

### **Matthew 7:3-4 First See Clearly, Then Help Others See**

Being discerning does not directly lead to being a 'judge' in the sense of being condemning. The person who is practicing the kind of judgement that Jesus is warning against is the fault-finder, the sin-sniffer, the self-appointed fruit inspector who is negative and destructive towards other people and enjoys actively seeking out their faults and shortcomings. As Paul wrote to the Romans 14:4a **'Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls'**. Paul also applied the same truth to himself when he found himself surrounded by hostile detractors in 1 Cor 4: **'It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.'** The point which Paul is making is that man is not God. No human being is qualified to be the judge of other persons, since we can't read each other's hearts or understand another's motives. We shall be judged with the greater severity ourselves if we dare to judge others. Judge not, that you be not judged. **For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.**

We are not to judge, because we are really bad at it! We are all trapped in our limited experience, preconceptions, biases, and prejudice. For example, Jesus got in a lot of trouble from the Pharisees, who said repeatedly that Jesus couldn't be the Messiah, because He broke the Sabbath by doing the work of healing people. So, they set up this system of condemnation for everyone else, and spent their time accusing their fellow Israelites. In John 7:23-24, Jesus calls the Pharisees out, saying **23 If a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry at Me because I made an entire man well on a Sabbath? 24 Do not judge by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."** We see that the Pharisees were mistakenly calling Jesus a sinner by healing on the Sabbath, since their preconceptions and traditions, and laws of men were causing them to miss what God meant by keeping the sabbath. They were breaking the sabbath every week by spending the day judging others, but they had the audacity to judge the Son of God! God meant for us to do His work on the sabbath, serving and ministering to each other in love, and resting from daily labors. People don't like to look at themselves, it's much easier work to look for flaws in other people than to look at ourselves. We tend to set up one standard for ourselves, and a whole other standard when we judge someone else. And this causes us to judge falsely.

Especially when we set ourselves up to judge someone else, we can be just like the Pharisees and attempt to judge others for a small thing, when we are guilty of a much bigger similar thing.

### **3 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?**

Jesus immediately points out that when we judge, we are not usually concerned with righteousness and true judgment at all, because if we were, then we would have already dealt with the problem in our own hearts first. If a person is really concerned about truth and righteousness, then they will be more critical of themselves than of others, because they know themselves better! Many people are not concerned so much about the principles, but simply about finding fault in other persons. The real desire is to condemn and not to gently correct in order to get them to repent. There are many warnings in the Bible about this condemning attitude. For instance, Romans 2:3 **3 But do you suppose this, you foolish person who passes judgment on those who practice such things, and yet does them as well, that you will escape the judgment of God?** So often our supposed judgement is rendered unjust by being motivated by holding a grudge, remembering some real or imagined slight. If there is bias, if there is personal feeling and motivation then we are no longer true in our judgements.

### **4 Or how can you say to your brother,**

You can almost hear the incredulity in Jesus' voice as he says "How can you say"? He's saying, "I just don't understand how you have the audacity to do this to your fellow Citizens of the Kingdom? Your

brother or sister in Christ?" To take a little of the sting out of it, he's putting it in the form of a miniature parable.

**'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, the log is in your own eye?**

It's kind of an interesting picture here. I mean thinking about someone having a splinter in their eye is bad enough. And don't you think that if a speck or splinter would bother us so much, that having a 2x4 in our eye should quickly consume all of our attention to get it out of there?! You would think that this would be our first priority—get that 2x4 out of my eye! And yet, we walk around like this. And this is the problem. Our unwillingness to deal with our own heart causes us to turn the attention that should be on letting God heal our own hearts outward into judgement toward others. Our injustice and biases, and willingness to judge with personal or ulterior motives, and our quickness in criticizing and finding fault blinds us to the fact that our own hearts and attitudes need healing. We must say, as David did **"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!"** (Psalm 139:23). Ask God to show us our blind spots. And repent. Ask God, as in Psalm 51:10 **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**5 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!**

I don't think I need to explain that Jesus calling us, as His disciples, hypocrites is not a good thing! He uses the word hupokrites--to judge under false pretenses. To say one thing, and practice another. When we act as judge, we put ourselves in God's place, and trying to play God is always a mistake. God is God, and we're not.

**first take the log out of your own eye**

What blinds a Christian to personal sin? Well, it's usually connected to ignoring godly truth, usually in order to do something, or stay in a situation that we know is against God's will. One of the most glaring examples of spiritual blindness begins with David committing adultery with Bathsheba, trying to cover up his sin, and then finally having her husband Uriah killed. But this was evil in the sight of the Lord, and we see God's response in 12:1 -4 when God sends the prophet Nathan to remove David's blinders for him. As a shepherd boy, I'm sure that David knew what it was like to have a lamb that he cared for a great deal. He could probably identify with the poor man in the story. But, we're talking about livestock here, and David is outraged enough initially to say that the man deserves to die. But David had, within the preceding few weeks or months committed murder! And he didn't even connect this with the fact that the Prophet of God Nathan was standing before him. Did he really think that Nathan had travelled halfway across Israel to talk about 1 stolen lamb? He was blinded by his sin! Nathan has to finally tell him in verse 7 **7 Nathan then said to David, "You yourself are the man!"** If that can happen to King David then it can happen to any of us. There is a connection between truth and repentance. All sin is based on deception while repentance is the work of truth. That's why it's critical to store God's Word deep in our hearts. Only the light of God's truth can expose and defeat Satan's lies, as well as the lies we tell ourselves. The longer we disregard godly truth, the cloudier our spiritual vision gets. We need to have our blinders removed in order to avoid staying in the pits we dig for ourselves. We need the Holy Spirit's guidance and conviction to tell us when we've fallen into a pit. We need to seek God, so that He can lift us out of the pit, and ask Him to **create in us a clean heart.**

**and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!**

It is a high calling to be asked to help restore a brother or sister in Christ. The procedure of getting a speck or splinter out of an eye is a very difficult operation. Now think about spiritual restoration. You are going to handle a soul, you are going to touch the most sensitive thing in a person.

We should be humble, we should be sympathetic, we should be so conscious of your own sin and our own unworthiness, that when you find it in another, far from condemning, we are sad and concerned for them. We should **'speak the truth in love'** to another and help them when guided by the Holy Spirit, and **'let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath'** (James 1:19).