

Ministering Grace in Community, Matthew 7:1-12

How do we relate to people in community to release such a full life? Jesus says Matthew 7:1-12 fulfills all the requirements. If the underlying sin in Genesis 3 is a need to **control**, then the truth to exchange for the lie of **control** is full **trust** in Jesus' Lordship.¹

1. Don't Judge (7:1-2): Jesus commands us not to *judge* or we will *be judged* by our same limiting standards. **First**, we become *judge* by measuring others from the perspective we have cobbled together over time. For Christians, it's *from* Scripture, but a subtle distortion. We see in part. **Second**, we become *jury* by measuring the other unfavorably to our personalized standard. We conveniently forget that we also fail to keep it. **Third**, we become *executioner* by looking down on them with criticism and/or contempt. **Control** hides itself in such self-righteousness.

2. First...Then Go Serve (7:3-5): Jesus uses a humorous story to teach a profound truth that deeply searches our hearts, if we are open. *Mr. Plank* sees a real speck in the eye of *Brother Speck*. Jesus tells *Mr. Plank* **not** to first go and help *Brother Speck*. **Why?** If he went first, he would assume that his observation was fact and act on it. Jesus deals with those who believe **"I see this right...end of discussion."** To **first** go uncovers the desire to **control** lurking within. Such an approach undermines community and leads to **judging**, looking down on the other. Jesus' **sequence** breaks off control and subtle pride.

With gentleness and humility, *Mr. Plank* **first** views his speck as a *tentative* observation since we see and know in part (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). What he sees may also be a **mirror** reflecting his own hidden blind spot. *"You spot it, you got it"* since we often project our stuff on others. He partners with the Spirit to check himself for a personal agenda or blind spot. Then determines not to swamp *Brother Speck* with details when he goes. See the speck of sawdust through Jesus' eyes and go with His gentle and humble heart.

3. "No Barging In" (7:6): This is a tough verse but here is my best shot. What if *Brother Speck* says, **"no, I don't want to hear any more"**?² Dogs and hogs are unclean animals to Jews, but we miss the point to focus on uncleanness. Jesus teaches *against* judging. The point is:

¹ Notice the subtly disguised attempt to **control** throughout the passage.

If this pricks your attention, I've summarized ideas from my teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, a freeware PDF found on my website *JimFredericks.Com* under "Freder's Favorites," Books of the Bible web page."

² Although dogs and hogs are both unclean animals to Jews, we miss the point when we read in uncleanness. Jesus is teaching about not judging. Jesus' point is that neither a dog nor a hog appreciates either sacred truth or pearls of wisdom. A dog and a hog only care about *"what's for supper?"* In this event at this time, *Brother Speck* is incapable of receiving and valuing this truth. The hog tramples the pearls of wisdom under foot and the dog turns and tears us to pieces because sacred truth is without value to either.

Have you been trampled or torn apart as you helped another?

How I wish I had learned earlier that when *Brother Speck* is done listening, I must stop talking. Regardless of how compelling my points or how passionate my delivery. Jesus treats us this way and we are to treat others how Jesus does. If we don't listen to Jesus, *Brother Speck* will turn and trample us under foot (Prov. 9:7-8a).

neither animal has capacity for sacred wisdom. A dog and a hog only care about “*what’s for supper?*” At this time, *Brother Speck* has no capacity to hear what we say.

With this cryptic verse, Jesus may have been thinking of Proverbs 9:7-10. Although we approach with the hope that the person is “wise” and will embrace help, we also recognize the possibility that *Brother Speck* may reject what we offer. Yes, God’s truth sets us free. However, it’s not the truth *Mr. Plank* knows, but only the truth that *Brother Speck* is willing to “*hold to,*” or obey (John 8:31-32).

How do we respond when we believe we have helpful truth?

Listen to *Brother Speck’s* “**no!**” Don’t run his stop sign. **STOP**, even in the middle of a great point (I’m still learning). God made each of us the gatekeeper of our own heart. It’s not truth that saves us, but only the truth we embrace and respond to. Ultimately, each is accountable to God Himself (Romans 14:3-4). Respect the dignity of his humanity by not invading his lane. Only God knows how fragile *Brother Speck* is.

4. Pray Truth to Exchange for the Lie (7:7-11): Prayer is action, yet action without words directly to *Brother Speck*. With prayer, so respect his “**no**” yet don’t ignore what we have seen to help him toward his highest and best. Prayer knows no limits of walls and space and distance and time. Pray into *Brother Speck* the truth that needs to be **exchanged** for the lie. For instance, if *impatience*, don’t pray **against** *impatience* but **for** *patience*. If *patience* reigns in his life, little room for *impatience* exists.³ “*We become what we set our focus on.*” The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is a great spot to hunt for truth to exchange for any lie. God may change *Brother Speck* and He **will** certainly change us. This is influence *without control*.

5. Practice the Golden Rule (7:12): The entire passage points toward 7:12 as the consummation of the Sermon on the Mount. I want people to treat me the same way Jesus does. So, in everything Jesus calls me to love as He loves others (John 13:34-35). To *accept* as He does (Romans 15:7). Meet others where they are, not where we are. That’s ministry in this third cycle, ceasing from our own works to do His. Now we won’t arrogantly hold that “**what we see is right**” because we hold our observations with a willingness to change.⁴

What impact could a faith-community like this have?

³ By the way, even a cursory google search of how our brain learns reveals how God designed our brains so “*we become what we behold.*” We become more like whatever we focus our heart on (affections, mind and will). When our **focus** is **against** a habit or response we don’t like, we actually unintentionally strengthen it. Learn to **focus** on the new habit you want rather than the bad habit.

⁴ In Romans 14:1-15-7, Paul dealt with a very similar response. The difference between the “*weak*” and the “*strong*” is not which position they take, but how they respond. See my post on JimFredericks.Com on July 12, 2021.