

## Rediscover Jesus

### Part 13: Judging Others | Luke 6:37-42

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### Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

### Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 13 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're studying the Gospel account of Luke from chapters 4-9, which record Jesus' public ministry in the area of Galilee.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Judging Others."

### Sermon Introduction

<Show Peanuts\_gang.png>



There's a classic newspaper comic strip called "Peanuts" that ran for 50 years from 1950 to 2000 that focused on a group of young children. You may be familiar with some of the characters like Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, and Snoopy.

There's one comic strip that we'll look at right now, and I want us to see if we can relate.

<Show fundamental-attribution-error-cartoon.jpeg>



PEANUTS; drawings by Charles Schulz; 1989 United Features Syndicate, Inc. Reprinted by permission of UFS, Inc.

This comic strip shows Linus and Lucy, who are brother and sister.

- Linus asks Lucy: "Why are you always so anxious to criticize me?"
- Lucy answers: "I just think I have a knack [or talent] for seeing other people's faults..."
- Linus questions: "What about your *own* faults?"
- Lucy responds: "I have a knack for overlooking them..."

Now, looking at this comic strip, who do you naturally relate with more? Linus or Lucy?

I think most of us would say that we feel more like Linus, where we're constantly being judged and criticized by someone else who doesn't see their own faults. And I'm sure that's true.

But the reality is that we're all also like Lucy, where we constantly judge and criticize others while we don't see our own faults. We all have a knack for seeing other people's faults and a knack for overlooking our own. Or to say it more candidly, we all have a tendency to be judgmental towards others while being blind to ourselves.

But there's actually a cause-and-effect relationship between being judgmental towards others and being blind to ourselves. And that's what we're going to explore more in today's text.

## **The One Thing**

***We will be judgmental towards others if we are blind to ourselves.***

## **Scripture Introduction**

Turn your Bibles to Luke 6:37-42.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

We are in the middle of Luke chapter 6. Jesus has just appointed his twelve apostles and he is now delivering a sermon to a great crowd of his disciples in what is commonly called the "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6:20-49). So far in this sermon, Jesus has described a great reversal of what it means to be blessed (vv. 20-26) and how his disciples are to be marked by a love for their enemies (vv. 27-36).

And that's where we are in the passage today as Jesus continues his "Sermon on the Plain."

## **Scripture Reading**

So let's read Luke 6:37-42.

<sup>37</sup> "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

<sup>39</sup> He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. <sup>41</sup> 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? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

This is God's Word.

## **Overview**

We'll look at today's passage in two parts:

- I. The problem of judgmentalism (vv. 37-38)
- II. The root of spiritual blindness (vv. 39-42)

### **I. The problem of judgmentalism (vv. 37-38)**

Verse 37 to the beginning of verse 38 say this:

<sup>37</sup> “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you...

We should first note that this passage is a continuation of a sermon that Jesus is giving, where the last thing he said was to “love your enemies” and to “be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (vv. 35-36). So here, verses 37-38 begin to elaborate on that.

If you’re a disciple of Jesus Christ, you cannot be loving and merciful and simultaneously judgmental and condemning. They are opposites. They are mutually exclusive.

In a broad sense, it’s impossible to “judge not” because *everybody* “judges” in the sense that we all make evaluations, we all form opinions, we all make conclusions. That’s inevitable. We evaluate students through tests, we form opinions about candidates through interviews, we make conclusions about products and services through experience. There’s no such thing as being “judgment neutral,” in the sense of never evaluating, having no opinions, and reaching no conclusions in life about anyone and anything.

So Jesus is *not* prohibiting *all* judging,<sup>1</sup> but he is warning against a particular *attitude* in judging. He’s warning against an unloving and unmerciful *disposition* in judging. Or as the second negative statement clarifies, Jesus is warning against judging in a condemning way.<sup>2</sup> In other words, it’s not wrong to make *judgments*, but it’s wrong to be *judgmental*.

*Judgmentalism* is devoid of love and mercy. It assumes the worst of others, gives them no benefit of the doubt, and jumps to the worst conclusions about them. But all the while, it assumes the best of yourself, gives yourself all the benefit of the doubt, and jumps to the best conclusions about yourself.

In social psychology, judgmentalism is known as the...

