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6 Things to do before you Judge...

This last Sunday, we took some time to dive into what the Bible says about “judging others” ([you can find that message here](#)) and its not as simple as you might think. While there *is* such as a thing as “wrong judgment” (ie – playing a role that only God can play), the Bible also encourages “right” judgment as we walk through this world on a number of fronts.

You can hear a more in-depth treatment of these differences in the message from last Sunday, but we didn’t get a chance to get super-practical about some helps as you think about *actually* approaching someone. So here are 6 things to keep in mind BEFORE you decide to go and approach ANYONE ELSE in ANY KIND of corrective way:

1. PRAY

It’s never wise to assume that just because you “noticed something” that you are automatically “God’s chosen one” to correctively confront someone else about an issue in their life, so going to God for his perspective (because he knows and sees everything) is always a good idea. Always pause and pray first, asking God questions like: “Am I seeing this right?” “Is now the right time?” “What exactly do I need to say, and how is it overtly sinful?” “Am I the person with a close enough relationship with this person that it will be received redemptively? Or do you have someone else in mind?”

Prayer also gives you a moment of perspective *on yourself* as well; for instance you can remind yourself there: if you’re conflict avoidant, in God’s sovereignty you’ve noticed this for a reason and He may want you to do something about it. OR, if you’re pretty quick to be confrontational, you can remind yourself that everyone is in process and God can handle this with or without you. Either way, trust that only after clarity in prayer, can you really discern what step God may have you take next.

2. USE GENTLENESS

In Galatians 6.1 it says: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently...” This is a good reminder that God doesn’t need us to “knock sense into another person” by being rough with them. We can sometimes think that to ‘swing the pendulum’ back in the other direction from where they are, *we need* to be harsher or push harder in certain areas. God’s Word is a helpful centering on that instinct – no matter what you say – use gentleness.

3. GO DIRECTLY TO THE PERSON

Jesus says this in Matthew 18.15: “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, *just between the two of you*. If they listen to you, you have won them over.” This means that we do not take opportunity to air out grievances with someone else’s life. This even applies to when it’s done under the guise of sharing “prayer requests.” In fact, if someone brings something *to you* about someone else, “judge them rightly” by sending them to the person they have an issue with – it would be sinful both to share OR to sit and listen to it.

4. DO IT WITHOUT HYPOCRISY

This goes back to Matthew 7 and what Jesus said about the log and the splinter. Amazingly Jesus doesn’t say NOT TO TOUCH THE SPLINTER, he just says not to before you take care of your own glaring issues. Certainly this doesn’t demand perfection (or no one would ever attempt to correct anyone else), but to be clear, *it does mean that glaring issues in your own life disqualify you from certain corrective conversations*.

For example, I believe this means that before you can have a corrective voice in the gay marriage debate and say to someone else: “hey that’s not right!” For the glory of God, there better not be even a hint of sexual immorality in your own life (Ephesians 5.3), or Jesus would say: “you personally are disqualified from speaking into that issue – work on your own log first.”

Isn’t this the case the world has AGAINST the church today? “Sure, rail on gay marriage – from the position of consistently ‘struggling with porn’ and engaging in sexual ‘slip ups’ outside of marriage; but yeah – go ahead and tell me that I’m not living up to Gods standard for sexuality.” And who can blame them – the hypocrisy is not hard to spot. Look for logs in your own life FIRST this week, and only after you do that, do you EARN the right to be heard by others struggling with the same thing.

5. NEVER TOUCH MOTIVES

Here we look to Matthew 18:15 again (quoted above). There Jesus says: “point out *their fault...*” not “guess and call out WHY the fault occurred.” In other words, don’t assume you know WHY someone did anything, simply stick with what you can SEE. In fact, a great lead-in question to store away for God’s glory in redeeming others around you is: “help me understand...” That lead in specifically communicates to the listener that: “this is not accusatory, and I could be missing something, but God’s Word is pretty clear about (fill in the blank), *so help me understand* what’s going on here.”

6. NO “PEARL JAMMING”

A bit further on in Matthew 7, Jesus says in verse 6: “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” I’m convinced Jesus is describing here, a point in any conversation where after sharing your concern with someone else (could be the gospel, could be a redemptive conversation with a brother or sister in Christ), but there comes a point in every conversation *where if correction isn’t embraced*, you really shouldn’t keep trying to jam it down their throat (what I call “a pearl jam”).

If it’s God’s job to ready a heart to hear truth that’s presented, and it’s obvious that that truth is not being embraced, Jesus says here: “its okay to walk away.” Certainly continue praying, and doing life with the person in the meantime; but at some point you actually have to make the judgment that they’re just not hearing it, and let God handle it until further notice.

Lots of damage has been done from trying to jam pearls down people’s throats; and kind of like “wrongly judging,” forcefully jamming the message into the life of a person whose flat out resistant to it, typically doesn’t help anyone into the kingdom of heaven. So, (full circle) go to prayer (remember – that was number 1 anyway), that God would change hearts by HIS Spirit, and in HIS time.

Hopefully this is a starting help for you BEFORE taking an issue to anyone else around you. Remember, these are some of the “finer points” around the discussion of judging. A more basic outline of the biblical landscape around this can be found in the message from Sunday ([again – HERE](#)). Blessings to you as you go out to redemptively be the hands and feet of Jesus in the lives of other people, even in the midst of some of the “harder” conversations.