

# Questions Jesus Asked: Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye?

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Preacher: Canon David Short

- [ 0 : 00 ] We have gathered here this morning and we have questions for you. We know that your questions for us are much more important. And so as we look at Jesus' questions for us today, we pray that you would open our eyes and help us to see ourselves clearly, see ourselves as you do, and see our brothers and sisters as you do.
- We pray this in your name. Amen. Well, if you would like to open the Bible to Matthew chapter 7, which Manya just read for us.
- Last week we began looking at some of the questions that Jesus has for us and I've done extensive research this week on what questions we have for God and I've found some very profound questions that are asked by children.
- These are genuine questions from children and they go to very deep topics, like ethical conundrums. Dear God, I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church.
- Is that okay? Another question on biblical interpretation. Dear God, I read the Bible. What does beget mean? Nobody will tell me.
- [ 1 : 13 ] Questions about sin and judgment. Dear God, is it true my father won't get in heaven if he uses golf words in the house? I love that. And often the questions are really advice for God dressed up.
- Here's one. Dear God, thank you for my baby brother. What I prayed for was a puppy. And my favorite of all, dear God, if we come back as something, please don't let me be Jennifer Horton because I hate her.
- I think that was a confession. Well, we do have questions for God. We have real questions, of course. And as we began to see last week, Jesus has questions for us.
- And his are infinitely more important. And the question today is a real stinger. Look down at Matthew 7, verse 3. Jesus asks this question.
- Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Very good question, isn't it?
- [ 2 : 21 ] Why is it we are so fast to see faults in other people, but so slow to see them in ourselves? And why is it that we think the faults of other people are so big and ours are so forgivable?
- Well, I just want to bring us back into the context. If you turn back to chapter 5, this is from the Sermon on the Mount, these three chapters, Jesus preaching. Chapter 5, 6 and 7.
- If you look at 5, 1, remember Jesus is speaking to disciples. He's speaking to people who have begun to follow him. And one of the main ideas in the sermon is the idea of righteousness.
- So if you look down in 5, verse 6, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, Jesus says, for they shall be satisfied.

In other words, he says, we're all starving and thirsting for righteousness, but there's a righteousness in us. We have a sort of our own righteousness, but our appetite is beyond that.

[ 3 : 26 ] All our own righteousness doesn't satisfy. We need a different kind of righteousness that needs to satisfy, you see. Or drop down to chapter 5, verse 20, over the page.

I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Scribes and the Pharisees were hall of fame, good guy, moral, upstanding people who tried never to do anything wrong.

Jesus says, unless your righteousness exceeds, way, far better than that. And the question is, where is this righteousness going to come from? Turn over to chapter 6, verse 33, verse we looked at last week very briefly.

It's a command. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things will be added to you.

God's own righteousness. This is why Christ has come. He has come to bring us to God. And in Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is available to us because what Jesus does, he brings us into a spiritual family by new birth where we are able to call God our Father in heaven.

[ 4 : 45 ] And the main point of the Sermon on the Mount is the radical difference that's going to make in day-by-day living. Relating to God as our Heavenly Father, having his righteousness in our life, you and I will be different.

If someone slaps you on one cheek, you turn the other. If someone asks to borrow something, you give them more. You and I will be different. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away.

It's radical stuff. If you read through the Sermon on the Mount, what Jesus is doing, he's applying this relationship and this righteousness to all sorts of things. The way we deal with those who hate us.

The way we deal with our sexual desire. The way we deal with our desire for revenge. The way we deal with money. The way we pray. The way we deal with anxiety. But here in chapter 7, Jesus moves across a line.

And he says, this new relationship with God as Heavenly Father and this new righteousness is going to affect the way we relate to each other. To other brothers and sisters in the family of God.

[ 5 : 50 ] You're not an only child. You've been adopted by God into a spiritual family. You've been given a spiritual DNA, as it were. And we belong together. The problem, and I don't know if you've noticed this or not, but the problem is our natural tendency is still there to see faults in others and not to see faults in ourselves.

And this question that Jesus asks us here goes right to the heart of what it is that kills community. Kills families.

What do we do about the fact that we as a Christian community are meant to be radically different from other communities, but there's still conflict and there's still sin and there's still disagreement and disappointment with one another.

At least, I'm very disappointed in you. You get the idea. And I think in this little passage, Jesus takes us to the two key barriers to community life.

His questions open up the two key barriers that will undermine the family of God. And the first is judgmentalism, verses one to two.

