

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: December 7, 2012

Good morning, men!

Audience Members: Good morning.

It's good to be with all of you. Let's stand and sing. We need to have some music. Let's worship for a second before we worship with the Lord. Something that's simple that we know, Blessed Be The Tie That Binds. Do we all know that?

[SINGING]

Father, we come into your presence with great joy because we know that we have always been there. We know that you are omnipresent and we never leave your presence. Lord, I just pray today that it would be more, more about Jesus, more about his grace to see, more, more, more about Jesus, more of his love who died for me. May it be so that this day will be more about you and less about us. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen

Continuing our study of the Sermon on the Mount. Thank you very much for coming out on a very drizzly day. I continue to be amazed and encouraged by your discipline and your commitment. There are a lot of other things one would want to do when you woke up this morning and saw how rainy it was. I do thank you for coming out. Ministry is never one way. It's always two ways. Your presence here is a great encouragement to me, for which I'll be eternally grateful.

We're looking at Matthew 7 of the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7, Jesus sort of summarizes our conduct as kingdom citizens by reminding us what we need and how we find it, how do we treat others and how we're to live as kingdom citizens. One of the things we today last week was about our responsibilities, first of all to the saved, to ourselves, to the ungodly and to the Lord. We talked about the issue of judgment.

Let me speak, just a moment, about...we talked about sanctification. Sanctification just means you've been set apart. That's what the word means. It means you've been set apart. Sanctification is not something that we do. Sanctification is something that we are. What you and I do is we participate in what we are. Look at it...you have your justification, your sanctification, your glorification. If you're in saving faith today, you have been justified by faith. God declares you sinlessly perfect and righteous because you get the credit what his son accomplished at the cross.

You have been justified by faith; therefore, you have peace with God and access to God. You have been justified; now you are sanctified. You are sanctified as a result of that justification. You don't add on top of your justification and become sanctified. Sanctification is not what we do. Sanctification is who we are. You have been set apart to be holy.

What we do, we have the responsibility to participate in that sanctification. Sanctification is not something you and I do. It is something the Holy Spirit does with us, and it's a consequence of your being justified by faith and made regenerate. What you and I do, the maturity that we have is we

exercise our responsibilities by participating in what God is doing in us, and that is he's sanctifying us. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. You and I do not sanctify ourselves. We are mature when we participate in the process of sanctification because that is something that God does.

Don't get the idea that your obedience makes you sanctified. Christ makes you sanctified. The Holy Spirit makes you sanctified. What you and I do by our obedience is we participate in the sanctification process by our being responsible. As Bishop Rogers so wisely said once, that I really appreciate, he said, "You know, the default system is human effort." Is that correct?

Bishop Rogers: That's right.

Our default system is human effort. In other words, I think this. I want to become more mature; therefore, I'm going to rely upon my human effort. That's the normal human response is to think that I can do it. You and I begin to think that I can become sanctified. You already are sanctified if you're in Christ. You and I now are obedient, we are now obedient, exercise our responsibilities to participate in what God is doing. You look back upon your sanctification. It's not something that I'm doing today. I look back upon it and say, "Because I've been justified by faith, I am sanctified. Now my responsibility is to participate in that with the energy of the Holy Spirit because he is the sanctifier and he's the one who does it." You see what I mean?

We have to be very, very careful that we don't build into this idea that says sanctification is based upon my human effort. That's our human default system. Really, what we're doing is we're participating in something that God is doing and has done, and that he has sanctified you by justifying by faith. Now you and I have human responsibility. No question. As we go through chapter 7, we're going to see that some of our responsibilities are to seek, to ask and to knock. Those are things that we do to participate in our sanctification, but they don't make you sanctified. Any effort that you and I have does not sanctify us. It allows us to participate in what God is doing and has done. You have been justified by faith. You are sanctified. And the next is this—you will be glorified. Three verb tenses. Have been, are and will be. That's how we understand our life.

As we look at the process as we go through Matthew 7, one of the things that we do in the participation of our sanctification process, if you would, because that is what the Holy Spirit does. We have human responsibility. There are certain things that we do to exercise and reveal our sanctification. That's what obedience does. It doesn't achieve your sanctification; it reveals it. It says I am sanctified by looking at my conduct.

