

STOP CRITICIZING!

MATTHEW 7:1-5

"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye?" - Matthew 7:3

As your group time begins use one or more of the following questions to introduce the topic of discussion:

Describe a time you had a bad splinter or something stuck in your eye. What did you have to go through to get it out?

When have you been criticized unjustly? How did you react?

In what circumstances or circles do you find yourself being most judgmental? What actions or behaviors by others trigger your judgement most?

We are all masters of criticizing others when things don't go according to plan. It's easy to point out the faults in someone else instead of taking a hard look at ourselves to figure out what we need to work on. In our passage, Jesus warns his followers of the natural tendency to exhibit a harsh, judgmental spirit or engage in destructive criticism against others.

When it comes to criticism Jesus lets us know **IT'S NOT OUR JOB.** **Read together Matthew 7:1-2 together.**

What type of judgement was Jesus referring to in this passage? How is this judgement different from the "Don't Judge Me!" type of judgement we so often hear today?

Was Jesus saying it is not right to judge anybody? How do we reconcile this statement with Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 5:12**?

How can becoming a follower of Christ and a child of God lead us to a place of arrogance and pious judgement? How have you dealt with this struggle?

Jesus also indicates that **CRITICISM IS OFTEN USED TO ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY.** **Read Matthew 7:3-4 together.**

Why is it so easy to be hypocritical, criticizing others for faults that are also ours? What are we trying to convince ourselves of?

What is the opposite of hypocrisy? Why would Jesus value that type of character?

What responsibility, if any, do we have when it comes to pointing out other believers' sins? Read **Galatians 6:1-5** for additional insight.

What does Jesus say is a prerequisite for doing so?

Finally, Jesus lets us know criticism **NEEDS TO BEGIN WITH OURSELVES**. Read together **Matthew 7:5** together.

What does Jesus mean when he says "take the plank out of your own eye," and how do we go about doing that?

How would our prayer life change if we stopped denying our sinfulness? Look back at the Pharisee and the tax collector in **Luke 18** and discuss the implications of this parable in your own life.

Jesus redefines the role of criticism as being a tool to first use on ourselves so we can then help others remove hypocrisy from their own life. What is the difference between correcting someone with God's law, and correcting them with God's grace? How does this look in practical terms?

Pray:

Pray for a realistic view of your own sin so that you might truly appreciate God's grace and then be able to lead others to do the same. Pray that the Lord would release you from being critical and having a harsh spirit toward others. Pray God would forgive you of those times you have been critical of others in a way that disqualifies them from God's grace - knowing that you have received grace and mercy yourself.

Connect:

Find the song "If We Are The Body" by Casting Crowns on Youtube. Search your heart this week for signs of criticism and hypocrisy. Take note of the feelings of disgust you feel toward others and ask yourselves how Jesus would see those same people. Take time to get to know someone who you been judgmental towards and after hearing their story you may feel compassion toward them. Use your relationship to bring that person to the Lord when the time is right.