

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Passing Judgment on Others

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye;' and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5). Here, Jesus is speaking about the matter of judging. Do we have authority to pass judgment on others? If so, what type of judging is being forbidden?

We are all guilty of pointing out the faults of others and overlooking our own. After all, it is much easier to see when others are in error than it is to evaluate the problems in our own lives. It is much more "fun" to point out the faults of others than to admit to my own, and it is much less painful. Also, as with anything else, it becomes very easy to go overboard when we judge another's actions. We forget another very important truth taught by the Lord. "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:24). Yet, many times what we are judging is the "appearance" instead of the substance.

A person's actions often represent what is in the heart. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man." (Matthew 15:18). Can any of us read another's heart? Not unless the person reveals that information to us. God alone judges men's hearts. "But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7). God has perfect judgment -- men do not!

Many times, we may pass judgment on someone, and then we add to our mistake. How? We share our opinions and conclusions with others; which in turn, may cause them to form wrong impressions concerning the actions of another. This also "opens the door" for gossip and idle talking. What should we do? Why not go to that person FIRST

and try to work out the difficulty? How can one person work out a problem that belongs to another? "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23, 24).

If you think a person is in error, or making poor decisions that can endanger the soul, try to help the person, rather than to hurt them more. Can we just assume anything in a given situation? Go to the person, with love and understanding, tell him/her your deep concerns about what is being done. Three things can happen. One, they might not have considered some of the things which you have brought to their attention. Second, you might find out some things you did not know before about the situation. Third, you may come to understand that it comes down to a matter of personal judgment. While you may not agree with their judgment -- it is their choice.

Jesus is condemning "hypocritical judging." Sometimes what people really need is a dose of their "own medicine." Would you want others to go to everyone else about a problem they think you have, or come to you first? To ask the question is to answer it! Let us be very careful about how we judge others.

- Lesley Riffe

No Greater Love

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:12-14). Every time I read these verses, it impacts me greatly. Just to know that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. We were sinners who treated Him badly. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:8-10).

"When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified." (Matthew 27:29-31). He did it all because He loved us so much! Would we have the guts to lay down our lives for persons, most of whom

we will never meet or come to know? We are commanded to lay down our lives for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16). But, what if the person is ungodly and treats you and your family badly? Die for them? I know I would have to think about that for a long while to convince myself! Especially, if I knew that person wouldn't even care. Yet, God found it in His heart to send His only begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:9-11).

After what He did for us, all He asks us to do is love Him and one another. To obey His will. "...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23). Things so simple as sitting, studying, and obeying His commandments gain us eternal life with God in heaven.

Without love, our lives in this world would be empty and without meaning. How could Christ be so willing to die for one as unworthy as I? I am humbled to think He loved me enough to take my place on that tree. Nothing I can ever do will equal what He did for me on that dark cruel day. We are truly blessed to have such a loving and merciful God! Let us never forget the price He paid for our salvation.

- Andrea Conover

Slow To Anger

History is full of conquering heroes who defeated kingdoms, vanquished cities, and ruled empires with great power. Yet, it is better to be slow to anger than it is to rule a city. The person who rules (exercises dominion over) his or her spirit is to be preferred and is due more honor than the mightiest conqueror. There is no honor in being short-fused or quick-tempered. Genuine strength of character includes being "slow to anger" when provoked. Control over one's spirit requires prudent discretion, therefore, "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly" (Proverbs 14:29). The sinfulness of anger is well documented in Scripture (Matthew 5:21-26; Colossians 3:8; Galatians 5:20). A mark of loving our neighbor as ourselves is refusing

to be provoked to anger against him (1 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 5:44). To control one's spirit by not being angry when wronged shows great strength of faith. Such self-control is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We must be "slow to wrath" if we wish to produce the righteousness of God in our lives (James 1:19-20). Therefore, rule over your spirit, be calm in your soul, and be honored by the Lord.

- Joe R. Price

- "There never was found, in any age of the world, either religion or law that did so highly exalt the public good as the Bible!" - Sir Francis Bacon
 - "It is much easier to be critical than correct!"
 - "God puts the church in the world - Satan puts the world in the church!"
 - "Sin is sweet in the beginning, but bitter in the end!"
 - A little girl had to be left alone in the house for a short period of time. When her parents returned, they were afraid that they might find her badly frightened. "I wasn't afraid," the little girl said, "When you are here God expects you to take care of me, but when you are gone, He does it all by Himself!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Six Questions of Life for Young People!"* (Text: Eccl. 12:1); Sunday evening: Hebrews Class: 12:18-29, p. 138-ff.