**Fundamental attribution error** = the tendency to falsely attribute the negative behaviors of others to their *character* (an internal attribution), while attributing one’s own negative behaviors to *environmental factors* (an external attribution)<sup>3</sup>

If someone else cuts you off on the toll road, you think it’s because something is fundamentally wrong with that person; but if *you* cut someone off on the toll road, it’s because you’re in a hurry to get to an important meeting.

If your co-worker is late for a morning meeting, you think it’s because he has time management issues; but if *you’re* late for a morning meeting, it’s because you had insomnia and couldn’t sleep all night.

When *others* make mistakes, we think:

- “Why is he so lazy?”
- “Maybe if she paid more attention...”
- “If he didn’t watch so much Netflix...”
- “She’s so disrespectful.”

But when *we* make mistakes, we think:

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus is not saying that we shouldn’t have any legal process and court judgments, but he’s referring to personal relationships. But even in the context of personal relationships outside the courts, he’s not prohibiting all judging either, for we see Jesus pronouncing some of the harshest judgments on the Jewish religious teachers of his day, calling them “whitewashed tombs” (Matt. 23; cf. Luke 11:39-52), and we see the apostle Paul also pass judgment on the apostle Peter when he saw that his conduct was “not in step with the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:11-14). In fact, when it comes to church discipline, Scripture *prescribes* a process for judging one another as Christians in terms of giving credible profession of faith (Matt. 18:15-20) and explicitly says, “Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?” (1 Cor. 5:12). In other words, Christ expects that we will judge those inside the church. And throughout the Gospel accounts, it’s those who claim to be the people of God that Jesus judges in no uncertain terms, but he does so as one who has perfect spiritual vision.

<sup>2</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 111.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 145.

- “I was stuck in traffic.”
- “I’ve been sick.”
- “I was late because I put family first.”
- “I couldn’t help it; I’m just too tired.”<sup>4</sup>

We *all* have a tendency to think the worst of others but the best of ourselves. We think other people are sinners but we’re just victims to our situations, and so we judge others as *sinners* and we judge ourselves as *victims*. But the very fact that we’re prone to do this shows just how sinful we really are.

It shouldn’t surprise us that we’re this sinful—and it doesn’t surprise *God* that we’re this sinful. In fact, recognition of how sinful we are is the beginning of being able to *stop* being so judgmental. We stop seeing ourselves as the *exception* to all the sinners around us, but as a *fellow* sinner who struggles and makes mistakes.

[<sup>37</sup> “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you...]

And as believers in Jesus Christ, we know that Christ does *not* condemn us for our sins, but he went to the cross to *be* condemned in our place for our sins. And if we believe that gospel message, it *changes* us.

If we recognize ourselves as sinners deserving of condemnation and yet have received such love and mercy from our God, how can we then turn to view fellow sinners around us with condemnatory judgment?

Rather, as Jesus continues, we should *forgive* and *give*. Forgiveness and generosity should be our default *disposition* towards others.

Because we know ourselves to be sinners who have been forgiven in Christ, our new disposition towards other sinners should be one of *forgiveness*. That’s not to say that Christians don’t struggle with forgiving; we do! That’s also not to say that we don’t battle bitterness or even hatred when we’ve been hurt so deeply; we do! That’s also not to say that forgiveness comes quickly; sometimes it takes time. But to say that Christians should have a forgiving *disposition* towards others means that we continue to work at forgiving and we ultimately *can* and *do* forgive because God has forgiven us even greater debts (Matt. 6:12).<sup>5</sup>

Also, because we know ourselves to be sinners who have been generously given grace after grace in Christ, our new disposition towards other sinners should be one of generously *giving*. Christians should give generously and sacrificially of their time, treasures, and talents. Again, that’s not to say that Christians don’t struggle with giving generously; we do! That’s also not to say that we don’t feel the tension of saving and investing to have enough to provide for ourselves and our loved ones; we do! That’s also not to say that we don’t spend on anything to enjoy rest and leisure; we should! But to say that Christians should have a generous *disposition* towards others means that we continue to work at giving generously and we ultimately *can* and *do* give generously because we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we by his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

And it’s not just what God has *already* given us in Christ, but the rest of verse 38 expands on the *extent* of God’s generosity that we can anticipate in the *future*; Jesus says this:

<sup>38</sup> ... Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

<sup>4</sup> Matt McWilliams, “What is The Fundamental Attribution Error? | The Advantage P. Lencioni,” <https://www.mattmcwilliams.com/fundamental-attribution-error-patrick-lencioni-advantage/>.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 160. Chris Brauns (*Unpacking Forgiveness* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008], 54, Kindle) provides a helpful definition of human forgiveness: “A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.”

