

Two months ago I gave a message aimed at husbands about their love for their wife being a means of grace that helped their wives to grow...as a way of helping their own lives to grow stronger spiritually.

Then last month I gave a message for wives focusing on their capacity to make or break their husbands leadership in the home by how they related to him. The passage focused on a wife's love of correction & her use of redemptive words to protect others as key characteristics of what Proverbs calls "the excellent women".

Today I want to talk to you about corrective communication. How we help each other deal with sin—but in a helpful way, rather than in a way that causes further conflict.

Think for a minute about the eyes on your face. You can see a lot with your eyes—you can see this room and the people in it. And you can see parts of yourself—you can see your hands and arms, and legs. But other parts of yourself cannot be seen at all. Your back is impossible to see...as well as your own face. Our eyes never look directly on our own faces through our entire life!

In the same way, we often are completely blind to large areas about our own selves...areas that are obvious to others around us. Because of this, we need other people's input to help us deal with our sins.

But here is where it gets messy. The people giving the input ALSO have this same blindness problem. So how are partially blind people to help others who are partially blind? Is this even possible?

Yes-it is. But it requires wisdom & relational grace. Please open your Bibles to **Matt 7:1-12** (read)

Prayer

This is part of a famous message Jesus gave called “The Sermon on the Mount”. In this message Jesus tells us that we can’t afford to be reckless in our relationships with others.

When a mother removes a speck of dirt from a young child’s eye, she does it with great care and precision. Likewise, helping others deal with their sins is a delicate business. Our passage today teaches us to:

Handle Sin With Humility and Prayer

Chapter 7:1 may be the most well known verse in the Bible in our generation. But few know that Jesus is actually teaching us here how to judge correctly. In other words, this scripture is not about avoiding judgements but avoiding wrong judgements so that we can evaluate and effectively help others struggling with sin.

Jesus tells us that the twin evils of recklessness on the one hand, and negligence on the other, must be avoided.

Jesus first begins by showing us a simple 3 step wisdom approach to helping others. Let’s look at this together.

1. Wisdom to Help Others with Their Sin (Matt 7:1-6)

Jesus begins by tells us to avoid making wrong judgement of others. Do you see that in verse 1 & 2?

(a) Always Avoid a Critical Spirit

The word “judge” here means to condemn others. It means to look upon others with a critical spirit. It means to wish they would be punished for their sin.

In other words, when we see others in sin, we are not to pronounce judgement on them, as if we were in the place of God.

Friends, I think one of the most common ways we do this is when we assign motives to other people's words and actions. We think that person avoided us at church because they think they are too good for us. But what if they were distracted by something we don't know about or had something else on their mind?

Yet if we get offended, we think the worst of them, by assigning them with the worst of motives—something we couldn't possibly know about for certain!

Now I want you to notice something important. **Verse 2** and **verse 12** are very similar. Both speak about a standard that governs how we treat others. In **verse 2**, Jesus says—"Don't treat others by a harsh standard you don't wish to receive". In **verse 12**, Jesus says—"Do treat others by a loving standard you do wish to receive".

These are just two ways of saying the same thing from a negative and a positive angle. Both are an explanation of what it means to "love your neighbour as yourself".

In other words what Jesus is teaching us in this passage is how to love others—particularly when its hard to love. So often we claim not to know how to deal with others, but Jesus says—"*listen! it's actually fairly easy. Treat others the way you would want to be treated. Don't treat others the way you wouldn't want to be treated. Relate to others like they were another you and love them accordingly.*"

So the first step in helping others is to resist and restrain the impulse to mistreat them. That kind of judging will always be wrong for a follower of Christ. But stopping wrong judging isn't enough. Jesus wants us to learn to judge the right way.

(b) Address Others Sin ONLY When Aware of Your Own

Look with me at **verse 3**. Jesus addresses here our tendency to **overestimate** the seriousness of other peoples sins, and **underestimate** the seriousness of our own. We think the “log” is in their eye and the “speck” in ours. But we have it backwards.

Now you might say to me—“Tim, its not always backwards—sometimes other people’s sin **IS** greater than mine”. What we miss however, is that **our reaction** to others sin—our self righteousness—is often worse than the sin they have committed against us!

Most of us are completely blind to our reactions towards others sin. This failure to judge ourselves correctly has a serious consequence—Notice this in **verse 4-5**. It hinders my capacity to see others sin clearly. Whenever I indulge a sin in my own life, my viewpoint will be clouded towards others.

In other words, It will always always be impossible for me to accurately evaluate where others need to change, until I deal with the obstructions in my own life first. Who wants a blind surgeon operating on them!

(c) Clarity About Your Own Sin Gives Clarity About Others Sin

Verse 5 & 6 then, deal with the right way to judge (i.e. evaluate) others.