[ 7 : 02 ] I'll read them again. Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. This has to be one of the most abused, tortured, twisted, misused statements of Jesus ever.

Leon Tolstoy said that Christ absolutely bans the human institution of the law courts. What does Jesus mean? Does he mean that Christians should never have, that we should never evaluate anything negatively?

Or we should never express an opinion that may offend or hurt people's feelings? I think you can hear people outside the church cheering Jesus on here because I think a lot of people think that Christians are just unloving, rude and judgmental.

A couple of years ago there was a book published called Un-Christian and it says that Christianity in North America has an image problem. We Christians are seen as unloving and judgmental.

And I think we've got to have sympathy with this point of view because there are, there's truth in it and I don't need I don't need to remind you about some of the more mean, narrow-minded, nasty things Christians do and say.

[ 8 : 25 ] The most egregious is probably you've heard of this church, the West Borough Baptist Church in the States where they they picket funerals with signs saying God hates fags and signs thank God for 9-11.

I mean they're just they're, that's hateful. That's not Christian. Two weeks ago someone told me St. John's, Vancouver you, you're a very judgmental church and I wish I'd been preparing this passage because I would have said that's a very judgmental thing to say.

But you know how difficult it is you know a week later you think of these things. Well I think we as Christians have a difficult time with tolerance.

I think we have a conflicted relationship with tolerance and the reason is that tolerance today ain't what it used to be. There's an old tolerance and there is a new tolerance and they're different.

The old tolerance said this I accept you and I respect you but not necessarily what you believe. the new tolerance says I accept you which means I must accept what you believe to be valid.

[ 9 : 45 ] The old tolerance says I recognize and respect you but I do not think all beliefs are equally valid. The new tolerance says the only way I can truly respect you is to say all beliefs are equally valid.

You see the old tolerance said there is truth and it matters. The new tolerance says we can't really know if there is a truth. So under the old tolerance there was such a thing as a distinction between right and wrong and good and evil and light and dark and the best way forward for us is to listen respectfully to one another and to seek the truth.

But under the new tolerance all belief and all opinion must be equally valid and the worst thing you can do is to say something is wrong or evil and what's happened is the tolerance has been elevated to become a very you know like a king virtue and what that means is we have to pretend that everything is equally true.

But when you cut tolerance away from a biblical basis of what's right and wrong in the end it does rule and when it rules what happens is the greatest possible sin that you and I can commit is intolerance.

Intolerance has to be eradicated at all costs. So Professor Leslie Armoire who's the Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa says this Our idea is that to be a virtuous citizen is to be one who tolerates everything except intolerance.

[ 11 : 20 ] Now I don't know whether you've thought about this but there's an inherent contradiction here and forgive me for this but when I was at university I studied a school of thought called logical positivism.

I don't know if this still does the rounds or not. Logical positivism was a group of scholars and scientists in the earlier 20th century centred in Vienna and they were most impressed by the scientific method and by scientific progress and they said we want to have one central principle around which everything falls everything is true and this was their central principle the only thing which is true is that which is scientifically verifiable.

Can you see the problem? That statement is not scientifically verifiable. So some followers later on came up with another statement the only thing that is true is what is scientifically verifiable except this statement.

And I think the same thing is happening with tolerance. In 1995 the United Nations Declaration of Principles on Tolerance says tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism.

It's a very dogmatic and absolutist stance isn't it? You see? So what does Jesus mean do not judge? Does he mean we should never voice any opinion unless it's positive and nice?

[ 12 : 47 ] If that's true Jesus disobeys his own teaching. Just look back at 522 for a moment. I say to you says Jesus in 522 that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment whoever insults his brother will be liable to counsel and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire.

Try that at a dinner conversation. Or look down in chapter 7 at verse 15 and now he's talking about you and me. He says beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly in ravenous wolves.

If you go on in the gospels Jesus in another gospel commands us to judge. He says don't judge by outward appearance but judge by right judgment. And so much of the Sermon on the Mount is a call for us to discern and to decide and to use our critical faculties that God has given us.

What does Jesus mean judge not? Well I think the clue is in verses 3, 4 and 5 where three times Jesus speaks about our brother, our brother, our brother.

In other words Jesus is talking about how you treat one another inside the family of God. How you treat other people in this room. He wants us to know the person sitting beside you and in front of you.

