christianity than previous generations when they were at the same stage of life. A huge proportion of them, 87% thought Christians were judgmental. 85% thought Christians were hypocritical. Other impressions, old fashioned 78% and politically 75%. These impressions remain exactly the same in a followup interview just last year, 2019. The United States Lifeway found massive 70% of protestants between the age of 18 to 22 stopped attending church for at least a year and 26% said it was because they found church people are judgmental.

Now why is judgmentalism so common in the church?

Timothy Radcliffe wrote a book called, "What is the Point of Being a Christian" has a good explanation.

A community which founded its existence on the claim to moral superiority would not only be repulsive, but would inevitably invite people to search for our failures and expose them with glee. If the Churches are so often attacked in the press...then it's because it is generally, but wrongly assumed that the point of being a Christian is to be better than other people.

What Radcliffe is saying is that a church is supposed to be different. Holy, ethically good hence morally superior to the world in his own judgment. The church looks at the world and judges itself better morally and the world inferior, which then invites the world to retaliate and such for the churches own failure and expose them. So judgmentalism is a two edge sword. We will be judged the same way we judge others.

Let's start our Bible study with the first verse, Matthew 7:1

#### Judge not, that you be not judged.

This is a command as the word "judge not" is in the imperative tense. It is not good advice. It is a total retaliation of judgmental behavior. This verse has often caused a lot of confusion as to word judge and in the Greek we know can have a range of meanings, but mainly it is between moral

discernment and moral condemnation.

Jesus is not asking the disciples to be naïve simpletons. We are not allowed to discern anything by the proverbial three monkeys who hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil, or someone whose ethical stance is so fluid and relative and will not make a conclusions on anything. If Jesus is asking us not to judge in a sense not to discern then we will be totally blind to the atrocities and evil characters like Paul Potts, Stalin, Hitler or even Najib Razak.

Jesus himself says in verse six.

## 6"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

He is actually calling some people dogs and pigs. Judgment is required. A little later in the gospel he says in Matthew 7:15

# 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits.

He is inviting us to judge. Who are in fact false prophets describes as ravenous wolves, but masquerade as sheep. What about church members or even a pastor? Look at Pastor Paula White in the US, who climbed to fame, rose to fame in the evangelical world and is now spiritual advisor to the president of the United States. Look at what she say's to raise funds for herself.

There is someone that God is speaking to, to click on that donation button by minimizing the screen. And when you do sow \$1,144, it's not often I ask very specifically but God has instructed me and I want you to hear. This isn't for everyone but this is for someone. When you sow that \$1,144 based on John 11:44, I believe for resurrection life.

So what she's asking is, she's actually offering resurrection life for \$1,144 based on John 11:44. When we hear this, are we to have no opinion, no judgment on whether she is a sheep or Wolf? You see the apostle Paul does the same thing in Philippians 3:2. He says,

### Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate to flesh

He is warning against Jewish folks who are trying to force Christians in Galatia to undergo circumcision in order to gain salvation, and he judges them as evildoers and derides them as dogs like Jesus does. And when Paul writes to his disciple Titus, he says in Titus 2:10

As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

He instructed Titus to make a judgment call. Jesus is not against judging, and in fact in John 7:24 he instructed the disciples to judge by saying,

#### Do not judge by appearances but judge with write judgment.

So is Jesus contradicting himself? No, he is not, because the kind of judgment he is prohibiting is not moral discernment. He is prohibiting moral condemnation. He is prohibiting a critical spirit, a

condemning attitude. He is referring to people who always assume that the know the underlying motives behind every behavior and that behavior along is seen from the outside is ample evidence of the person's character and moral standing.

Psychologists have this attribution theory, which actually divides our judgments into two kinds; situational or dispositional attributions. When we walk into a supermarket and the cashier has a sour face and is rude to us we can react in two ways. We can give her the benefit of doubt and assume she might be irritable because she has had a bad day or is having emotional problems. This is the situational attribution, and it's nonjudgmental. Or we can assume she is rude because she is a nasty person, a character flaw and this is called a dispositional attribution. And this is what Jesus is asking us not to do because it's judgmental behavior, because we don't have enough data on her because this is the only one encounter to safely conclude she is a nasty person.

The evidence that this is what Jesus meant is found the next few verses.

3 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? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

It is judging with double standards. So the judgmental people are called hypocrites. Jesus during his ministry was mainly dealing with Pharisees who had precisely the kind of judgment, critical judgment spirit that made them blind to the truth of Jesus' ministry.

The next question to answer in the passage is, why can't we judge? Look at verse two

## 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

You see if we judge people on that harsh unyielding manner, we will receive the same kind of judgment. Well, does this mean that if we are unkind and unfair that God will be unkind and unfair to us in retaliation? This cannot be so because justice even in human ideals is blind, which means it is totally even handed and fair unbiased and does not discriminate.