This is a marketplace picture of purchased grain being poured into a container (or measure) and what Jesus describes as being a “good measure.” To maximize how much grain is given, the person not only puts grain in the container, but he *presses* it down to fill the space and *shakes* it so that the grain will settle and fill the container more fully, and then he overfills it so that grain is “running over” the top of the container.

<Show graininlap.jpeg>



It is an *overabundance* of grain that is then poured into “your lap,” which was the folding of a man’s cloak with his arms underneath to receive the grain (cf. Ruth 3:15).<sup>6</sup>

This is a picture of how generous God will *continue* to be to us in all of eternity. In Christ, God has *already* lavished upon us “the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7-8), but in the coming ages, he will lavish on us even more “the *immeasurable* riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). Throughout Scripture, this is the picture of God’s ever overflowing generosity to sinners like us.

No matter how merciful, forgiving, and generous we are to fellow sinners, we can never out-mercy, out-forgive, or out-give God. No matter what sacrifices we think we’re making for Christ, we will receive “many times more” in this time and in the age to come (Luke 18:29-30; Mark 10:29-30).

Again, this becomes our motivation and empowerment to be merciful, forgiving, and generous. Even though we are wretched sinners before a holy God, we *have been* given so much already in Christ and we *will be* given so much more in Christ in eternity. Whether we look *back* to the cross or look *forward* to his coming, we see that we *already* have and *will* have more fully “every spiritual blessing” in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Therefore, how can we remain judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy towards fellow sinners? We can’t. And that’s Jesus’ whole point.

Christ’s disciples should *not* be marked by a judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy disposition, but rather a merciful, forgiving, and generous disposition.

[<sup>37</sup> “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you...]

Now when Jesus says “you will not *be* judged,” “you will not *be* condemned,” “you will *be* forgiven,” and “it will *be* given to you,” it was a way of saying “*God* will not judge you,” “*God* will not condemn you,” “*God* will forgive you,” and “*God* will give you” in terms of the final judgment.<sup>7</sup>

This is not salvation by works—as if not judging, not condemning, forgiving, and giving will somehow *earn* our salvation. No, rather this is works as *evidence* of salvation.

You don’t need to be a Christian to be merciful, forgiving, and generous; by God’s common grace, many non-Christians are in fact merciful, forgiving, and generous. But when Christians are judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy, it begins to call into question whether we’re *really* Christians at all because *Christ* is merciful, forgiving, and generous, so something is very wrong when we don’t resemble Christ more and more in our lives.

<sup>6</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

In other words, “Quacking doesn’t make you a duck, but ducks quack.”<sup>8</sup> You and I can quack, but we’re not ducks. But if you ever find a creature that will *not* quack, then it’s very unlikely that the creature is a duck.<sup>9</sup>

We are *not* saved by being merciful, forgiving, and generous, but if we find ourselves constantly being judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy, then Jesus warns us: “Then you should *not* have much assurance that you *really* are a Christian—that you *really* believe in the gospel—and so God’s judgment and condemnation for your sins is all you can expect.”

But if we find ourselves constantly being merciful, forgiving, and generous because of the abundant mercy, forgiveness, and generosity we have received in Christ, then Jesus encourages us: “Then you should have greater assurance that you *really* are a Christian—that you *really* believe in the gospel—and so God’s forgiveness and even greater generosity is what you can anticipate.”

<pause>

But the very fact that Jesus *needs* to give these commands to judge not, condemn not, forgive, and give is already very telling. We naturally do *not* act like this. We commit the fundamental attribution error left and right, thinking the worst of others but the best of ourselves. We *all* have the problem of judgmentalism.

Even as Christians, we still deal with this problem. So how do we address it? That’s what we’ll get into next.

<pause>

So first, the problem of judgmentalism; and second...

## II. The root of spiritual blindness (vv. 39-42)

Verse 39 says this:

<sup>39</sup> He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

Here, it says that Jesus told his disciples a “parable,” but it’s not the kind of parable with a plot or storyline.<sup>10</sup> Rather, “parable” can refer not only to stories with a beginning, middle, and end (cf. Luke 6:48-49), but also to proverbial instruction (cf. Luke 4:23; 5:36).<sup>11</sup>

Also, even though it says that Jesus told his disciple a *single* parable, he gave them *three* pictures that all deal with the *single* issue of *sight* or *vision* (cf. Luke 5:36-39).

