

How Should We View Ourselves and Others?

Luke 6:37-49

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Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; 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. - Luke 6:37-38, ESV

Here's a harsh reality about ourselves that we all need to face: We are very quick to make excuses for our own sin, taking into account all of the circumstances and rationalizations we can muster, and we are just as quick to condemn the sins of others, at least the ones that offend us most. The benefit of the doubt we extend so readily to ourselves we rarely extend to others, and the harsh judgment we pass on the failings of others hurts so deeply when others send it back to us in our time of weakness. As human beings, we are constantly judging and condemning one another and just as constantly excusing our own failings.

One of the worst things you can do right now is to quickly agree with the above paragraph and think of all the people you know who fit this description so perfectly: "Oh, yes! I agree. Conservatives are so quick to condemn sexual sins while they excuse their own self-righteousness!" OR "Absolutely right! Those liberals are so quick to condemn people for intolerance, but they're really the most intolerant bunch around."

Stop! Go back and read the harsh reality again. This time refuse to apply it to anyone but yourself: "Yes, this is true. I do this all the time. I pick and choose the sins of my own I will excuse and the sins of others I will condemn. Jesus is talking to me."

Jesus is telling us to extend grace and understanding, patience and forgiveness to others for their sins. Be very slow to condemn anyone. Would you really want someone measuring your life by the same measure you use when you criticize others?

But Jesus then goes on in verses 39-49 to call us to a rigorous level of self-examination. The criticism we are to spare others we should not spare ourselves. We should see our own sin as a log in our eye and see others' sin as mere specks in their eye. We are to see our own inconsistency in calling Jesus "Lord, Lord" while we do not do what we says. Our hearts should be broken by our own hypocrisy but should also be overflowing with compassion for the weaknesses of others.

We don't do any of this very well. We are much better at jumping on the bandwagon of the critics who are quick to condemn. We are much better at avoiding the hard work of repentance and the even harder work of forgiveness and love. This is why we need Jesus. His grace can change our hearts and give us the love for others that we want others to give us. His Spirit can also give us the strength to hate our own sin and long to see it removed from our lives forever.