We examine ourselves. We evaluate ourselves. The Scripture says, "Do not judge, lest ye be judged." The word judged there means have a critical spirit to find a fault; to have a critical spirit in order to find fault. We are... part of our sanctification process is we are not to judge, lest we be judged. One of the reasons that we do not judge is because Scripture has already prejudged everything. There's nothing left for us to judge. I can't judge the homosexual issue. It's already been done. I can't judge same sex marriages. It's already been done. All the issues that we face in life have already been prejudged by the Scripture. That's why you and I have not been given the ministry of judgment. There's nothing to judge. It's already happened.

The only thing that we're supposed to do is to begin to judge ourselves. Examine ourselves. We need to explore ourselves. We need to test ourselves. As the Scripture says, Paul tells us in Corinthians, "Test

yourself to see whether or not your faith.” That’s an evaluation. That’s a judgment. I test myself to see whether or not I’m in the faith.

When we talk about Matthew 7, we first start looking about the judgment we have and that we are to judge ourselves and examine ourselves. We don’t do it with a critical spirit; we do it with a discerning spirit. One of the great problems we have in the church today in America, in my judgment, is we’ve lost the spirit of discernment.

As we talked last week, in Matthew 7:1-8, we shall be judged; therefore, we need to test ourselves to see whether or not I’m in the faith. Test yourself. How do you do that? Well, I would say you don’t look back and say, “Oh, I went forward 25 years ago at a Billy Graham Crusade,” although that may have been the point of your conversion. I’m not belittling that. But that is not the evidence of your conversion. The evidence of your conversion is what’s going on in your life right now. You test yourself.

Go to the book of 1 John. There are seven tests and seven traits of a true believer. Seven tests and seven traits of a true believer. Test yourself. That’s an examination. That’s a self-examination. Let me give these tests. Let me give the verses. In 1 John, the seven tests of someone who has saving faith—1 John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9 and 4:20. Turn with me to 1 John just for a moment. I’ll give you an example of what I mean because they all have the same phrase.

Let’s go to verses 6, 8 and 10 just for an illustration. “If we say we have fellowship with him.” Every one of these things, every one of these tests, are going to start with this phrase, “if we say.” In other words, it means if I confess. If I say that I have true saving faith, and notice the contrast, and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. That’s a test. Do you say that you have saving faith? What’s the conduct of your life? Does it reveal it? That’s an examination. You need to take an examination of yourself. This is a test. You judge yourself—not critically to find fault, but to see the true position you have in your saving faith.

Notice verse 8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” There again, the same phrase, “if we say.” In other words, it’s this. Here’s the summary of the book of 1 John. If you say you do and you do, you are. If you say you do and you don’t, you’re not. That’s 1 John. If you say you do—have saving faith—and you do the things the Scripture says, then you are. If you say you do and you don’t do the things the Scripture says, then you’re not. The summary of 1 John is simply this—if you say you do and you do, you are, a believer. Conversely, if you say you do and you don’t, you’re not. That’s what Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “Test yourselves to see whether or not you’re and the faith.” That’s one test we need to do to examine ourselves.

Another series of verses in 1 John that can be very helpful would be the traits of somebody who’s been truly born again. What are the traits of somebody who’s been truly reborn? Let me give you the verses—1 John 2:29; 3:9, 14; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. These are the traits. The first were the tests—if you say. Here are the traits. Evidence. Examine yourselves. This is the evidence of true saving faith.

Let’s take a look at 1 John 2:29 to give you an example. Every one of these is going to have the little phrase, “is born of him,” meaning you’ve been reborn. Notice 1 John 2:29, “If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.” That’s a trait of somebody who’s been reborn.

Take a look at 1 John 3:9, “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning” Practicing of sinning there means continually, habitually, doing it repeatedly. It doesn’t mean that you’re sinlessly perfect. You get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ—that’s justification. This does not mean that you live a sinlessly perfect life. We saw one of the first tests of true saving faith was this—if you say you have no sin, you’re a liar. John is not talking about living a sinlessly perfect life. That’s why you’re justified by faith alone, because it’s impossible for us to do that. Therefore, God does something that we can’t do for ourselves, and that is he gives you credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ because you can’t do that in your own human effort.

1 John 3:9, “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.” You see, in those traits, you see the phrase “born of God.” One of the things that we need to do, brothers, is this. When the Scripture says, “Do not judge, lest ye be judged,” the first person you want to examine if yourself. Until you do that, you’re no value to anybody else.

As we saw last week, the first thing that we need to do is we realize that we will be judged. The first thing that we do is recognize...

Ted: *I didn't mean to interrupt you mid-sentence.*

No, that’s fine. Go ahead. I need to breathe.

Ted: *Bishop Rogers and I actually were talking about these very verses before we started.*

Were you really?

