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Transformed from the Inside Out

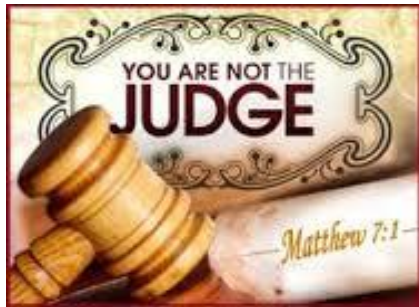
"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-5

I have always found this to be among the scariest passages in Scripture and sadly, one I ignore all too often. The warning in Jesus' words should certainly cause us to pause and reconsider before we get into the business of judging others. ***"...in the same way you judge others, you will be judged..."*** is a sobering message.

The truth is all of us struggle with making condemning judgements of those around us. We judge and condemn everyone from world leaders down to the folks who live next door. And let's be honest here, we are not just condemning the sin in their lives. More often than not we are condemning them.

Why do we have to give up our judging and condemning ways? There are undoubtedly any number of reasons, but here are three. First, when we judge and condemn others, no matter who they are, we are overlooking our own sin-filled reality. We are sinners. We break God's will for us every single day. We are not now, nor have we ever been perfect. When we get into the habit of judging and condemning others we forget that in doing so we condemn ourselves.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, ***"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things."*** (Romans 2:1) If I condemn someone of lying, I condemn myself because I lie. If I condemn someone for stealing, I condemn myself because I steal. It doesn't matter who I am judging or who I am condemning I am in truth no different than they. I am doing the same things.



Second, when I judge and condemn others I am setting myself up in God's place. God is the perfect judge because he not only sees what we do, he also sees why we do it. He alone can measure the effect of the influencers in our lives. He alone can read motives. Because of this God is the only perfectly fair judge. We cannot know what motivates others. Quite often when we sin we don't even understand our own motives. Judging is far beyond our abilities and we should, in fact we must leave it up to God.

Again, the Apostle wrote to the Roman believers, ***"So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification."*** (Romans 14:12-19) Our task is to edify and bring peace to our troubled world. Joining in the constant stream of condemning judgment accomplishes neither.

Finally, judging and condemning others overlooks the role of grace in our own salvation. When we understand that ***"There is no one righteous, no even one..."*** (Psalm 14:1-3) And when we accept that ***"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."*** (Romans 3:23) Then, we can begin to understand that judging and condemning others for their sins overlooks our own overwhelming need for grace.

My hope and yours does not lie in our own ability to live good and perfect lives. Our righteousness does not come from our own goodness, but from the goodness of God. We have no

hope outside of God's perfect love, perfect mercy, and perfect grace. We desperately need God's grace and we must extend that same grace to all others.

So, does this mean we should go through life ignoring the sin around us? Absolutely not! As far as we can judge what is sin and what is not sin and we should do so. To see someone lie or steal or murder and not condemn what they have done as sin is impossible. But consider how Jesus handled sinners. When he met the woman at the well, or the woman caught in adultery or any of the other sinners he interacted with he never ignored or overlooked their sin. But neither did he respond in condemning judgment to them. In fact, the only sinners Jesus ever strongly condemned were those who continued to deny their own sin.

When we understand our own sin-filled lives it should become easy to return mercy and forgiveness to those around us who sin. We want to be treated gently, with mercy and forgiveness for our sins. How can we offer any other response to those around us? M