[ 14 : 18 ] That person is your brother, your sister and they belong to your heavenly father and when you deal with that person you are dealing with God who stands behind them so that they already have a judge.

Thank you very much. So when Jesus says judge not that you will be not judged, he's not talking about how other people are going to treat us. Don't judge them or else you will get it back and it just makes sense not to do that.

No, no, no. The judgment coming back is not from those but from God, the God who stands behind them. Imagine, just say I've got a friend called Simon and he's just had a baby and he's standing here with his baby in his arms but the baby annoys me.

I don't know, it's hard to believe. It's always crying and it can't take care of itself and I hate the way it wears its bib and kicks its shoes off and you know I just, it's always sucking its thumb.

You understand? It's an illustration, okay? Stop it. You see, if I start expressing my opinions about the baby, who am I going to have to deal with?

[ 15 : 35 ] It's Simon. That's Simon's child. In the same way, the way you and I speak about and think about each other, the way we talk about each other, you have to deal with God who holds each other in our arms.

So when Jesus says judge not, he's warning us about having a condemning spirit, a tendency to regard each other with contempt, being hypercritical, expecting to find fault in others, hoping to find fault in others, disappointed when you don't find fault in others, delighted when you do.

Taking things that are completely unimportant and making them important, assessing people and what they wear, and how smart you think they are. And Jesus is not just talking about how we communicate with that other person, he's going much deeper about how we think and what's in our heart.

Do you watch other people and do you despise them? Do you think of yourself and do you wish they were more like you? Do you find it easy to see what others are doing are wrong and how they ought to fix it?

Do you have a habit of thinking the worst of people? This is what Jesus is talking about and he says it's sin and it undermines the reality of Christian fellowship. The first thing he says is that when we catch ourselves doing it we need to remind ourselves judge not that you will be not judged but that brother and sister already has a judge and it's not you and it's not me they belong to God.

[ 17 : 12 ] The solution of new tolerance says well we can't say anything or judge anything. Jesus' solution is the opposite. He says actually there is a judge all powerful all knowing all seeing he's God your heavenly father.

Put it positively the basis of our acceptance of each other is not our performance or the external things. The basis of our acceptance of one another is the fact that we're brothers and sisters we have the same heavenly father who is the judge of all.

The wonderful thing about this is that Jesus takes us deeper because judgmentalism is a problem and if we're all feeling it a little bit that's good but Jesus wants to go deeper and he wants to say what's underneath judgmentalism and that's our second point.

And it's self righteousness. Verses three to four. Here is a question. Why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eye but not notice the log that's in your own?

How can you say to your brother let me take the speck out of your eye when there's a log in your own? You hypocrite. I think there's a little bit of astonishment in Jesus' question.

[ 18 : 26 ] Why? Why do you do this? Because Jesus hates hypocrisy. He's already started exposing our religious hypocrisy the way we do you know the religious stuff so that we'll be seen by others.

And now he starts to deal with hypocrisy and how we deal with one another. And I think he means to be funny. Because the speck is the tiniest thing.

It's a moat. It's a midge. It's a little bit of dust. And as Dan stole my thunder in the children's focus the log is a huge beam that the house hangs on.

And the picture is that I'm pretending to be an optometrist and I'm pretending to be very concerned about you and somehow I've found out that there's a speck in your eye. And I come over and there's two great big Douglas furs sticking out of my eye socket and I try and do some delicate surgery.

Because I care. That's what it looks like to God. And he asks why? How can you? Of course he knows why.

[ 19 : 33 ] And that's why he devastatingly says you hypocrite. Hypocrite is an actor on a stage who wears clothes that are not their own.

Who plays a role who who are not themselves. And Jesus is saying we have this tendency to act better than we are.

That underneath judgmentalism and a critical spirit lives the hypocrite. And the hypocrite is the infallible symptom of self-righteousness.

Because I'm blind to who I really am. That's what Jesus is saying. I'm not seeing myself as God does. I see myself as better than you. I would never say that.

You see, so self-righteousness is so deeply ingrained in us that we become so sensitive to it in other people but we can't see it in ourselves. And self-righteousness destroys churches, it destroys families, it destroys marriages.

[ 20 : 39 ] it's a form of insecurity. It's a worry that I'm actually not as good and the way for me to inflate myself is to put others down.

And I've got all sorts of polite and religious ways of doing it. But what I'm doing in my heart is trying to prove my own moral superiority to myself. And so I can find something very unimportant in you and I'll talk to you about it to take the focus of the massive roof beam in my own eye.

