

Loving and Judging: Part 2

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Dr. Henry Cloud says in his book *Integrity* that someone is dysfunctional when their best attempts to make things better actually make things worse. That has always stuck with me for a variety of reasons; it also make this general point: that just because we try to make a positive impact doesn't mean we do. Sometimes are very effort to be helpful proves to be unhelpful.

We do this when we judge others. Oddly enough, our judgements are oftentimes misguided efforts of trying to be helpful. We might justify our judgmentalism as being a "truth-teller" or having "tough love" when in reality we are just being unloving and unhelpful. A good sign that we are being judgmental is if we do a lot of talking, but don't spend any time listening to be a learner. When we are judgemental our minds are made up; we've got everything figured out. There's no need to listen; the only question is: is someone going to listen to our lofty wisdom and insight. Jesus has a better way. Rather than criticizing others, Jesus want to show us how to have a loving presence in the lives of others to make real impact; I'm excited to share that with you today. Let's read our passage, look at our outline and proceed forward (READ Luke 6:37-42)

The outline we are working with is as follows.

- What goes around comes around (vs. 37-38)
- The power of persuasion (vs. 39-40)
- Finding 20/20 vision (vs. 41-42)
- How to help your friend (vs. 42)

Last week, we looked at the first section; what goes around comes around. The way we measure others will be the way God measures us. If we are harsh and judgmental, God will be harsh and judgmental with us; if we are patient and forgiving with others, God will be patient and forgiving with us. It's that simple. Friends, this dose of reality motivates me. I want God to be merciful to me; let me rephrase that, I *need* God to be merciful to me. And so do you. If God is going to be harsh in his judgment toward us we are toast. So, learning the path of love is really important for all of us here.

The following 3 sections, the one's we will look at today, are all related to way we help or interact with others. Vs. 39-40 address the negative impact we make in the lives of others when we are judgmental. Vs. 42 shows us what real help looks like. And sandwiched in between is the change that needs to happen in us to not be judgmental (vs. 41-42). Let's begin.

The power of persuasion. We are never helpful to others when we are judging them. That means when we are judgmental we are a negative influence a person's life and not positive one. But we don't really see it that way, do we? We feel so sure, so right, so... helpful in our judgments. So, whether we keep our judgmental thoughts to ourselves or if we actually

open up our mouths and give voice to what we're thinking, even though we are wrong and judgmental we feel good about it (talk about being wrong!). If we gossip and talk to others, we think we're helping others avoid these bad people. If we tell those we are judging what we're thinking we confidently wear the badge of morality police and think we are upholding righteousness. Like I said earlier, we defend these approaches by saying "we're just being honest," when in reality we're just being judgmental.

Vs. 39 and 40 say, "A blind man can't lead a blind man; they both will fall into a pit." That's what we're doing when we are judgmental; we're a blind guide. We think we're doing a good job; we think we're a helpful guide, but we're not. In vs. 40 Jesus says when you teach through your judgmentalism, your pupil will be just like you... judgmental. That's the negative power of our persuasion. Rather than leading someone to life, we bring more death. How do we fix this? That's the next section.

Finding 20/20 vision. We have two problems when we give into the temptation of judgmentalism. The two problems are 1) we have greater guilt than those we are judging and 2) our own sins blind us from seeing clearly. Let's take these one at a time.

When we judge people we actually have the bigger problem. Look at vs. 41, "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." The word "log" is a builder's term. Think of a center beam in a house or a building holding the entire structure up; it's kind of like these big beams in our own sanctuary. Big, bulky beams. Speck means dust. The contrast could not be more dramatic. You've got an enormous beam of sin and problems in your life, but you're concerned about the little piece of dust in your neighbor's eye.

Why is that the case? And is it always the case? I know it doesn't feel that way to me. Your speck doesn't look like a speck; it looks like a log. And my log doesn't feel like a log; it feels like a speck. But that's not what Jesus says, is it? He says I got the log and the person I'm observing has the speck, meaning I've got the big problem and he's got the small one. Why is that?

The answer, I think, is Jesus' charge of hypocrisy. Do you see that there in the middle of vs. 42? When I'm judging others, when my assessment is harsh and critical, when I'm seeing only the bad and I'm presuming the worst, I'm not just judging, I'm being a hypocrite. Why? Because I'm presuming self-righteously to be better; I'm taking the role of a teacher when I should be the student. Look at vs. 39-40; you're the blind guide thinking you can help your brother with judgments and condemnations. You're the bad teacher. But, you've got bigger issues than your brother, namely, your judgmentalism and hypocrisy. Dude, take out the log in your own eye first!

And it gets even worse. Consider this: what the does the scriptures say about teachers? They will be judged with greater strictness. James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should become

teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” By the simple virtue of your judgmentalism (not counting all the other issues you have), you have the bigger problem. You’re judgmental (that’s a problem) and you’re also a hypocrite, presuming a position of self-righteousness and correction in the lives of others people. And God will judge you more strictly.

We really go off the rails when we are judgmental; we get a ton wrong. Believe it, brothers and sisters. Will you? Will you believe the words of your master? You have the bigger problem. In your judgments, in your self-righteousness your sin is a bigger problem than the sins of your neighbor. I know it’s hard to believe; our pride doesn’t want to admit it. But when you do believe it, you’re poised to receive God’s mercy for yourself and to give mercy to others.

Here’s the second problem: our own sins blind us from seeing clearly. Jesus speaks rather plainly on this point; look at vs. 42, “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?” Another way of saying that would be: since you’re *blind* to the log in your own eye, why do you think you can *see clearly* to take the speck that is in your brother’s eye?