God is described in Matthew 6, which we have done before, verse 45 as a father who is in heaven for he makes a sunrise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. He is totally fair even to the most undeserving evil person on the face of the earth. So this verse must be taken in the same manner as the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:12,

Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

Verse 14

If you forgive others their trespasses your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.

Which means if we do not forgive others, it just means that we too have not been forgiven. Our unforgiven hardened attitudes towards others betrays a spiritual reality that we too have not received or experienced the true grace and forgiveness from God, because an authentic spiritual

experience will transform us into forgiving people. In the same way the judgmental attitude excludes us from God's pardon because it betrays a broken spirit.

Richard J. Foster writes in his famous book, "Celebrations of Discipline". He summarizes it very well and he writes.

When we genuinely believe that inner transformation is God's work and not ours, we can put to rest our passion to set others straight.

You see the truly blessed disciple will be poor in spirit. So therefore he will not be so full of himself that he is judging and condemning others, and the one who has truly received mercy will be merciful. A judgmental hypercritical spirit is a huge warning sign. It is like an alarm bell to us that there's something spiritually wrong with us. Jesus is not asking us to excuse sin. We can still morally discern sin but look at the way he dealt with the woman caught in adultery.

So here we have a whole bunch of the very best people, scribes and Pharisees, all ganged up on a young woman caught in adultery and wanted to test Jesus to see if he would agree to the Mosaic Law that actually prescribed stoning, which actually at that time hadn't been practiced very much for woman caught in adultery. Jesus then asked one question, John 8:7b,

### Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

There was silence. Gradually one by one the scribes and Pharisees left until only Jesus was left alone with the woman and he said to her in John 8:11,

#### Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on sin no more.

You see Jesus was not saying adultery was not wrong. He never excused her. He said to her to sin no more but what he was illustrating from this episode was that there was a greater wrong here. Judgmentalism, hypocrisy, a deep rooted sin that uses the God given law as a means of making one out to be a righteous, when in fact the lowest meant to shine the light of God's judgment in the dark places of the heart. Jesus reminds the scribes and Pharisees that they are in no position to judge and that their self-righteousness was even more problematic to Holy living than the woman's adulterous affair.

In their zeal to find a speck in the woman's eyes, they failed to see the log in their own eyes. Barely the scandal of catching this woman in a very act of adultery made all the Pharisees look good by comparison and they happily trusted in front of Jesus to watch him condemn her and in the process justified themselves because compared to her they came up smelling that roses looking great. Jesus reminded them of the ugly log like sin of judgmentalism and one by one they each slipped away in shame.

Our relationship with judgment should be that it is for us first and not for other people. We ought to hold onto Christ's instruction to first take the log out of our own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbors' eye. The biggest problem with judgmentalism or hypercritical spirit is that it that makes us blind to our own sin, which is much more lethal for us spiritually.

The other reason why we cannot have a judgmental critical spirit is because all our judgments are flawed. Jesus gives an illustration of why we cannot judge.

3 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? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Jesus is saying that our judgments are flawed because we are unable to be fair and we have double standards. The best example is 2-Samuel 12:1-7. This is a story of when King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. He has taken her from her husband Uriah and arranged his murder on the front lines of a battle. And he was quite happy with that. He didn't even know that he had done something wrong or did he. The prophet Nathan cleverly told a story of how there were two men who lived in the city, a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had lots of flocks of sheep and cattle while the poor man only had one tiny lamb for his pet who slept with him, ate from his hand, cuddled with him, dearly beloved. And a traveler came to visit rich man, instead of killing one of his many, many sheep for dinner, the rich man grabbed the poor man's only lamb and roasted it for his guest.

At this point King David became very upset at the injustice and declared the rich man deserves to die. At this point Nathan turns around and points to him. You are that man. See David had condemned himself. The fact that he didn't realize it was because he was practicing double standards.

You see, we are all like King David. We are not qualified to judge and to condemn. The other passage on judgment is taken in Romans 14. It is about diet. It is on a situation where they've got different diets. The one who eats, look at verse 14:1

1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

You see, we are asked not to judge each other so the meat eater is not to look down on the vegetarian, and the vegetarian is not to look down on the meat eater because why? Because God welcomes both meat eaters and vegetarians. The other reason is given that,

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stans or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Every Christian is independently a servant of God and answers directly to him. He is accountable to God directly. So therefore we cannot judge another man's servant. In his to the Corinthian church Paul was criticized by the church. But answers in 1-Corinthians 4:4

4... It is the Lord who judges me. 5Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

He is God's servant. Paul is God's servant and accountable to God and not to the judgmental church members. The other reason why we cannot judge is that we cannot read the hearts of men. God can and will reveal all when he returns and judges. In fact, if God himself has reserved a day for

judgment is it not premature for us to start judging each other?

