

The Disciples as Self-Righteous Judgmentalists and Executioners:

Jesus “sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ But he turned and rebuked them. * And they went on to another village” (Luke 9:52-56).

*Some manuscripts add: “and he said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy people’s lives but to save them.’”

Self-righteous judgmentalist test – 1 Corinthians 13:3-8 upside down:

They are: impatient and unkind; they envy and boast; they are arrogant and rude. They insist on their own way; they are irritable and resentful; they rejoice at wrongdoing, they do not rejoice with the truth. They refuse to bear all things, they will not believe anything, they see no hope in anything, and they cannot, nor will not endure all things. They quit, give up, and walk away in anger and frustration.

The Law of Moses is powerless to save – and it is equally powerless to sanctify.

“For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:19).

“Do not be angry that you cannot make others as you would wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be” (Thomas ‘a Kempis).

True criticism vs hyper-criticism

True criticism is helpful, loving, and constructive. Hyper-criticism is hurtful, demeaning, demoralizing, and destructive.

“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

And so can we, using the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), and the Spirit of God (John 16:8).

II. THE LOVING, CARING ADVOCATE

“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? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 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” (Matthew 7:3-5).

“see clearly” is a Gk word that means more than to *look at*. It means to *gaze into*, referring to a penetrating observation that sees deeply, clearly, accurately into something or someone.

“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one” (1 Corinthians 2:15).

We are Called to *Test the Spirits*

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false” (Revelation 2:2).

“Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Ephesians 5:4-12).

Christians will judge the world and rule over angels.

“When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life” (1 Corinthians 6:1-3).

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-11).

Jesus gave us explicit instructions, not only that we *should* confront sin, but precisely *how* we should confront sin:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-18).

The apostle Paul made it very clear that ongoing, egregious sinning is to be dealt with firmly in the church:

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

"Truth always carries with it confrontation. Truth demands confrontation; loving confrontation nevertheless. If our reflex action is always accommodation regardless of the centrality of the truth involved, there is something wrong" (F. Schaeffer).

The motive and objective in using discernment to help another believer who is struggling with sin is *love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*" (1 Timothy 1:5).

The apostle Paul reminds us that, "in Christ," no demanded moralized behavior borne out of legalism "counts for anything, but only faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

"...through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:13-14). And *love* is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:1-4).

"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" (Matthew 7:5).

Only after self-examination, purging your own sin, and marking your motives, are you qualified to help someone else.

In a word, "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

"We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.' For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:1-7).