

First Things First: Examine Yourself and Do Not Condemn Others
Matthew 7:1-5
February 6, 2011

The boomerang is an object that many are familiar with but just in case you're not, let's take a look at a video piece of a man who is throwing a boomerang.

Video

You really have to know what you're doing to make the boomerang work. Throw the boomerang the wrong way, and it could come back and hit you. Throw it well and it can be used for sport or it has even been used to hunt birds for food.

We are about to hear the word of Jesus that in a sense teach us our thoughts and words of judging can be like the boomerang. We can use judgment the wrong way and it not only can harm others as well as come back to harm us. We can mean well but still confuse and discourage, like a church sign intended to give encouragement stated, **“don't let worry kill you off – let the church help.” Judging others can kill relationships.** But if we put first things first there is a place for making judgment calls in our lives that helps others and us.

Reading of Matthew 7:1-5

Let's first consider how this scripture is miss-interpreted. Let's first rule out what Jesus isn't saying. This is not a passage of scripture to say there is never a time when we have to point out a wrong or sin we see in the life of another.

Pastor Jerry Depoy, has said, “This is probably the most quoted verse of the Bible. Almost every time a backslidden Christian

is criticized, he reverts to this verse. It is probably the only verse that the lost man can quote.

Pastor Jerry Depoy (sermoncentral.com, 2/2/11)

The Bible teaches we're all fallible. One of the key basic doctrines of our Christian teaching is that we all sin. Romans 3:10 states, **"There are none that are righteous, no not one."** Heroes of the Bible needed at some time in their lives someone to confront them and tell them they had done wrong.

- King David had Nathan the prophet to confront David's adultery. (2 Samuel 12)
- Jesus had to tell his inner circles of disciples/closest friends they were getting off track such as arguing amongst themselves who was the greatest disciple. (Luke 9:46-48)
- The Apostle Paul once confronted the Apostle Peter about showing favoritism to Jews Christians over the non-Jewish Christians. (Galatians 2:11)

The problem of sin/ missing the bull's eye of God's will doesn't go away just because we are Christian. So this passage of scripture is not to be used for teaching that pointing out the flaws to another is wrong or un-Christian.

Another truth and reality to life is that sin blinds us. We don't always see the error of our ways. **Jeremiah 5:21** has God speaking to His people through the prophet Jeremiah and saying, **"The people have eyes but do not see and ears but do not hear."** Sometimes the wrong we get involved with has a blinding effect on us on seeing the changes we need to make. So there are times when we need someone to tell us we might be getting off spiritual course.

This passage doesn't mean we don't care if we confront. The people we can really count on are those who can tell us something we may not like to hear and yet still be in friendship with us. Jesus

modeled this best with his disciples. Time and time again he would point out where they were wrong. Yet he never abandoned them; although they abandoned Jesus. Matthew 18:15-17 contains the words of Jesus of the steps we are to take when we especially see a brother or sister in the faith that has sinned against us. **Jesus said;**

- **We are to go and talk to them alone.**
- **If they don't listen, we tell them in the presence of one or two elders' spiritual leaders.**
- **If they still don't listen they are brought before the church.**

Matthew 7:1-5 is not a passage that says we don't care because we confront others. **This is not scripture to say there isn't a time to throw out the boomerang of genuine concern about what we see going on.**

But there is a right way to put first things first before we go to someone and confront a concern we have about them. In verse 5 Jesus said, **"You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."**

Illustration: (Andrew) Jesus knows were a lot like the story about a five-year-old boy named Andrew. While visiting a neighbor with his parents, Andrew pulled out his kindergarten class picture and immediately began describing each classmate. "This is Robert; he hits everyone. This is Stephen. He never listens to the teacher. This is Mark. He chases us and is very noisy." Pointing to his own picture, Andrew commented, "And this is me. I'm just sitting here minding my own business." (Pastor Matthew Parker, sermoncentral.com, 2/11)

Jesus knows there is not a one of us who are always just minding our own business. We sin and we're tempted to mind the business

of others when we should be closely examining our own hearts and lives. **So how do we avoid being hypocrites when we see sin and wrong in each other?**

We cannot help another with their sin if we are blinded by our own.