Self-deception is our very first, misguided attempt at saving ourselves from the weight of our sinfulness; self-deception is our way of hiding from our guilt. I think Romans 1 suggests this (Romans 1:18), “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” What does Paul say we do with our unrighteousness? We suppress it. And when we do that - when we willfully become blind to our own sin - we feel justified in self-righteously taking the position of judge. What’s so deadly about self-deception is we become so committed to our view of reality that we can not see the truth for ourselves; nothing but the merciful Spirit of our God working through the church of Jesus Christ can root it out. Otherwise we are stuck in self-deception. I love how Lewis Smedes says it: “First we deceive ourselves, and then we convince ourselves that we are not deceiving ourselves.”

But there’s hope. Jesus gives us a picture of that hope. Look at vs. 42; “First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly.” There’s a way to see clearly; there’s a way to have 20/20 spiritual vision and be rescued from being judgmental. The way is taking the log out of our own eye. How do you do that? You do that though confessing and repenting of sin. That’s taking the log out of your own eye.

Those are meant to go together. Confessing, admitting, acknowledging sin is the critical first step; you have to know and own your sin. But, if you don’t repent, if you don’t turn away and forsake your sin your confession doesn’t mean anything. Repentance (which means to turn away from your sin, to forsake your sake) is the bread and butter of taking the log out of your own eye, but you’ll never get there unless you confess.

Listen to Prov. 28:13; “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Drink that verse in, FBC. Mercy; we want and need mercy. And God gives it through confession and repentance. And when we do that, we will see clearly.

How to help your friend. You can help a friend with their sin problem and not be judgmental. Not everybody believes that. For some, anyone who highlights an area of sin or weakness in their life at anytime is being judgmental. So then any correction, any loving and careful criticism is rejected out of hand because it’s judgmental. Friends, you’ll never grow if that’s what you think; if that’s how you live. If you are a follower of Jesus, you ought to be eager for the correction from a good brother or sister. Correction from others is one of God’s gifts of grace to us. Paul Miller explains this in his own life in the book *A Loving Life*; he says, “I began to pray daily that I would love, even prize correction.” Why would Miller say that? Because he has learned what the Proverbs teach (Prov. 15:31), “The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.” What a great verse. Listen to life-giving correction, FBC; we need it.

Jesus says in vs. 42, “Then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is your brother’s eye.” We have a role in serving our brothers and sisters; we have a part to play in the spiritual growth in each other’s lives. Galatians 6:1 says the same thing; it says, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep a watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Who are the *spiritual* ones? Not necessarily the pastors or elders (though we hope so); not necessarily the SS teachers or Titus 2 mentors (though we hope so). The *spiritual* ones are the repenters and forsakers of sin; the spiritual ones are those taking the log out of their own eye. Titles mean nothing. God is not a respecter of titles; he’s a respecter of repenters.

In 1 Cor. 5, God commands the church to appropriately and helpfully correct one another. We are to do this. We are not being the church of Jesus Christ if we never help each other grow and mature in faith through correction. But we’ve learned from Luke 6 and Galatians 6 that it must be done in love from a fellow repentor. Here’s how our help will be different when we first take the log out of our own eye.

First, we’ll see that our brother’s or sister’s sins are such a small speck that we can overlook them. Prov. 19:11 says, “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” Sometimes (maybe even oftentimes), the right thing to do is to overlook the speck of sin in a friend’s eye. It’s small. It’s not persistent. It’s not bringing great, public shame on the name of Jesus. Come on; get over yourself. Remember how much God has forgiven and overlooked in your life and forgive them. There’s always a cost to forgive someone. So, pay the price without even your friend knowing about it.

Secondly, when we take the log out of our own eye, we will be gentle in our correction. When I’m self-righteous with a beam sticking out of my own eye, I’m pretty harsh. I lack the sympathy and compassion that’s necessary to offer correction. Galatians 6:1 says a repentor

should offer correction in a *spirit of gentleness*. Gentle. Tender. Sympathetic and compassionate. There's oftentimes a web of hardship, hurt, fear and rebellion all mixed together when we sin. A wise friend sees this web and is gentle in correction.

Finally, when we get the log out of our own eye, we'll see how to correct the best. Sometimes, honestly, a word of rebuke needs to be firm, but loving. Other times, it should be soft and sweet. When do you need to ask questions? And when do you have all the info you need? And what are the signs that someone's speck is doing public damage or just personal damage? It's hard to know these things. It just goes to show you and I how much we need to see clearly. Because when we see clearly, God will grant us the wisdom and discernment to handle the process of correction well.

I've noticed that when kids turn 5, 6 or 7 they start trying to figure out what's right and wrong. And when that happens, they can turn into little police officers. Have you ever tried to keep your niece, your grandchild quiet when they say something like, "Grandpa, he just used a naughty word!" So we teach them; this is what's right and wrong and this is how you interact with others. That journey never stops. And our passage today and last week has taught us areas where we need to grow so we can make a loving impact in the lives of others. Submit, my good brothers and sisters, to Jesus' way. Humble yourself to God; cry out for his grace. And then give it to others.

Key Verse: Luke 6:41 ~ 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?

Questions for the week

- What's hard about seeing the log in our own eye?
- How eager are you for loving correction from a friend? What might make you more accepting of that kind of help?
- What's one way God has challenged you with these sermons on this passage? Share that with a friend or family member.