The judgmental critical spirit is sin because we place ourselves in God's judgment seat. We are not God, we are pretending to be God, so we are hypocrites.

There are other reasons why we cannot have the judgmental spirit. You see Jesus' kingdom is all about reconciliation. The whole reason for the cross is that. The condemnation that we face is removed by the sacrifice of Jesus. The great John Wesley actually said,

"The judging that Jesus condemns here is thinking about another person in a way that is contrary to love."

Listen to the voice of Paul in 1-Corinthians chapter 3

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Even the apostle Peter echoes this in 1-Peter 4:7

The end of all things is at hand, therefore be self-controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly because love covers a multitude of sin.

Peter is saying that the key is love. If we come from a place of love, if we look for an excuse to love them then much of the sin that we see or the false in others that normally upset us will suddenly become invisible. Our love covers over the sins and we will not see them nor be upset by them and we will begin to see people as Jesus sees them as sinners in need of mercy and peace, not that we will condoned to sin but we see them as sinners who are in need of mercy and peace.

There is an Anglican priest, Fraser Dyer in London who wrote a book entitled, "Who are We to Judge" and he writes,

The point of being a Christian isn't to be better than others, or you have to engage in that sort of dualism. It is about how we relate to God and each other, working with the resources of discipleship prayer, scripture, church and so on - to help strengthen the qualities of those relationships with a commodity called love.

Why then do we judge?

There are many reasons. One is low self-esteem. It is when we struggle to feel good about ourselves. When we fail to pull ourselves up, we will instinctively try to pull others down. So relative to them we will look to feel good. Think about a recent scandal in a church about perhaps a pastor or an elder caught in adultery. We automatically check out the story with each other. Who was the woman? What was she like? Where did they meet? How long did they have the affair for? We remember his words to us on a pulpit. So sanctimonious, so self-righteous and all the while he was sinning, why have you ever had to merit or face to get on the pulpit? Again, we will chase him out of church. Suddenly, we feel good about ourselves. At least we were faithful. We didn't go full time but we were fateful. We feel good because like Archbishop and Nobel prize winner Desmond Tutu

said,

We too often feel that God's love for us is conditional like our love for others. We have made God in our image rather than seeing ourselves in God's image. We think it's all performance base and our neighbors sin just makes us look good.

The other reason for judgmentalism is basically fear and anxiety. We want to detrack attention from our own problems and inadequacy, so we demonize others. It is us versus them kind of thinking, and we're too quick to make judgments. We see that so often in the field of politics. Malaysian Insider headlines in 2016 was, Umno-PAS attacks fuel anti-DAP sentiments among Malays, study finds. There is a Darul Ehsan Institute of IDE deputy chairman, Datuk Redzuan. He reported an increasing attitude among rural Malays against DAP to DAP was only pro Chinese and anti-Malay and anti-Islam. Well over two thirds of the respondents had this attitude and this is often fueled by politicians sowing fear among the Malays that their rights and privileges were under threat. Hence it is this fear that incites judgmentalism and racial hatred.

As sinful human beings our judgments are all too often rooted in a desire for power or control, revenge or punishment. We seek to exonerate ourselves for producing or pronouncing others guilty. All too often we set ourselves up as the palace guards. All too often we feel the urge to tell people what's wrong with their own lives, that they need to put their house in order before they can join our exclusive club or church. We demand transformation first and we offer grace second.

It is as if it's ours to dispense. We set up ourselves as gatekeepers to the kingdom. I remember my dear uncle from Australia with whom I spent a year in college. Every time we would get into conversation about the faith, he would remind me there was my brother who had told him that he was going to go to hell. It was the spirit of judgmentalism that actually stumbles most people. Grace comes second when it should come first.

Now, what are the signs that we are being judgmental, if we do not know it already? We judge ourselves by our intentions but we judge others by the actions. You may be rude or bad tempered or drove pass a red light, it is because we were too tired and could not sleep last night, but if someone else did it, it was because he was careless, inconsiderate, poor excuse for a Christian or even as a leader. It is when we tend to define others by their flaws, always letting the negative carry more weight. Oh, it's Sandra the loud mouth woman or Steven the sticky hypocrite or Jason the fat boy.

I once met a leader of a large Christian organization in this country, which shall yet remain unnamed for obvious reasons, who actually told me that in his Christian organization there was no fat Bible study leaders because fat people always ill-discipline and such poor Christian witnesses. We are judgmental when everyone is good or bad, hardworking or lazy, clever or stupid, it's all black and white. And there are no nuances except when it applies to ourselves.