Notice the word “**first**” and later the word “**then**” in **verse 5**. Here is the sequence. Deal with your own sin before you deal with others sin. Jesus doesn’t say—“mind your own business and just deal with your own sin”. That’s what most people think Jesus is teaching here.

Jesus wants us to help others when they get entangled in sin—but he wants us to do it gently and carefully after we have dealt first with our own heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. Gal 6:1 NLT

Now when we have rightly seen the gravity of our own sin and dealt with it, it helps us not only help others in sin, but it gives us the **discernment to avoid helping** those who are **not open** to correction.

Some people are too proud to be corrected, so Jesus says you shouldn't even try to. Do you see that in **verse 6?**

Actual Pigs and 4 legged dogs don't have the capacity to appreciate pearls or what is holy—You don't give Bible lessons to your pet dog. Waste what's precious on them. Some people are like animals when it comes to beautiful truth—they have no appreciation of its preciousness.

Sometimes when we see others' sins clearly **because** we have faced our own sins head on, it is still prudent to leave others in their sin, because they will reject any "truth-input" you offer them.

Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Prov 9:7-8

3 Simple Steps:

(a) Always Avoid a Critical Spirit

(b) Address Others Sin ONLY When Aware of Your Own

(c) Clarity About Your Own Sin Gives Clarity About Others Sin

Simple...but not easy. It's not complicated, but that doesn't mean it's easy, because sin makes everything more difficult than it should be.

Thankfully, Jesus doesn't just give us the wisdom we need, but He also tells us where to get the grace we need. First he tells us what to do, and then he tells us how to do it.

2. Grace to Help Others with Their Sin (Matt 7:7-12)

This section on prayer is intimately connected to what Jesus has just been saying. We know that by looking at **verse 12**. Notice that it begins with the word "**So**".

But verses 7-11 don't seem to have anything at all to do with how we treat others—It's just about prayer. In order for the "So" in verse 12 to make sense, it must mean that Jesus' teaching on prayer is a vital part of what he has already said about helping others with their sin. It's the grace provision for the obligations he has just taught on in verses 1-6.

Jesus wants us to pray about our relationships with others.

We speak to God about others, while speaking to others about God.

Whenever we pray we connect ourselves to the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. In these verses we pray about the grace we need to follow the wisdom instructions Jesus has just given us.

What we so desperately need in our relationships with others is more of God in them...and prayer is how we get God involved in our relationships. Most of us have heard the dictum about marriages —"the couples that pray together stay together".

Do you know why that is true? Because prayer invites God into the relationship!

In Matthew, Jesus repeatedly presents God as our Father to us. He reveals God as our Father as the answer and pivot point an amazing 16 times in this sermon alone!

Notice this in **verse 11**. It is going to be hard to pray if you don't see God as a kind Father who longs to lavish you with good things.

Prayer then accomplishes two wonderful things for the Christian in the middle of relational challenges.

First, prayer is how we get answers to the brokenness in our relationships. Our need of seeing the sin in our own heart we are blind to. Our need to carry a strong awareness of our own sin when we approach others in theirs. The need to see clearly so we can help people with their sin struggles.

Secondly, prayer is how we enjoy our relationship with our Father. It is the means of communicating with our Father like children with their earthly fathers—and like children when they are utterly confident of their fathers' love to make bold requests of him, so great is our trust in the Father's love for us!

Steven Kamenar's tribute to his grandfather is an amazing tribute to a man who wonderfully reflects the Father heart of God:

"We, his grandkids have learned over the years to be careful what we mentioned when we were in ear-shot of him, for anything we either needed, or simply liked. I think he might have even had the ability to hear through walls when you mentioned something as simple as "hey this juice is really good!" or "oops, last piece of gum". Within seconds he would be putting on his jacket and sperry-topsiders to make a trip to the store to bring you

back a month's or even years supply of said item. A phrase we grew up hearing frequently was "I'm heading to the store, does anyone need anything?" **Steven Kamenar**, Dec 2017

We know—a deep knowing-reinforced through our prayer relationship with him—that he will never give us anything but what is good for us. This God is not everyone's Father—He has bound himself as Father to those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Jesus clearly tells us how we come to the Father:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." **John 14:6**

It is through personal trust in Christ that God becomes our Father, and we become his children!

"To all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God." **John 1:12** NLT

Jesus is telling us here that we all need to help each other with our sin struggles but we need to see our own sin first...and that requires God's involvement—through our prayers to him.

Whether you know God already as your Father, or you want to know him as your Father, the pathway is the same. It's through Jesus. We call on God through Christ, and God answers us:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been Fathered by God...You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" **1John 5:1** NET ; **Gal. 4:6** The Message