Ted: *When you mentioned the verses, I said, I hate it when Bishop Rogers is right. {LAUGHTER}*

Bishop Rogers: *He's in good shape because it doesn't happen very often.*

Ted: *The thing I was questioning is, and I've questioned this kind of thing before, is this no one born of God practices sin. We can say, "Well, I'm trying not to," or "I'm not doing as bad as I was," but in fact, I would say about myself, and I suspect others could say, that indeed, there are sins that we continue to practice, and will probably practice, in some area, or in several areas, until we die.*

I agree. That’s Romans 6 and 7.

Ted: *To me, it's a disturbing verse.*

It is, very disturbing, because it exposes us. It exposes the fallacy of our human effort. It exposes our default system, which basically says, “I think I can do it.” Let me take you to Luke 18. Ted’s got a great point. Guys, there are sins that I repeatedly commit, and I just wish I didn’t do it. But I’m always doing them. My sin of presumption. I presume upon God’s grace too much. That’s something that I do every day, and it grieves my soul. But every day I do it. I’m constantly saying I know the grace of God; therefore, I know I’m in Christ. So I have that little thought. I have that intention. It’s erroneous and sinful. You see, that’s just repetitiously...now, the fact is that you’re aware of it and you’re dealing with it. That’s what John is saying. When he says, “you practice sin,” there are going to be things that you’re

going to do forever, but the realization is I'm doing it, and you're always trying to deal with it. That's part of the struggle. That's the fight. Sanctification is a fight, but it's produced by the Holy Spirit, not in your human effort.

Audience Member: *When you said Romans 6 and 7 is [UNCLEAR].*

Yes. Paul says, "Why do I do the things that I don't want to do?" That's exactly what Ted said. I find there are two laws—laws in my flesh and the law of the spirit that says, "Why do I do that?" One of the things of our evaluation is we need to be realistic...go to Luke 18 for a moment.

Are you tracking with me on this, guys? Let's go to Luke 18:9. Here's the contrast between the Pharisee and the publican. "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves," whose default system was this—human effort. That's the point of this parable. He's exposing people, the Pharisees, by name, whose default system, as Bishop Rogers says, is human effort. It's critical that you understand that. Sanctification is not about human effort. It's about the grace and work of the Holy Spirit in us. You can't take credit for your obedience. Sanctification is something that God does in us, and we participate with him, and we reveal our sanctification by our struggle. You see, if you didn't have that struggle, you wouldn't be sanctified. The reason you struggle is because you are sanctified. You can't resort back to your default system of human effort.

"He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous," have viewed others with contempt. That's judgment. You see, that's what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge."

Brian: *I think the two sides of, hey, I'm trying in my own effort versus relying on God's grace, is really saying the same thing. Does it come down to motivation, because the Pharisees here, they're striving and adding these 613 rules to show how righteous they are, outwardly, so people would view them as righteous? Whereas people fighting in that sanctification of fighting out of a motivation of love and gratitude, and it's a self-will or self-discipline to want to obey because of what you've been given? Is that [UNCLEAR]...*

Uhh, yeah. That's good enough. Let me read on. Let me read the rest of this because it'll answer your question. Let me start all over. "9He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves," their default system of human effort, "that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week,' here's what I do to earn my sanctification, 'I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' That was his attitude. You see, that is the description of somebody's who's operating on their default system of human effort. That doesn't achieve sanctification at all. We read the rest of the parable, "13But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18: 9-14)

Let me show you the contrast. Jesus says the one who just said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," that's a self-examination. It's not relying upon your default system of human effort. Notice, he went away justified. The other guy went away self-satisfied. See the difference? Who was he trying to

impress? Himself and other people. That's what human effort does. Human effort is really design is to attempt to impress other people. Jesus says this guy who just looked at himself in reality, saw himself the way he really is, and said, "Lord, yes, I struggle with all this. But just have mercy on me, a sinner." You see, that may be the most powerful prayer that we can say every day, "Lord, just have mercy." That's what I prayed today coming up here in the car, "Lord, I don't know what to pray today. Just be merciful to me, a sinner."

Tom: I think another aspect of sin is that [UNCLEAR] do it because it makes us feel good. It feels good because that's our nature as a human being, and God has given us a new nature [UNCLEAR].

We're no longer in Adam; you're now in Christ. There's a difference.