Whenever we do that it's a way of saying no to God, it's a way of saying no to his righteousness and it's depending and establishing my own. And I think it's one of the reasons why we love it when hypocrites are publicly exposed in the news.

You know, religious or political leaders who are exposed. There's a corporate howl of hypocrisy which is absolutely right but if you listen carefully to the howl underneath it there's a great big sigh of relief I'm glad it wasn't me.

But Jesus is talking about this form of self-righteousness and hypocrisy inside the family of God. It's a wonderful combination of ignorance of myself and arrogance toward you that I know what you need.

[ 21 : 56 ] And the reason Jesus is saying this is if we don't see ourselves as God does, we don't have any hope of building a new community. He's come to create a new humanity.

He's come to create a different kind of society to give hope for the world. And I don't think this has ever been more important than it is for us right now.

I have here the Vancouver Foundation study of Metro Vancouver from June 2012. Many of you will have come across this. But if you haven't, I just want to refer to it.

The Vancouver Foundation set out to learn what issue people in Metro Vancouver care about the most. And I quote, what we care about the most is a growing sense of isolation and disconnection.

We live increasingly in silos separated by ethnicity, culture, language, income, age and geography. There's a deepening civic malaise that resulted in more people retreating from community activities.

[ 23 : 07 ] And this corrosion of caring and social isolation hurts us personally and hurts the community. It says we are disconnected, isolated and worst of all, indifferent.

I read on. Metro Vancouver is a very hard place to make friends. Of the 24 to 34 year olds, fully one third and it may be up to half, are more often alone than they would like to be.

And struggling to deal with this indifference towards one another, I quote, we found that while people embrace diversity and value, as a value, most people that, most think that people prefer to be with others of the same ethnic group as their own.

It's very interesting. They also found out that people lie, which came as a great shock to them. Let's see if I can find that quote. Oh yes, here it is.

66% of people we surveyed said that they voted in the last municipal election. The actual voter turnout, just under 30%. I thought that was great.

[ 24 : 30 ] However, let's get back to the point. The report struggles with and tries to grapple with this sense of isolation and disconnection and it ties it to tolerance.

It says people in our region are highly tolerant of diversity, community. But fully 65% of those surveyed and you might add 20% to that, agree that while most people are tolerant of different ethnic groups, most prefer to be with people of their same grouping.

They're talking about the new tolerance. And the first casualty in the new tolerance is truth. And they cannot quite say it, but I think they are moving toward the fact that the new tolerance undermines community.

The new tolerance says there is no speck, there is no log, we can't know absolute truth. The best way to get along is without offending anyone, is not to talk about those things.

And it's corrosive to true connection and true community. But Jesus says, if God is a heavenly father, we're meant to be different. There's a different dynamic in our family.

[ 25 : 44 ] We have a God who is blazing in his holiness, but who is able to forgive and to transparently love his enemies. On the cross, Jesus cries, Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do.

And that's where verse five is very important. So let me, this is the last verse I'm going to read. I'm not going to read verse six because I don't know what it means. I went to the staff and they were of no help to me.

Verse five, you hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. What is it that we do?

This is very different than what the new tolerance says we should do and we've learned new tolerance and it's going to take a lot of work. Jesus does want us to help each other after we deal with our own self-righteousness.

he wants us to be a community that belongs to the same heavenly father. We are seeking first his righteousness not our own and that means brothers and sisters that we are a community of self-confessed hypocrites.

[ 26 : 57 ] If you're new to St. John's and you haven't discovered this yet I'll tell you right now we're all hypocrites and there's room for one more. So what does it mean to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness?

It means first take the log out of your own eye before you even begin thinking about anybody else. You can't seek God's righteousness and your own righteousness at the same time and for the sake of brothers and sisters in this community first seek his righteousness because the basis of our acceptance and the basis of us growing together as a community is not your righteousness it's his righteousness you see?

And Jesus expects us to be a community where there's real growth and real change taking place and the largest part of that real growth and real change is the interaction we have with one another. Jesus doesn't say in verse 5 take the log out of your own eye and leave your brother alone you know hakuna matata.

No he says first deal with the log then deal with the speck. The purpose of dealing with the log is so we can see clearly to help our brother and sister. It's love isn't it?