The first picture is of a blind man leading a blind man, but he gives it as a rhetorical question: “Can a blind man lead a blind man?” And the answer is no. And then he asks regarding the consequence: “Will they not both fall into a pit?” And the answer is yes. The conclusion is that a blind man cannot lead a blind man.

That seems simple enough. But what’s the point?

Remember, Jesus had just appointed his twelve apostles and he’s now speaking to a great crowd of his disciples, and he would later commission them to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that he commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20).

So the point is that Jesus’ disciples are called to *lead* others but they cannot lead as blind men and women. Of course, he’s not talking about being *physically* blind but being *spiritually* blind, in reference to those

<sup>8</sup> Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 130, Kindle.

<sup>9</sup> Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 127, Kindle.

<sup>10</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

who lack faith or those who lack insight.<sup>12</sup> If they remain spiritually blind, they will lead others to their destruction.

Scripture talks about “pits” in a couple ways—either to picture suffering and catastrophe (Prov. 22:14; Isa. 24:18) or to picture death or hell (Ps. 30:3; Prov. 1:12). In any case, if you remain spiritually blind and attempt to lead others, the result will be disastrous for all parties (cf. Matt. 23:13-15).

That’s what Jesus constantly reiterated in his charges against the Jewish religious leaders; they tried to lead others to salvation but they themselves were spiritually blind—all the while thinking that they saw fine (cf. John 9:39-41).

Paul Tripp, author of *Dangerous Calling*, writes this:

Spiritual blindness is not like physical blindness. When you are physically blind, you know that you are blind, and you do things to compensate for this significant physical deficit. But spiritually blind people are not only blind; they are blind to their own blindness. They are blind, but they think that they see well. So the spiritually blind person walks around with the delusion that no one has a more accurate view of him than he does. He thinks he sees and is unaware of the powerfully important things in his heart that he absolutely does not see at all.<sup>13</sup>

So if we’re blind to our own spiritual blindness, how can we begin to see as we ought?

Verse 40 says this:

<sup>40</sup> A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Usually, Jewish disciples mastered the teachings of their rabbis in hopes of someday *surpassing* them. Isn’t that the sentiment of any good teacher? We *want* our students to exceed us. But here, *Jesus* is the teacher and *we* are his disciples, and so we can never *exceed* him as the perfect, sinless Son of God, but we can only hope to be *like* him.<sup>14</sup>

So what does this have to do with spiritual blindness? The only way we can *see* as we ought—the only way we can *lead* others as we ought—is if *Jesus* is our teacher who “fully trains” us to become *like* him.

We were once *completely* spiritually blind, but when we first put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we were given *some* spiritual sight to recognize Jesus for who he is and to trust and treasure him, but our spiritual sight is still not as it ought to be; it’s still blurry vision (cf. Mark 8:24). We’re still not seeing in 20/20, “for now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12 KJV), and Jesus is continuing to restore our sight as we continue to follow him until one day we will see perfectly as we ought.

As with our *salvation*, there is a past, present, and future element to our *spiritual sight*. We *have been* given spiritual sight, we *are still being* sharpened in our spiritual sight, and we *will* one day be given perfect spiritual sight. So in the present, as followers of Christ, we *already* have spiritual sight and yet we *are still being* sharpened in our spiritual sight.

Another word for this current process is *sanctification*. As we continue to follow Jesus as our teacher throughout our lifetime, Jesus *sanctifies* us; he progressively makes us more and more like himself, enabling us to see more and more perfectly as he sees.

But *how* does Jesus “fully train” us? How does he sanctify us? He sanctifies us—including our spiritual vision—through his Word and through his body (his church).

<sup>12</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 72-73.

<sup>14</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015). This is not just a generic proverb of “a student is not above his teacher,” but this is specifically referring to *Jesus* and his disciples here. The word “teacher” (*didaskalos*) occurs 15 times in Luke’s gospel account, 13 of which refer to Jesus, and in two other places in Luke, the terms “teacher” and “disciple” are paired together with reference to Jesus and his disciples (Luke 19:39; 22:11).

Remember, Jesus is preaching a sermon here. And he expects that his Word will transform and continue to transform his disciples more and more into his likeness, “for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12), and “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be *complete*, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). So Jesus “fully trains” us to be *like* him through his Word.

