

The Heart of a Helper

December 03, 2017 Matthew 7:3-6

For the fuller context, read Matthew 7:1-6

1. When is your “help” hypocritical?
 - a. Read Matthew 7:3-5 again.
 - i. What does Jesus *explicitly* say that indicates that He was talking about people “helping” with a hypocritical heart?
 - ii. What does He say that *implicitly* indicates hypocrisy?
 - b. Jesus asks, “Why do you look at the *speck* in your brother’s eye...?”
 - i. What kinds of issues or problems was Jesus talking about that people might notice?
 - ii. What kinds of issues or problems are you most likely to take note of in others’ lives?
 - c. Reread verse 3.
 - i. What is the key problem that Jesus identifies as hypocritical?
 - ii. Have there been times in your life when you have been unable or unwilling to see problems you’ve had?
 - iii. What kept you or keeps you from taking note of your “logs”?
 - d. Reread verse 4.
 - i. What “help” is this person offering?
 - ii. Why is this not really “help”?
 - iii. What is the key problem that Jesus identifies as hypocritical?
 - iv. What might keep you from being willing to remove “logs” from your eye?
2. When is your help made more helpful?
 - a. Read verse 5.
 - i. What does Jesus say that indicates that giving help is a good thing?
 - ii. How do Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 relate to this idea?
 - b. Reread verses 3-5.
 - i. How often does Jesus repeat the idea of specks and logs?
 - ii. Why do you think He repeats Himself?
 - iii. What would change in terms of your attitude or approach if you viewed your problems as significantly greater than the person’s you are correcting?
 - iv. How will looking up at God rather than out at people change your perspective with respect to the significance of your sin in comparison to other’s?

- c. Reread verse 5.
 - i. What is the proper order that Jesus teaches when correction is necessary?
 - ii. Why is it so important for you to deal with your own issues first before going to correct another?
 - iii. How will this help you? How will it help the person you're correcting?
- d. Read Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 again.
 - i. When do Jesus and Paul say that correction or reproof is necessary?
 - ii. According to Matthew 18:15, what is the goal of your correction? What is the goal in Galatians 6:1?
 - iii. What are you tempted to make your goal when you correct or reprove others?
 - iv. What would change if your goal were focused on the good of the other person?
- e. What is the key heart difference between the hypocrite and the careful helper?

3. What will keep your help from becoming wasteful?

- a. Read verse 6.

This verse includes four phrases arranged in a poetic formula. Each phrase can be identified by a letter that indicates its connection to the others. For example, the first phrase can be identified with an "A", the second with a "B", and so on. What we find is that the formula Jesus used was ABBA. In other words, the first and last phrases, and the middle two phrases are meant to go together. This results in the following:

(A) Do not give what is holy to dogs, or (A) they will turn and tear you to pieces.

(B) Do not throw your pearls to swine, or (B) they will trample them under their feet.

- b. Read Philippians 3:2 and Revelation 22:15.
 - i. How might these passages help us identify who the "dogs" are?
 - ii. According to Matt. 7:6, how do the dogs respond to what is given them?
 - iii. How might this help us to better identify "dogs" and their attitude?
- c. Read 2 Peter 2:22.
 - i. What happened to this sow before she returned to the mud?
 - ii. What does this passage say about what hogs love?
 - iii. How does this sow's behavior relate to the behavior of the swine in Matt. 7:6?

- d. Reread verse 6.
 - i. What does Jesus tell us not to give to dogs? To hogs?
 - ii. How might Matthew 13:44-46 help identify these things?

At a minimum, I think we can say from this verse that we ought not to continue to argue theology or even gospel truths with people who are persistently hostile and unwilling to listen. Jesus also seems to teach that we need to evaluate the appropriateness of continuing to spend precious time with those who love their sin and will not listen to gospel instruction.

- e. Additional questions related to Matt. 7:6.
 - i. How might Matthew 18:17 relate to this passage?
 - ii. What is Paul's instruction in Titus 3:10, and how does this relate?
 - iii. Why might it be "wasteful" to continue to invest time with those who are obviously hostile to or dismissive of gospel instruction?
 - iv. Why is it so important that we exercise great caution before identifying someone as a "dog" or a "hog"? How might the church help with this?

Some Practical Application:

- As you meditate on what Jesus teaches in these passages, what most convicts you?
- Are there any relational conflicts that you have right now that you need to rethink? Do you need to go and seek anyone's forgiveness?
- When are you most tempted to become critical of others? How do you most commonly express this judgmentalism (e.g. dwelling on it in our own mind, telling others, etc.)?
- Are you willing to own your critical heart and to repent and seek for holiness in this area?