

Specks or Logs?

by Rev. Steve Bydeley, D.Min.,

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at 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,' and behold, the log is 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 your brother's eye. (Matt 7:1-5)

This is a grossly misunderstood section of scripture. Here Jesus deals with the act of judging, which is not what we know as a process of evaluating someone. This judging carries the act further - to the point of deciding or what our courts would call passing sentence. You have reached the point in your evaluation of the offender - knowing all you need to know – that have convicted them.

judge (jùj) verb

1. To form an opinion or estimation of after careful consideration: *judge heights; judging character.*
2. *Law.* To hear and decide on in a court of law; try: *judge a case.* b. *Obsolete.* To pass sentence on; condemn. ¹

Notice 2b, the obsolete definition of judge - 'to pass sentence on, to condemn'. This is closer in meaning to the Greek word used in the text. Strong's Concordance tells us it means to judge or to decide. You are so sure of the guilt of the offender that you have decided against them. This is the judging that Jesus warns us against because we never know all the facts. Actually we usually know very little and are blinded by our own issues. The verse that follows tells us why we do not want to judge others:

For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

The problem is one of specks and logs.

God created us for relationship. That relationship is to be with God, with our spouse, our children and with others, that order. God allowed Adam to look for fellowship with the newly created animals, but not even man's best friend could satisfy that need. Only when Adam was introduced to Eve did he find an answer to his loneliness. After this introduction God rested.

Satan's first and still best attack against God was to damage man's capacity for relationship. When sin came into their hearts, Adam and Eve hid themselves from God and each other. We can see the effect of that sin in their new ability to blame each other for their situation.

How does this show itself in our text? As specks and logs.

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The effect of this sin in our lives results in wounds that we inflict on those around us and that we receive from them. These wounds stay with us until they are removed by confession and forgiveness. While in us, they act as “bruise buttons” or triggers, giving us emotional responses to similar present situations. Let me use the illustration of a gun. When you pull the trigger of a loaded gun it results in a lot of noise and a projectile that leaves the gun in a direction away from the gun. The first key is the noise. The noise tells us a trigger was pulled and it also leads us to the trigger. The second key is the projectile, the bullet, sent out to hurt, wound, or *condemn*. With this illustration in mind, we can begin to see the bigger picture. Let me create a small drama to illustrate this:

A husband and wife are in an argument. The wife is angry because the husband has just informed her of his intent to play a morning round of golf with some friends. She complains that he is always leaving her home alone and she does not like to be left alone. Now he gets angry because this is not something he does very often.

Who is the problem or who owns the speck and who the log? Can you judge between these two? Do you know all the facts? Let’s look deeper.

Imagine the wife as a 4 year old girl. She has a father who was a salesman. Her father needs to be on the road to earn a living. It hurts her to always see the most significant man in her life leave her, at home and alone. She feels rejection and believes if he really loved her, he would stay. This is not true of course, but her young mind, not yet trained in logical thinking, believes it to be true. She wants and needs him to validate her, but he is always leaving. Her misunderstanding of her father's responsibilities and possibly, to some degree, her father's insensitivity to her needs causes the hurt – the wound - she carries as that little girl. This is not an issue of passing blame onto her father. Regardless of whether his actions were right or wrong, it is her response to his actions for which she is accountable. The emotions of this early scene become the trigger lodged deep in the heart of that grown woman. Anything today that closely resembles that earlier event will cause her to experience again those earlier feelings and emotions.

Enter the golfer husband with plans of leaving for a morning round of golf. The similarity of that present event triggers the childhood hurt in his wife's heart. She responds with a bang of emotions and a projectile of criticism that condemns her husband for his action. An argument is started that cannot be resolved without one or both being hurt.

Now who had the speck and who had the log?

Enter Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor of Isaiah 9:6. He alone is able to heal the hurts at that point in time when they entered the heart of the little girl. He can do this because He is not subject to time as are we. He brings the light of His truth to dispel the darkness of the negative conclusions in that little girl's memory. He affirms her. He tells her that she is precious, that she is never alone - He is with her. As she confesses her misunderstandings and expresses forgiveness to her father for the hurts he had some part in, that trigger is removed - instantly. Instead of the emotional pain and hurt, that memory now carries the words that Jesus spoke to the little girl.

Enter the golfer a few weeks later. This time his leaving can find no trigger; in fact, she finds it to be a good opportunity to do some things as well. The husband and wife bless each other as they part and look forward to the joy of being together later.

Too simple you say. Yes it is, very simple, very effective, and very real. Jesus is well able to do this and much more if we come to Him recognizing our need and His ability. First we need to know who has the speck and who has the log and avoid the serious consequences of a wrong judgment.

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