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**A Disciple's Heart...Judges Itself First
Matthew 7:1-6**

Richard Dehaan, in his book *Men Sent from God*, lists (tongue in cheek) some of the criticisms pastors receive:

- If the pastor is young, he lacks experience
- If he's old, he lacks energy and cannot relate to the young people
- If he has five or six children, he's irresponsible
- But if he has no children, he's setting a bad example for families
- If he uses a lot of sermon illustrations he neglects the Bible
- If he doesn't use illustrations he is not relevant
- If he talks a lot about sin, he's cranky
- If he doesn't talk about sin, he's compromising
- If he drives an old car he shames his congregation
- If he drives a new car he's setting his affections on earthy things

(The story of the bachelor, his prospective wives, and his mother)

Few things are more debilitating than harsh, unloving criticism
And some of us may view any criticism as unfair and unloving

We live in a critical world - criticism is a part of our lives
We criticize everything and everyone around us
While we also do what we can to avoid being criticized

Some in the church may believe a critical spirit to be a spiritual gift.

Our world loves opinionated people: politics, art, music, literature, sports and culture.

But our world hates people who are opinionated on issues of morality, especially those who speak for traditional or conventional morality.

So some believe model Christians are should have no critical judgment, but just accept everything as equally valid. In other words, a good Christian is only good so far as they stand for everything, and for nothing all at the same time.

Matthew 7:1-5 *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 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? 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? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of our brother's eye.*

This is inappropriate judging:

“Judge not” means to “pronounce another person guilty before God.”

“For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged” means that an undue harshness and judgmental attitude toward others will result in being treated much the same way by God.

We tend to excuse in ourselves of the same sin we readily condemn in others.

And pride is the self-justification, the root for hypocrisy (holding someone else to a standard we do not hold to ourselves)

The “log” is our own pride in/of self

Using hyperbole, Jesus is saying that you cannot help anyone else if you are blinded (by the log in your eye) to see anything, especially the sin in you.

And here’s what may be the truth, in every hypercritical person’s life:

They’re consciously trying to hide their own sin, by deflecting attention on to someone else.

By contrast, this is appropriate, discerning evaluation:

Matthew 7:6 *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.*

“Dogs” in the ancient world lived in squalor and scavenged the streets for food. Jews considered them unclean and used the term to describe those apart from, or enemies of Israel’s covenant community.

This could be Gentiles, the Romans, heretics, or to Christians maybe those people who do not live up to their profession of faith

“Pigs” were rejected by Jews as unclean according to the Mosaic Law

“what is holy,” “pearls” symbolize the great value of the message of the kingdom of heaven (the gospel)

What is Jesus saying?

Be slow to judge, but use Spirit-directed discernment to know the true character of people and do not indefinitely continue to proclaim the gospel to those who adamantly reject it, and do not continue to placate their agendas when they continue to be unrepentant of their own sin.

People who God is drawing to Himself will be drawn to you because of Jesus. People who God is not drawing to Himself will eventually trample the gospel underfoot (by criticizing you and everything else in the church) and will end up attacking you for being different from them, for presenting the truth.

And while pigs will eat just about anything, pigs don't like to eat pearls.

1 John 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Matthew 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*

What are the leaders in our church called by God to do?

To feed the sheep

To lead the sheep

And to protect the sheep...from false doctrine, and from sin in the sheep

Sometimes this means protecting the sheep from other sheep

John 7:24 *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*

Here's the difference:

There is a huge difference between being discerning and being hypercritical

1. A discerning heart is constructive for the other person and the church
2. A hypercritical heart revels in criticism for its own sake, a malignant satisfaction in feeling superior by making someone else feel less so
3. Hypercritical people focus on little things and make them the big things

A discerning person recognizes the hypercritical person as "weaker in faith"

Romans 14:1 *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.*

Jesus tells us we set the standard and tone for our own final judgment by our judgmental conduct in life.

James 3:1 *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*

Do I claim to have an exceptional knowledge of Scripture?

I will be judged accordingly

Do I claim to have been an especially wise and discerning servant of Christ?

I will be judged accordingly

Do I set myself up as the standard for biblical living?

I will be judged accordingly.

There are two judgments we face:

Matthew 25:31-33 *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd*

separates the sheep and the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on his left.

God has already judged Jesus in our place. Those of us who have been saved are now the sheep. If we are united to Christ by what He has done at the cross, our end time judgment is already behind us. We are therefore liberated from judging others, because of our lavish exoneration through the free grace of God the Father through Christ Jesus the Son.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

We will each answer for every time we have been judgmental of other people.

Here's a prayer I'll bet none of us have ever prayed:

“God, judge me as I judge my fellow men and women”

There is nothing more ungodly than that a critical spirit and a false-righteousness that is always looking for something wrong in someone else.

So how do you take something out of your eye, or someone else's eye?

It's difficult and delicate

Gentleness, patience and sympathy are needed

We must be humble, sympathetic, conscious of our own sins, and without condemnation. We need God's mercy.

We need to be people who speak the truth in love because the love of God controls us.

1 Corinthians 13:6-8 *It [love] does not rejoice at wrongdoings, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

As the Church, we are called to speak the truth

Let's make sure it's gospel truth, and not hypocrisy on our part

And we're called to speak the truth in love

Motivated by what draws the other person closer to Jesus, as we are drawn closer to Jesus