Also, the church is the body of Christ. And it is through “speaking the truth in love” that we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ and it is “when each part is working properly” that the body grows so that it builds itself up in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

And it’s this second way of his body (the church) sanctifying one another to be *like* him that Jesus addresses next.

Verses 41-42 say this:

<sup>41</sup> 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? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Let me first just say that Jesus has a sense of humor. This is such comical imagery that Jesus gives of a person trying to take a speck out of another person’s eye, but he can’t even get close to him without the log coming out of his eye constantly getting in the way.

This is a picture of discipling relationships in the church going wrong. The first person refers to the other person as “brother,” which is how Christians refer to one another because we have all been adopted into the family of God through faith in Christ, and so we now know not only God as our Father but we also know one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

So you could say that the first person is committed [to our Q2 rallying cry as a church]—to sanctifying one another as a spiritual family. Now that seems *commendable*; isn’t that what we would want every member in our church to be committed to doing for one another? But Jesus does *not* commend him for this.

In fact, what’s so shocking in this passage is that Jesus calls this person a “hypocrite.”

In the Gospels, only *Jesus* uses the word “hypocrite,” and he *never* uses it to describe notoriously sinful people like tax collectors and prostitutes. Rather, other than in this parable (cf. Matt. 7:5), he *only* uses it to describe the religious teachers like the scribes and Pharisees, calling them “actors”—people who are *pretending* to be something before *others* that they *know* they are *not* before *God*.<sup>15</sup>

So *why* is Jesus calling this brother a “hypocrite”? Because he applies a standard to *others* that he *himself* is *not* committed to meet. The measure that he uses for others is *different* than the measure that he uses for himself. In other words, he has a double standard.

And in that sense, whether intentional or not, he is pretending to be something before others that he knows he is *not* before God. Or to put it another way, whether intentional or not, he is pretending *not* to be a sinner before others when he knows that he *is* before God.

What’s so shocking about this is that a person can be a “hypocrite” in Jesus’ eyes *even if* they have good intentions.

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<sup>15</sup> H. B. Charles, Jr., “Trapped By Tradition” (sermon, Shiloh Church of Jacksonville, October 22, 2019), <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/trapped-by-tradition/id973263701?i=1000454490319>.



Remember, those who are spiritually blind are *blind* to their own blindness; they *think* that they see well. And so, in the very act of doing something that they *think* is good, they are *blinded* to their own hypocrisy.

This isn't too far-fetched for us.

- Parents often discipline their kids to learn how to obey right away, without excuse, and with a good attitude. And yet, many times we're not committed live up to the same standard of obedience before God.
- Bosses often expect their employees to be accountable to complete their work in a timely, excellent, and professional manner. And yet, many times they themselves are late, mediocre, and unprofessional in how they carry themselves.

In the very act of wanting and acting in the *best* interest of their children and employees, parents and bosses are often *blind* to their own hypocrisy.

Especially if you're in a position of leadership, whether at home, at work, or at church, you are probably one of the most susceptible to this. There are temptations particular to leaders that can unwittingly keep you spiritually blind to yourself.

It's very easy to allow your leadership position to define you, where you're leading *others* through their problems and struggles but not giving enough attention to your *own*. Your identity can become so engulfed in your leadership position that you forget first and foremost that "I am a fellow sinner saved by God's grace; my identity is most fundamentally in Christ and I continue to need his grace every day."<sup>16</sup>

"Success" can also fool you into thinking that God is somehow pleased with how you're living. When everything is going well, it's tempting for leaders to think that it's somehow God's way of endorsing your lifestyle and decisions. But God can use rocks (Luke 19:40) and donkeys (Num. 22:22-35) to accomplish his will. "Success" always says more about who *God* is than it does about the *people* he uses.<sup>17</sup>

And especially for Christian leaders, it's very easy to be fooled into thinking that you're spiritually mature simply because you have more biblical literacy and theological knowledge than the average person. But spiritual maturity is *more* than just knowledge, but it's *wisdom*—it's "understanding and living in light of how that truth applies to the situations and relationships of your daily life."<sup>18</sup>

So with all that said, please pray for the leaders in our church. Pray that we would not be unintentional hypocrites. Pray that we would be committed to our *own* sanctification just as much as we're committed to that of others. Pray that we would never allow "ministry success" to excuse any hidden sin in us. Pray that we would never confuse mere biblical knowledge *without* personal application for spiritual maturity.