Psalm 139:23-24

We cannot really help anyone else with their sin if we were not aware of our own. Psalms 139:23-24 states, **“Search me o God and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”**

The words of Jesus and psalmist remind us to check the motivation of our hearts. Before we raise an issue of concern to someone else we need to ask ourselves what’s our motivation for approaching them and why are we thinking we need to be the ones to speak to them?

One pastor pointed out three motivations we ought to watch for in ourselves that misguide us.

- Motivation to control – our words are not to manipulate others. Caring enough to confront is suppose to help another; not try and make sure they do what we want them to do. We know we are trying to only control when we only confront when there is something in it for us. **Thomas a Kempis once said, “Be not angry that you cannot make others as you want to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.”** (preachingtoday.com.com) So we need to ask ourselves if we think we have something to tell someone, who will benefit from our words. Who will be helped if they see it your way? Is it just us that will benefit? When Nathan the prophet confronted King David, Nathan, really had nothing personally to gain and a great deal to lose like his job and his head on a silver platter.
- Motivation to condemn – meaning our words only punish,

our words only point out the flaw that we see and we give no hope, no encouragement. As harsh as Jesus was even on the religious leaders that opposed him, he could share his heart in Matthew 23 about how he wanted to reach out in love to them. So practice the words of the psalmist and search and ask if what we believe we need to say has encouragement and not just pointing out the wrong.

- Motivation to clear our name – meaning we point out fault in another so we look good, and we get elevated. We judge ourselves as not being as bad as another. We say “well at least I am not like _____.”

One preacher said the point Jesus was making is we can only truly help others when we have clear vision of our flaws and sins.

Before we confront, we take stock of our own lives: v.3

Jesus said “why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye but do not notice the log in your own.” As we search our heart take stock of the nitty gritty ways about us that are not pleasing to God and are not consistent with the teachings of the Bible. **1 John 1:8 states “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”** Take stock and name to yourself what sin is going unaddressed and ignored. If you are having trouble seeing your sin, ask those who aren’t afraid to make you mad and know you’re tough enough to take the feedback. An ancient saint of the church once said, **“You cannot put straight in others what is warped in yourself”** Athanasius 293-373 Patriarch of Alexandria and Church Father, preachingtoday.com)

Before we confront make sure we are not minimizing our own flaws and failures: v.4 Jesus said “take the log out of your own eye.” We can take away the warning not to minimize our sin it’s as big as a log. One of the ways we avoid growing as Christians and maturing as people is we minimize and trivialize how insignificant

our sin is and what needs changing. **Minimizing is dangerous because it is our way of knowing the sin/problem is there; but we allow it to stay.** Listen it is one thing to be blind and just not realize the error of our ways. But when we get wind of it and we realize it, and compare ourselves to others so we don't change, we are allowing the log in our eyes to stay there. Minimizing leads to callous a spirit. A callous spirit means our conscience gets use to tolerating the sin. We get so use to tolerating the sin we reject God's truth and stop doing anything about what is inappropriate.

Before I confront someone else; I confront myself: v.5

Jesus said **take the log out** of your own eye. It is a command not an option. It is an instruction; not a suggestion. It is a call to true faithful obedience. Jesus said take it out, get the things in us addressed, work on them, strengthen your soul, but get it removed. So with clear spiritual vision you can go to your brother or sister in the faith or whomever you are concerned about and have eyes that see the ways they can overcome their sin and flaws **because we see ways are overcoming ours.**

Conclusion:

Maybe this is a little cheesy to say it like this, but today is Communion Sunday when we remember when Jesus called his disciples to sit around a common table made of wood and eat the bread and drink the wine that symbolized his body and blood revealed his and God's love for us.

The communion table was made of wood. We need to take the logs from our own eyes and spiritually through humbleness and confess and turn those logs into a table and time of communion seeking to be forgiven and offer forgiveness.

Ecclesiastes 3 is that great scripture that we often hear at funerals that says for everything in life there is a season. There is a season to go to others and share concerns, even take a stand at the wrong

we see – there are those seasons. But Jesus reminds us before we do; put first things first and remove the log in our eyes by seeing the error of our own ways.

Let's Pray

Confession and Assurance of Pardon