

YOUTH NEWS

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It's Not Just About The Plank

Specks Aren't Great Either

Matthew 7:1 - ... Do not judge or you too will be judged...

We have all heard Jesus' words in Matthew 7 when He warns through analogy against pointing out a speck in someone else's eye while we have a plank in our own eye.

It is easy to imagine the pain and inconvenience of a giant chunk of wood in one's eyeball. Yet, specks are not so comfortable either. They can be super irritating. **Legacy** studied the passage in context and saw something the casual reader might not.

Matthew 7:1 is often misquoted. How often has a person said, rather judgmentally, "The Bible says not to judge." While ironically, the person not wanting to judge is also judging, Jesus was in the same position. His actual words were, "Do not judge or you too will be judged." Yes, Jesus is making a judgmental statement, and no, he is not saying we are never to judge another human or another believer. How do we know?

Well for one, the context of this verse uses the plank and speck

analogy and goes on to say, "first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Also, throughout Jesus' teachings He gives us the ability to judge.

We have to judge: situations, character, actions and even one another. In Matthew 7, Jesus is not saying humans cannot judge. He is warning that in order to judge well, we must manage the same sins in our own lives before we point them out in others. This is why leadership is called to a high standard. The New Testament also goes into great depth on how to lovingly and graciously correct one another.

The image of finger pointers loudly and publicly declaring who has a speck in their eye is a great turnoff. No one wants to be judged that way. But the image of brothers and sisters in Christ, who have worked hard to identify sin in their own lives, now seeking to help others while showing grace is a welcomed thought. It's how we grow and mature.

And if planks haven't been removed, the specks will stay too.

January Events Calendar

Don't Forget!

- Jan. 8, 15, 22 & 29 (Sundays)
Legacy at the Chapel 5:30– 8
No meeting January 1.
- Jan. 10, 17, 24 & 31 (Tuesdays)
Rooted at the Chapel 7- 8:30

Early Resolutions

Like other Christian festivals, the celebration of New Years Day in the West started before the church came into existence. At first, the Romans celebrated the beginning of the new year on March 1, not January 1. Julius Caesar instituted New Year's Day on January 1 to honor Janus, the two-faced god who looks backwards into the old year and forwards into the new. The custom of "New Years resolutions" began in this earliest period, as the Romans made resolutions with a moral flavor: mostly to be good to others.

When Rome took on Christianity as its official faith, the Christians kept New Years Day. Only, they traded the vaguely moral emphasis for a practice of fasting and prayer aimed at living the New Year in the New Life of Christ.

Later, the Puritans urged their young people, especially, to skip the revelry and meditate on the year past and the year to come. Always ready to introspect—in famously excruciating detail—they adopted again the old custom of making resolutions. They vowed to take more care against their besetting sins, make better use of their talents and other divine gifts, and treat others with Christian charity.

Attitudes Of A Servant

If you asked random people on the streets of America what they thought a good life consisted of, what do you think they would say? How about if you asked them what they thought would make them happy? Or this: "What is the point of living?"

These are good questions and we should ask them, even of ourselves, because they reveal a lot about what we believe and what we value. When Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6, He has become quite the popular person. He draws a crowd wherever He goes. People are drawn to Him because of the power He exhibits, the deep things He says and the healings He performs. People like that Jesus, except those who feel threatened by Him.

Then Jesus says some very hard things. He starts challenging His followers to completely change how they think about what a good life is. He challenges what they see as the point of living. He asks them to reverse what they used to think of as the road to happiness. Some people weren't going to like it then and many people today still don't. The world knows that money, popularity, fun and comfort are all desirable things. And they are, if you only want to look at the temporal.

Then Jesus says things like, "Blessed are the poor ... those who weep ... those who are hated ... for My sake." The **Rooted** class pondered these things.

It's not that being hungry is awesome or going without is so enjoyable. But when things happen to us because of our relationship with Jesus, these are things He is using. These are things He wants us to experience. And in that context, we know this is not eternal, but He is and our relationship with Him will be too.



If It's Not Fun, You're Not Trying

The High Schoolers exchanged gifts in the usual way in December, which is to say they played a little Yankee Swap. In the midst of taking gifts others have opened or trying one's luck with picking a package of unknown contents, even those who ended up with something "undesirable" didn't go home sad. It's all about the art of trading as well as the creativity of the gift givers. And in the end, those who seem to have the most fun are those who put the most thought into the gift they brought. And if that isn't a little picture of Christmas spirit, I don't know what is.



To Bribe Or Not To Bribe

In Rooted and AWANA one of the adopted practices is to reward students who have earned points. Points are earned by doing bookwork, memorizing verses, bringing friends and remembering one's Bible. In other words, things that are good for them and that they should do anyway. Points are exchanged for prizes at the end of each semester. And while this may seem like a bribe, in reality, it is more akin to giving a taste of blessings that come from doing things that God wants us to do. Read God's Word, memorize it, introduce friends to it, and ultimately, obey it: The results are better than trinkets, toys or candy. The outcome is a closer walk with the Lord and all that comes with knowing Him well.

Caught Red Handed

Studying through the Gospel of John in Sunday School, the **high schoolers** came to the passage of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). The Pharisees, obsessed with finding a situation that Jesus would be stuck between two impossible decisions, found a woman caught in the very act of one of the most stigmatizing and embarrassing sins. Should they stone her? That would be following

Mosaic Law. But Israel is under Roman rule at this point and you can't just stone people, no matter what people group you belong to.

Jesus gets beyond the rules, beyond the outward, and goes inward. Not only does he manage to turn away men intent on seeing someone humiliated, but He also deals with the heart of the woman who has still sinned, regardless of the

intentions of her accusers.

Jesus famously wrote in the dirt. We don't know what He wrote, but it got to the Pharisees' hearts. Go ahead and stone her, Jesus said, if you are without sin yourself.

And while the woman sinned, Jesus says, "Go and sin no more." A second chance! Forgiveness! The impossible test was passed by a perfect Savior.