At the same time, may this be our constant prayer for *ourselves* as well—that we would *not* be unintentional hypocrites, that we would *not* be blind to our own blindness.

Now what's interesting in this passage is that the *same* person that Jesus calls a "hypocrite" is the *same* person he still instructs to go remove the speck from the other brother's eye.

The problem is *not* so much trying to sanctify another brother or sister in Christ; that's what we *should* do for one another. But the problem is the *order*: "*first* take the log out of your own eye, and *then* you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

We are *still* called to be committed to sanctifying one another as a spiritual family, but we must *first* be committed to our *own* sanctification before we can rightly help others.

This doesn't mean that we need to be perfect by any means, but when you learn a truth, apply it to *yourself* before you try applying it to someone else. When you're planning to speak the truth in love to someone else, judge *yourself* with the same truth first. The measure you use for *others* should be the same measure that you first used with *yourself*. And that measure should be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 22.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

In fact, it's *as* we apply the gospel to our *own* lives that we're *able* to properly help *others* to apply the gospel to themselves. "[God] comforts *us* in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort *those* who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we *ourselves* are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:4).

If *we're* not comforted by the gospel, then how will we properly comfort *others* with the gospel? If *we* don't take sin seriously and grace seriously in our lives, then how will we properly take sin seriously and grace seriously in the lives of *others*?

We can't. We will either be judgmental and unforgiving or apathetic and uncaring, but we won't be able to speak the truth in love as we ought.

Just as sin *corrupted* our view of God, ourselves, and others, the gospel *restores* our spiritual sight of God, ourselves, and others—and in *that* order.

In terms of *God*, the gospel enables us to acknowledge that God is our Creator and he is holy, and we are accountable to him.

In terms of *ourselves*, the gospel enables us to see ourselves as those made in God's image but also as sinners who have rebelled against God and who deserve his wrath for our sins. But through faith in Christ's life, death, and resurrection in our place, we are now beloved children of God who have been given the Holy Spirit to empower us to live lives pleasing to God.

In terms of *others*, the gospel enables us to see them *also* as those made in God's image and yet fallen sinners, but because of the mercy and grace we have received in Christ, we are now able to see them *not* with judgmental and unforgiving eyes but with merciful and forgiving eyes, and we are able to help them with love and empathy as a fellow sinner who depends on God's grace every day.

The gospel must work through us in *that* order, and our spiritual sight is restored to us in *that* order—God, ourselves, and others.

And so, the passage comes full circle. At the beginning, Jesus said "judge not" because it is *impossible* for the spiritually blind to judge others rightly. But at the end of this passage, Jesus gives instructions to a "hypocrite" to *first* remove the log from his own eye and *then* to take out the speck from his brother's eye. In other words, when he can judge himself properly through the lens of the gospel, he is then able to judge his brother properly through the lens of the gospel—no longer in a judgmental way, but in a way that reveals the gospel and helps conform his fellow brother to the gospel.

<pause>

So where do we go from here? Being sternly warned by Jesus that we will be judgmental towards others if we are blind to ourselves, what next steps should we take?

If you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, it begins with getting to know Jesus more. It begins by becoming a disciple of Jesus and learning from him as your teacher. But even more than a teacher, we hope and pray that you would know him as Lord and Savior, for that's exactly what he teaches about himself.

The gospel message is that we are all created by God and accountable to him, yet we have sinned against him and are deserving of his wrath. But God, in his love and mercy, sent Jesus Christ to live the perfect, sinless life we could not live, to die on the cross as our substitute to take the penalty that our sins deserve, and to resurrect three days later to give us new life. So now, whoever repents of their sin and believes in him as Lord and Savior will be saved from their sin.

That's the starting point. We begin by seeing *Jesus* rightly. And from there, he will help restore our spiritual sight for *ourselves* and *others* as we become more *like* him throughout the rest of our lives.

If you're already a believer in Jesus Christ, we *also* start with Jesus—to see *him* rightly through his Word. But if we are to see *ourselves* rightly, we also need to seek help from our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ—to see what we could never see about ourselves on our own.