Sig: In the context of being lead or being written at the time shortly after Christ's resurrection, doesn't a lot of the reference point to the fact if we continually keep on sinning, like it says in Hebrews, aren't they referring to men talking to their fellow Jews saying if we don't see Christ as the final sacrifice, to make us right with God, if we deliberately keep saying we're going to go back to our own ways, and don't acknowledge Christ as the Savior, there is no hope. There is no other sacrifice. There is nothing else we can do. It's because of Christ...if we don't acknowledge him, what else can we do?

You have a good point there. One of the things we need to do in self-examination is don't beat yourself down so much that you get discouraged and become imbalanced. When you get that way, what do you need to do? Quit looking at yourself and look to whom? Look to Christ.

You see, Satan is the great deceiver. (Revelation 12:10-11) The great deceiver, the accuser of the brethren. You see, his primary technique is when you and I begin to examine ourselves as we become more mature in the sanctification process of having God work in us and we examine ourselves, the tendency is going to be imbalance because Satan is going to come along and say, "Hey, you're doing that again, aren't you? You've been doing that now for 47 years. How in the world can God use you, you rotten sinner?"

When I start imbalanced and focus on me, I become discouraged, and as the Scripture says, you faint. The word faint means you give up and become discouraged. It doesn't mean you pass out because of lack of oxygen. Look at Luke 18:1. The New American Standard says this, "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." The ESV translates that faint. Literally that means to give up and lose heart.

The options are this—give up and lose heart or pray. There are your two choices. When you're examining yourself, and the evil one comes along and begins to highlight all these sins back upon your life, and you begin to think, "How can he use me? I'm not as qualified as so and so. I don't have this. I don't have that. I don't have this experience." You see, sometimes you've got to be very careful that you become so imbalanced the you focus on yourself, and at that point, you have to do exactly what Sig just said. You've got to focus on Christ. Take your mind off of yourself and put it on him. That's how you achieve the balance.

The other side is rationalization, "I'm trying. I'm doing my best. God loves me. I can presume upon his grace." Now that's me. [UNCLEAR] great sin. I hate to confess it. But I do it every day. I presume too much upon his grace and his mercy. That's why one of the prayers I'm saying every is just remind

myself. It doesn't need to be verbose and theological. It's just simply saying, "Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner." I'm just realizing that's the best thing I can say every day. That's the best thing I can say.

Be careful. You're examining yourself and you go through these tests and these traits. Be careful that you don't become imbalanced and let the deceiver come along and accuse you of your worth or deceive you of your value. That's what he'll do. "How can you be used? You think God can use you? Look what you've been doing for 47 years. My goodness! You have the audacity to think that he can use you?" That's when you have to say, "Get behind me, Satan!" and say, "Lord! You've paid for that. I'm justified by faith. I have peace with God and access." You've got to remind yourselves of the truth.

***Audience Member:** I think presumption is the issue when you're talking about self-examination that causes us to faint. I think more often than not, people don't examine themselves to see how really bad they are. But it's not that I reflect on myself and see how sinful I really am. When I faint is when I then presume that God can't use me.*

Yeah. That's presumption. Presumption can be either way. Presuming upon God's grace and presuming that he can't use me. We've got to realize this. You have been justified by faith alone, you are sanctified and you will be glorified. That's the pilgrimage that we have as a believer. You have been sanctified by the grace of God. You're now regenerate. Therefore, you are sanctified. What you and I do is in the battle of life, we manifest and participate in what God is doing called sanctification. My obedience does not achieve my sanctification. It expresses it. It reveals it. That's called maturity.

Maturity is more of Christ and less of me. We do not become more spiritual; we become more mature. Maturity is part of that struggle that we have, that we have in our process. We've got to realize this—our motivation for obedience in sanctification is not to achieve it; it's to express it, with gratitude. Just, I'm grateful for what you've done for me, that I can't do myself, and I'm going to resist my human default system, which is human effort. I'm going to become more childlike.

Let me show you another example in Luke 18:15-17, about children, "¹⁵And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they *began* rebuking them. ¹⁶But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

There's a difference between being childlike and being childish. He's saying you need to come...and the illustration, notice, it's a comparison between the publican and the Pharisee. Childish and childlike. There's a comparison. The reason he has this illustration of the children right after is because he said, "The publican, the tax collector, was childlike. He came in absolute faith and dependence." That's what a child does. A childlike expression of life is one of absolute dependence. That was the publican.

The Pharisee is childish, thinking that, "It's mine. I can do it myself." You see, that's the ego-centered, give it to me entitlement mentality that child has. The reason he has this illustration of the children right after is because he's highlighting the difference between the publican and Pharisee. The publican, the tax collector, is childlike. A childlike expression is one of absolute faith, dependency and trust. That was the publican, the tax collector, because this is all he said, "God have mercy on me, the sinner." You see, that's dependency. It's not human effort. It's not his default system.

