

Peek your eyes across Matthew 7.1-5

This is about judging. One of the hardest areas in church life to understand. Why? Cos while we shouldn't judge, we should be able to make constructive criticism and evaluate what we do. So where does evaluation start and judging stop?

It may sound basic but it'd be good to get your personal definition of these two things:

1. Judging

2. Evaluation / Constructive criticism

Now go round and try and create a group definition for these 2 things:

1. Judging

2. Evaluation / Constructive criticism

Jesus message is quite simple and we find it in verse 1 and 2. Don't judge or you too will be judged.

NIV - "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

This principle is Biblical. What you sow you will reap. What you give you will get. So if you spread peace, kind, constructive loving words - the same will more than often come back to you. If not on earth, in heaven.

But it's not simply that you what you sow you reap, it's the amount that you sow that you will reap. So if you invest yourself, immerse yourself in serving people with love, you too will be immersed in people's love back. If you never give control of your money and finances to God, you will not see spiritual blessings and finances return to you in great measure.

I had 2 friends, let's call them John and Judy. They invested in other people, they helped someone with their life when it was going through lots of struggles. One day, John and Judy needed a holiday. Badly. Suddenly the person who they'd helped was able to get them a really cheap holiday. What John and Judy sowed they reaped.

Sit and listen to a Christian worship song - or sit in silence - or listen to some heavy music, hip hop, whatever suits you. Shut your eyes and ask God to speak to you by his Holy Spirit asking him to reveal areas and times you have judged others - and ask God for forgiveness. You may want to write these down and rip up the paper symbolically.

OK, so what does Jesus mean when he says take the log out of your eye before pointing out the speck in your mate's eye? Was he an optician?

An example of the whole log and stick thing is this: I know a person who once made some criticisms of a ministry (not mine). This ministry was far from perfect and deserved much of the stick it got. But the person giving the comments wasn't prepared to help, wasn't right with God and wasn't giving themselves or their money where their mouth was.

This person saw the problem with something else but not themselves. You know what? This is what we're all like a lot of the time. Especially us Brits - and often most people on social media!!

What does Jesus say in verse 5? I know it's obvious, but write it down!

See, Jesus says take a look at yourself, check yourself, look in the mirror. It's like disrespecting people because they have spots - but refusing to look in the mirror to see that your face is spottier than anyone's.

What's the way round this? Well, I'm going to take you to Colossians 4.6. This is what it says:

AMP - Let your speech at all times be gracious (pleasant and winsome), seasoned [as it were] with salt, [so that you may never be at a loss] to know how you ought to answer anyone [who puts a question to you].

MSG - Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.

You know, whatever is in your heart will come out of your mouth. Just as what you physically eat will come out the other end, so what you 'eat and drink' spiritually will come out of you. Watch violence and sexual films and your words will reflect this. Read God's Word, play Christian music and pray - and this will come out from your mouth.

I know someone who listened to the New Testament on CD at work. Apart from being a courageous thing to do, their words were completely changed - as the Bible says their words became 'seasoned with salt and light'. This person started speaking God's word out loud and stopped gossiping and disrespecting people - during this time - all because of listening to the Bible.

See, the way ahead is to love God, love others and let your words speak like it says you should think in Philippians 4.8. Go find this verse now and substitute the word 'think' for the word 'speak' and write it out.

Situations: How can you resolve positively without judging?

1. Someone bad mouths you behind your back unfairly. You know they've been doing wrong stuff. How do you respond?

2. You find yourself dissing other people all the time? How do you make a change in your own life?

3. You don't like someone in the group and nor do other people. How do you include them and love them?

Is there any time you can judge?

I'm personally of the opinion that judgment is Biblical when serving others in positions of authority. So I believe you'll find Biblical justification for rulers and church leaders being able to judge others - look at the Old Testament Kings and at the letters of Paul. But look how it was done, not snarling, vicious or unfair. Not to serve self or put others down. No, the focus of Paul was entirely on God and building God's Kingdom. So should yours be.

Prayer - Father God, I'm sorry for judging others. Help me not to judge, but to say only things that will honour you and honour other people. Help me know the difference between judging and encouraging. Help me to be an encourager, not someone who flatters. Help me to speak truth but gently, in love. Help me keep close to you. I draw near to you Lord and claim the promise that when I draw near to you, you will draw near to me. Amen.

Bonus Question: what does Matthew 7.6 mean?
