

Sermon Notes

Series: How to Be A Peacemaker

Date: November 29nd, 2009

Title: “Step 3: Evaluate the Situation”

Text: Matthew 7:1-5

When we evaluate the situation (e.g...problem, conflict, disagreement in our relationships) **we should...**

1) EVALUATE WITH GRACE.

- a) **Jesus begins in verse one by saying, judge not, that you be not judged.**
 - i) And that word “judge” could be defined as evaluate or discern...
 - ii) But given our context, I don’t think that’s the best way to interpret the word “judge” in verse one.
 - (1) Cf. vv 5-6...evaluation and discernment is required to obey those verses.
 - iii) Instead, when Jesus says “judge” in verse one, he’s referring to something else.

- b) **Consider verse 1 alongside of verse 2...**
 - i) Verse 2 helps us to see that the judging Jesus is talking about is not evaluation, but passing a sentence on another person.
 - (1) Essentially, Jesus is saying that we must not condemn others.
 - ii) And there’s good reason for that... because when we judge others...
 - (1) We’re acting as if they are accountable to us...
 - iii) And when we do this, we’re guilty of playing God.
 - iv) God says the consequence for that is that we will be judged more strictly.
 - v) But there’s another biblical reason that we shouldn’t judge others...

- c) **We shouldn’t judge others because we’ve been shown grace in the person and work of Jesus Christ.**
 - i) God could have given us what our rebellion and sin deserves.
 - (1) God had every right to let us face the death sentence we earned.
 - ii) But instead, God chose to show us mercy. He chose to show us grace.
 - (1) And He did that by sending His Son Jesus, who never committed any sin, to face judgment for us...
 - iii) If we as Christians, have received that kind of grace, shouldn’t we extend it to others?
 - iv) So as we evaluate the situation we’re facing in our relationships, we better evaluate with grace. That includes...
 - (1) remembering that we are capable of the same sin they committed against us.
 - (2) realizing that the sins we’ve committed in the past are just as heinous to God.
 - (3) being ready to forgive them as God in Christ forgave us.

2) Second, when we evaluate the situation we should EVALUATE OURSELVES FIRST.

- a) **And this becomes pretty clear in verses 3-5, doesn’t it?**

- i) When it comes to evaluating the situation, we need to look at ourselves first.
 - (1) We need to consider our contribution to that argument or conflict before theirs.
- ii) And I think Jesus' rationale for this is pretty clear.
 - (1) We should evaluate ourselves first because we're sinners too.
 - (2) In fact, because we're sinners, we often deceive ourselves.
 - (a) We assume that we're innocent and the other person is guilty.
 - (b) But typically, when it comes to relationships, we both share in the guilt.
 - (3) In fact, there are many times we won't be able to evaluate the other person accurately until we evaluate ourselves first.
 - (a) As Jesus said, how can we expect to take the speck out of our brother's eye if we have a huge beam... a big log right in the middle of our own eye?

b) And let me share four things we can do to evaluate ourselves first.

- i) To begin with, we can pray, and ask God to reveal our sin.
 - (1) Cf Psalm 139:23-24
 - (2) That's a really helpful prayer, especially given what I just mentioned about our deceptive sin nature.
- ii) Second, we should get into God's Word.
 - (1) It is true that God can point out and convict us of sin through prayer.
 - (2) But just as often, He does this as we read and study and meditate on His word.
 - (3) Cf. Hebrews 4:12
 - (4) But what about those times when we're not sure if we've sinned against the other person?...
- iii) Well, in those times, I would suggest getting counsel from others in Christ.
 - (1) Cf. Proverbs 19:20
 - (2) As long as we don't use outside counsel as an opportunity to gossip or name names or give unnecessary details, it can be a great help in evaluating ourselves first.
- iv) And then finally, if after those three things we've pinpointed some sort of sin, we need to confess that sin.
 - (1) And we start by confessing that sin to God.
 - (a) That means we come before him in prayer and agree that we have broken his law and deserve to stand guilty before Him.
 - (2) But we don't stop there...
 - (a) We ask for and receive His forgiveness on the basis of what Jesus did in his death and resurrection.
 - (b) And we decide right there and then to forsake that sin, and pursue obedience, and follow Jesus

3) EVALUATE OTHERS LAST.

a) Once we evaluate ourselves it is okay to move on and evaluate others.

- i) Just because we sinned against the other person doesn't cancel out the need to address their sin.
- ii) In fact, even if your sin was greater – even if was literally a log in comparison to their speck – you should still evaluate the other's person contribution to the problem.

- iii) And there are other verses in Scripture that support this line of thought.
 - (1) Cf. Galatians 6:1-2 and James 5:19-20
- iv) So again, it's not wrong to evaluate others.
 - (1) It's just wrong to evaluate others before you've evaluated yourself.

b) Well, how should we go about this? How should we evaluate the other person's contribution to the problem?

- i) First, to evaluate the other person, ask God to help you discern if they have sinned against you.
 - (1) And it's important that when we do this we make a distinction between perceived sin and actual sin.
 - (a) If someone at church gives you a blank stare, don't automatically assume they don't like you or don't care about you – maybe they are distracted by things going on at home or just unaware of their body language.
 - (b) If one of your children doesn't do their chores right away, don't automatically assume their being disobedient – maybe their sibling distracted them or they're picking up something you didn't even ask them to.
 - (c) If one of your friends doesn't return your call, don't automatically assume they've removed you from their friend list – maybe their cell phone battery died or they had to take their child to the ER.
 - (2) Instead of making a big deal about perceived sins, believe the best about others.
 - (a) Cf. 1 Corinthians 13: 7
 - (b) Essentially, if we are being gracious and loving we'll look at those situations that could be taken in one of two ways and interpret them positively.
 - (i) We should assume and believe the best about others.
 - (c) And if we can do that, we'll be in a much better position to discern if someone has really sinned against us.
- ii) Second, to evaluate the other person we should look to God's Word.
 - (1) And when Scripture talks about evaluating other's sins, the focus is always on sin that is visible, and objective, and concrete.
 - (2) So basically, we're not to try to evaluate the motives or heart of the person.
 - (3) Our evaluation should be based on fruit..
- iii) Third, to evaluate the other person, we may also need to get outside counsel.
 - (1) But as mentioned before, this should not be taken as an opportunity to gossip or identify names or complain about the individual.
- iv) And then fourth and finally, depending on whether they sinned and the affects of their sin you need to either "overlook" or "go."
 - (1) Sometimes their sin against you is something you should overlook.
 - (a) It's an offense you should cover in love and forgive them for.
 - (b) And when that happens, you don't even need to go to them.
 - (2) But if their sin is not something you can or should overlook, you should go.
 - (a) You should go to restore and reconcile and grant forgiveness to this brother or sister.
 - (b) And again, I plan to lay out some more principles on this when we look at step 4 in a couple of weeks.
 - (3) Conclusion...