

LOOK AT YOURSELF FIRST

In Matthew 7, Jesus deals with the issue of JUDGING. After stating the principle, He goes on to illustrate His lesson on “judging,” and He does so with hyperbole and irony.

Matthew 7:3–4 (NKJV)

3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

4 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?

Note that in this illustration, the speck and the plank are located in the eye – related to the vision. The speck (Gk. *karphe*) is a small splinter. The plank (Gk. *dokos*) is a large beam of wood – a log. If you have a mere “speck” in the eye, you still have some vision. It hurts your vision, but you are not completely blinded. You have a problem, but you are not completely disabled in that eye.

In contrast, if you have a “plank” in your eye that eye is completely done. You can’t use it at all. The vision is completely gone. How ironic that one with a plank in the eye (metaphorically speaking) should try to deal with the speck in his brother’s eye.

In other words, the person with the PLANK has a much larger problem than the person with the SPECK, and yet the person with the plank is hypocritically critical of the person with the much smaller problem.

“Jesus was rebuking the natural tendency to look at others and instinctively observe their faults, but refuse to consider one’s own problems. To try to avoid seeing guilt in oneself by noting the faults in others is instinctive to the fallen human nature.” – **Ed Glasscock**

It is so “human” to overlook your own shortcomings and to exaggerate the faults of others. This is SINFUL JUDGING!

Matthew 7:5 (NKJV)

5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Here Jesus deals with the essence of what He is condemning – that is HYPOCRITICAL judging! A hypocrite is a “player”. This word originally describes a “play actor” who plays a role on the stage at a theater. The word hypocrite (Gk. *hypokrites*) literally means “**one who wears a mask**”.

A hypocrite therefore is a “pretender” who pretends to be something he is not. He acts like he is more spiritual than he really is.

Hypocrisy is something that God hates and consistently it is denounced in the Scriptures. It was a KEY sin of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus denounced their hypocrisy with 7 woes in Matthew 23.

“A hypocrite may look righteous on the outside, but it is a façade. True righteousness comes from the inner transformation of the Holy Spirit not an external conformity to a set of rules ([Matthew 23:5](#); [2 Corinthians 3:8](#)).” – **Gotquestions.org**

The hypocrisy in view here involves a form of high pride. Pride puts self up and others down. This is what one has described as “***the conceit of self-delusion.***”

Pride is a blinding thing which prevents one from seeing properly. So it is very fitting that Jesus uses an eye analogy to illustrate this hypocritical PRIDE problem. It’s very hard to see properly with the LOG of hypocrisy in your eye! And again this hypocrisy is fueled by PRIDE.

“**A proud man is always looking down on things and people**; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.” – C.S. Lewis

Jesus says the first order of business is to deal with oneself. Before being concerned about anyone else, our FIRST concern should be to deal with our own sin problem! Before trying to straighten out others, make sure you deal with your own issues first. “First remove the plank from your own eye”.

“I have had more trouble with myself than with any other man.” – Dwight L. Moody.

Don’t be nitpicking at others and their flaws, when if the truth be told, you have far BIGGER issues. First and foremost, deal with the plank in your own eye. The first order of business is our own faults!

It is so human to be critical of others and at the same time to be soft on oneself. It’s just natural to hypocritically give SELF some slack. This is part of human depravity!

Having taken the beam out of our own eye (via repentance), we are now in a position to HELP remove the speck from our brother’s eye. This is the

place of proper judging. It is not done with a critical spirit, but rather in humility and with integrity!

This is consistent with what Paul teaches in Gal. 6.

Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

There is to be no “*holier than thou*” attitude. We are all vulnerable. None of us is above being tempted, and none of us is above falling. Paul says, “*let him who things he stands take heed lest he fall.*” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Those who are truly spiritual are genuinely walking the walk. They have a life that is in tune with the Holy Spirit.

It is they who are in a position to deal with sin in the life of an erring brother or sister. And even so, the process of correction is to be done in “*a spirit of gentleness,*” which is reflective of humility, recognizing that we too could fall, as Paul says, “considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

Any time we put ourselves above others, we have a problem, especially when glaring EGOTISTICAL HYPOCRISY is involved. This is the kind of judging that Christ condemns.

There is a place for correcting, there is a place for holding others accountable, but it should not be done hypocritically. It should be done in humility and with integrity.

So we are not to sinfully “judge” others, but there is a place for proper judging. That is true in reference to fellow believers and also true in reference to unbelievers, as Jesus goes on to show in verse 6.