Verse 12 and 7 whatever you wish others would do to you do also to them for this is the law and the prophets. It's to recognize this critical spirit that I have this laser like ability that we all have to spot faults in other people to see yourself as God does to acknowledge your hypocrisy and your self-righteousness and to see everyone in the family as a precious child of God and to face the truth to be honest with God about yourself.

[ 28 : 41 ] And I think if I could summarize what we should do, two pegs on which to hang this, I think Jesus is calling for us to do two things. The first is examine yourself.

Don't apply this to the person sitting next to you. Apply it to yourself. Be honest with God about the log in your own eye. If he's speaking to you, deal with it.

See how judgmental we are to each other. Repent of that critical spirit and hypocrisy towards each other and stop the constant judging. I think we need to examine ourselves on this.

And secondly, we need to engage with each other. Not on the basis of clothing or taste or intelligence or attractiveness or ability, but on the basis of the most profound truth we can say to each other, that through Jesus Christ we have access to the same God in heaven, our Father.

That through him we have access to his own righteousness. And that the person next to you is an eternal brother, an eternal sister. They belong to God who is judge of all.

[ 29 : 47 ] And I imagine a day in six months time, wouldn't it be great if the Vancouver Foundation did another survey and they took in some members from St. John's and they were a bit surprised to find the level of connection and engagement and something very different from indifference.

It would make Jesus happy. We're not on about tolerating each other. We want to love each other. Engage with your brothers and sisters and ask God so that he will allow his righteousness to flow through you to each other in this family.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust. Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.

They shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. lead me in your truth and teach me.

[ 31 : 26 ] For you are the God of my salvation. For you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from old.

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions. according to your steadfast love, remember me. For the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, we're here this morning. Each one of us important to you and important to each other.

as each of us has different attributes and different qualities, we are dependent on each other. But ultimately, we're all dependent on you, Lord.

You are the cornerstone of our lives and the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whom we are all joined together. Help us to see that and to follow your direction in our lives and ministries.

[ 32 : 46 ] Thank you that we can work together in expanding your kingdom as we spread the gospel message in Vancouver and ultimately around the world. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

And as we think of our position in the world, we pray for our leaders, for the Queen, and for all those in government. give each the direction that they need to govern effectively.

For the leaders of our church, we pray. We thank them for their dedication to the spread of the gospel. And we ask for guidance with wisdom in the decisions they make that affect the whole church and her ministry to the world.

It seems there's so much happening these days that affects the witness of the church. Help us each to be strong in prayer for her ministry and strong in our defense of your word.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. For those in our church who minister locally, we ask your blessing. We think of Catherine Grenette and her indigenous people's ministry in Campbell River.



[ 34 : 03 ] Give her continued strength to know how best to reach out and give her the wisdom to see the particular needs that can be met. We also pray for those who minister at St. John's.

I'm grateful for the kids' camp that is finished. And may each child who attended continue to grow closer to you. And may this time be a start for some on a road to full knowledge of you as Savior.

Be with youth leaders and continue to give them the wisdom to know how best to teach and to encourage our youth. For they are the future of our church. We thank each one for their commitment to you.

And for our pastoral staff, we pray for strength to continue in their ministries. And may they feel their strength increase as they continue to rely on you for guidance.

Help us to all support them in prayer and to encourage them on a regular basis. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

[ 35 : 11 ] We think of those things happening in the world these days. A lot of crises. Think of the Middle East and Africa and the political instability there.

The rioting. The massacres. Think of the landslide that just happened in the Nelson area.

Those families affected. Think of all of those affected by the fires in Colorado. Some have lost everything.

We hear of some that said, yes, but I still have my life and my faith. We pray for the Ratnak project. We ask that you would continue to open doors and to help Brian and the leaders to know how you would have them minister and how best to utilize resources.

And for Sharon Thompson, give her wisdom and strength in her current ministry. This week, we pray for two of our local Anik parishes, the Church of the Resurrection in Hope and Good Shepherd in Richmond.

[ 36 : 22 ] And for those in our church who are sick, we pray. We think of Derek, Rowena, Doug, Colton, Ruth, Marguerite, Chris, and Glenn and Linda.

And for those we know ourselves who are not part of this parish, who have special needs, we ask you to consider them as we pray.

We ask you, Lord, to make us continually aware of those who have needs in the church. And at the same time, we thank you for those who meet regularly to pray for our church and its ministries.

We thank you especially for those who have a specific ministry of caring and praying with and for those who are sick and hurting. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

prayer. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

[ 37 : 57 ] Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Amen.