Here is a bunch of other diagnostic questions. Are we making negative moral comments or judgment on others? Do we have a moral rating system skewed in our favor? For example, we're always, if we're always habitually punctual and everybody else was late, it's always lazy, ill-discipline or bad. If we're fat and love to eat, everyone who is tin and exercises is obsessive and boring. Or are we inclined to believe the worst in people and do so, so very quickly, are we inclined to believe the worst in people without first personally knowing the situation.

Let's end this first section on judging by looking at Luke 19, where the story was told when Jesus came to town and everybody wanted to interact with Jesus and there was a tax collector. In fact, he was a chief tax collector called Zacchaeus. Hated by people because he is known to be a corrupted evil man who would basically would not only collect taxes on behalf of Roman and betray his people, but also add on top of that taxes for himself. So he is really shunned by people. Zacchaeus was a short man and he couldn't get to reach Jesus, so what he did was climb up a sycamore tree and when Jesus came in town, the first thing he did was to look around and He saw Zacchaeus and say, Zacchaeus, you know what, I'm coming to your house to have dinner with you today.

And Zacchaeus was really astonished, came down hurriedly and took Jesus to his house. And when Jesus interacted him, people criticized, they says why would Jesus go of all places to the house of the chief sinner in this town. They were really judgmental, and once Jesus interacted with Zacchaeus in verse eight in Luke 19, Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord,

Behold Lord, half of all my goods I give to the poor. And if I've defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him today salvation has come to this house. Since he is also a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and save the lost.

You see, happens with us in the church often we are gatekeepers or we tend to judge people. We insist people come in, they have to admit their sin and repent and then we will show them grace, and what this situation Jesus has shown that he shows grace first. Zacchaeus did not deserve the invitation from our Lord. The Lord went to his house of all peoples' house. He's the least deserving and as a result of the grace shown Zacchaeus repented and came into the kingdom of God as well, because he was touched by grace and we as Christians ought to show grace and grace is the opposite of being judgmental.

We need to be charitably quick to believe innocence and slow to pronounce guilt. If we have to judge, we have to judge rightly. We should be charitably redemptive in a way we treat other people we seek to reconcile them to God, reconcile them to ourselves. And lastly, we should be charitably silent. Because the greater the distance from the person we don't know much about the great should be our ignorance and so therefore we should be silent rather than to quickly judge and spread rumors and gossip.

The work of the church in building for God's kingdom is diminished when all our energies goes into deciding who we find acceptable and who we find not.

We now come to the last verse of today's lesson, Matthew chapter seven verse six,

Do not give dogs what is Holy and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

This is addressed to people on the opposite side of the spectrum, people who are non-discriminating. Now, there are two pictures here, two metaphors. The metaphor of the dog and pigs. Now the dogs are not the usual Shih Tzu, Chihuahuas, cute little pets that you actually have. They're wild dogs, they are mongrels and they basically search the streets and they live in the streets for scraps and they are vicious, right. They are not your pet dogs. The same thing with the swine. And in fact, if you look in 2-Peter chapter two verse 22, Peter writes.

What the true proverb says has happened to them; "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the

#### sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

So they are both dirty animals even described by Peter. So what happens is that do not take pearls, your pearls, which are valuable things and throw them before pigs. And what these pearls mean is not literal pearls but spiritual truths. Do not take the spiritual truth that you actually have and pass them onto people who are not going to appreciate it. Here it is like taking pearls and giving it to dogs or pigs and they think it is food the pounds on it and when they eat it they choke on it and they turn and they actually attack the human beings.

If you look at Matthew chapter 15 verse 10, Jesus was speaking to them about foods, which some of the Pharisees felt were clean and you couldn't simply partake of food which was unclean. And then verse 12 says.

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into a pit."

So here is actually, when he's actually sharing the Pharisees who were against, they were offended. But Jesus actually said, let them alone. He wasn't going to waste his time on them because this is this precious truth. What Jesus was talking about is actually throwing them before pigs and before dogs who will turn on them. Same thing with Paul with the Jews in the city of Corinth, Acts 15 verse Five.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia Paul was occupied with the word testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook his garments and said to them, your blood be on your own heads. I am innocent from now onwards. I will go to the Gentiles.

Here we have spiritual truths. Whenever he go to a city, Paul would first of all always go to the Jews and bring them the spiritual truth. But here you've got people who rejected him and because they rejected him, they were like the proverbial dogs and swine. So there's no point taking a scripture of truth and throwing it that then because they will turn on you. So he went and took the gospel to the gentiles instead.

And so therefore here is a lesson for people who are not as discriminating. There are certain people who are so against the gospel that going up to them and confronting them with the truth will only antagonize them and Jesus is teaching us to be wise. So let me conclude today's lessons. Main thing, the main temptation for all of us is actually not to judge. And for those who are less discriminating, be careful when you take the gospel truth to share with certain people, some people are not going to accept it. And maybe it's time for you to pray for them until the time when God touches their hearts. May God bless you and have a good week coming forward.