But even as I say that, I know that the naturally judgmental attitude in us is probably already protesting. Perhaps we're thinking, "Why would I do that? Won't others just be judgmental and unintentional hypocrites towards me?" Unfortunately, that may be *some* of what we experience, and I'm truly sorry for that. The reality is that we're *all* still Christians *in progress*; *none* of us are "fully trained" to be *like* Christ yet, and we'll *all* make mistakes along the way. I wish that weren't the case; I wish we were all *already* fully like Christ, but that day won't come until the new heavens and new earth. But until then, I pray that we'd be merciful, forgiving, and generous to show grace towards one another. And as we're *all* personally reflecting more on the gospel truth that we are sinners in need of God's grace—not just for initial salvation but for the *whole* of our lives—my hope is that we would *all* experience the beauty of Christ's design for us to be formed more and more into his likeness through his Word and through his body (the church).

Paul Tripp, author of *Dangerous Calling*, writes this:

I have now come to understand that I need others in my life. I now know that I need to commit myself to living in *intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven, redemptive community*. I now know it's my job to seek this community out, to invite people to interrupt my private conversation, and to say things to me that I couldn't or wouldn't say to myself. I have realized how much I need warning, encouragement, rebuke, correction, protection, grace, and love. I now see myself as connected to others, not because I have made the choice but because of the wise design of the one who is the head of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot allow myself to think that I am smarter than him. I cannot allow myself to think that I am stronger than I am. I cannot assign to myself a level of maturity that I do not have. I cannot begin to believe that I am able to live outside of God's normal means of spiritual growth and be okay....

Since, as one who has remaining sin still inside of him, it is right to say that the greatest danger in my life exists inside of me and not outside of me, then wouldn't it also be the height of naivety or arrogance to think that I would be okay left to myself?<sup>19</sup>

We are *all* still Christians *in progress* and we *all* need to be committed to sanctifying one another as a spiritual family. I'm so thankful that Jesus doesn't just end the passage by saying to that brother, "You hypocrite." That would be absolutely devastating and hopeless for us. But the good news is that Jesus himself comes alongside this brother as one who has no logs in his eyes, and he lovingly helps him take that log out of his eye. And then Jesus instructs this brother to *then* continue to proceed to do so for his fellow brother, but now as one who sees more clearly.

This is how the gospel works in the church community. This is how spiritual sight is restored in the church community.

And as we're able to see ourselves *rightly* through the gospel, we will be less and less judgmental towards others and more and more merciful, forgiving, and generous—more and more like our Teacher, Lord, and Savior—for that is exactly how Christ has been towards us as sinners in need of grace.

<pause>

Now let's get into the...

## **Life Application**

1. Don't minimize times you've been judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy towards others but repent.

Allow Jesus' warning to sink in. If you find yourself constantly being judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy, then you should *not* have much assurance that you *really* are a Christian—that you *really* believe in the gospel—and so God's judgment and condemnation for your sins is all you can expect.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 84.

If Jesus really is our Lord and we take what he says here seriously, then we should not make peace with being judgmental, unforgiving, and stingy, but we should go to war with them; we should repent and cry out for more of God's grace to transform us from the inside out.

2. Don't pretend not to be a sinner before others but share sin struggles to trusted brothers/sisters in Christ.

When was the last time you shared not just a struggle with work or family, but a particular struggle with sin that you have with another trusted brother or sister? And not just a sin struggle that you had already overcome, but a sin struggle that you're currently *in*?

If you can't remember the last time that was, then perhaps you're unintentionally pretending *not* to be a sinner before others. And as a Christian; that's unthinkable. In fact, Jesus calls that hypocrisy. If we believe that we are sinners who need God's grace every day, let's act accordingly and be willing to share those sin struggles to trusted brothers/sisters in Christ.

3. Don't isolate yourself in blindness but seek out discipling relationships to help one another to see God, yourself, and others rightly through the gospel.

Discipling relationships are those where we intentionally help one another to follow Christ—to better understand and apply the gospel in our lives.

One formal context for this in our church that some of our LIFE Groups have implemented is called "Life Change Group" (or LCG), which is a same-gendered group of 2-3 men/women who meet regularly to intentionally help one another to follow Jesus through care, commitment, and challenge.

Discipling doesn't have to necessarily be through a formal context like LCG, but if we know that the greatest danger in my life exists inside of me and not outside of me, we should not isolate ourselves in our sin and spiritual blindness, but we should proactively seek out these kinds of discipling relationships to help one another to see God, ourselves, and others rightly through the gospel.

## **The One Thing**

***We will be judgmental towards others if we are blind to ourselves.***

## **Conclusion**

Can we all stand as we respond to God's Word?