Jesus is using the illustration right now of children in saying, “Childlikeness is like the tax collector.” Absolute faith, dependency, trust. Childish is like the Pharisee, relying upon human effort because, “I think I can make the difference,” because it’s one of pride, ego and I’m entitled to it; it’s mine. You see, the contrast, the beauty of the illustration of the children is it’s a comparison of what the publican and the Pharisee were. He’s just illustrating the difference between our being childlike and our being childish.

Notice Luke 18:17, “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child.” That means an absolute trust, dependency and faith, “will not enter it *at all*.” At all. Now notice, that’s a reflection back to the Pharisee, who went away self-satisfied, but he didn’t go away justified. It was the man who said, “God have mercy on me, the sinner,” that went away justified. That’s the one who has the childlike faith. The childish faith is like the Pharisee who said, “I’m not like the other people.”

Brothers, when we talk about judging one another, the word judgment there means to have a critical spirit, to find fault. What we need to do is, as the Scripture tells us in Matthew 7:1-8, we are to evaluate, examine ourselves. I’ve just given you some insights on how one might do that, by going to the book of 1 John.

One of the reasons we’re told that we are to examine ourselves, to judge ourselves, if you would, but not with a critical spirit, with a discerning spirit, and the discerning might be the difference between justification and presumption. You can’t justify your sin, nor can you presume that God is going to work through you. You’ve got to deal with that. The reason you do that is so that we must see clearly to help others. You’ll see that in verses 3-5. The reason that you and I examine ourselves is so we can be useful to other people.

***Audience Member:** Could you explain a little bit more into 1 Corinthians 5, where it talks about [UNCLEAR] discerning versus a critical [UNCLEAR]...*

In 1 Corinthians 5?

***Audience Member:** In chapter 5 it says, “Do not judge those outside the church, but inside the church.”*

We have to realize this—all things have already been prejudged; even somebody else’s soul. You and I can’t judge that. When it says don’t judge the outsiders, you and I don’t know if they have saving faith or not. We have never been given the ministry of checking somebody’s motives. We have been given the instruction to examine the fruit of the person’s life, to examine and evaluate the consequences of their choices, but not to look at their motives. You and I have never been given the responsibility to be a motive checker. You can’t do that to people outside the church. You just don’t know their motive, and so you can’t have a critical spirit about them.

Inside the church, we are to examine one another so that we preserve the truths of Scripture and the holy things that God has given us. That is part of biblical church discipline. The three keys to the kingdom are the Gospel, the sacraments and church discipline. Those are the three keys to the kingdom. That means we need to examine...the reason you examine is to purify the church, to keep the church holy.

The reason God has a church is to have a demonstration of holiness, a demonstration of sanctification, of what he’s accomplishing in people. We examine one another inside the church. It doesn’t mean that

you're legalistic. That's not what I'm saying. All I'm saying is we'll get into this when we say...the fruits will reveal it.

We inside the church must reveal. It's like when you're picking elders and identifying elders. You and I don't vote on elders. You don't pick elders. You set them apart. God's qualified them. You don't qualify an elder. God qualifies them. What you do is identify them. You say, "Oh there's one. Oh there's another one. I'm not sure here. Yeah, maybe over there." You see, God qualifies church leadership. We don't do that just upon a person's position in life. You look at the instructions on choosing elders and deacons. There's a whole list. One of those is, "Do you desire the office?" Do you desire the office? That's one of the qualifications. If you don't desire the office, you're not qualified. Maybe you don't have that desire. That's okay. God qualifies church leadership.

What we do inside the church is we just recognize those whom God is setting apart for the unique ministries that we have. We don't go make them happen and say we need 12 people to sign up and be an elder. That's why I'm not a strong proponent of having in your by-laws a certain number. What if you only have four qualified? That means you've got eight unqualified. You've got 2/3 of your leadership is not qualified. What do you think is going to happen? Not a whole lot. {LAUGHTER}

I've always been a strong proponent, is I'll go with the numbers that God qualifies. It may be four one year and it might be five the next year. It might be three the year after that. But you don't have a set number. You've got to have 12. Gotta have 15. Whatever it says. We've got to be very, very careful. Inside the church, we look at their fruit. Outside the church, you don't check their motive. Is that helpful?

***Audience Member:** Yeah, cause it was talking about [UNCLEAR] and it ways we are to judge [UNCLEAR]...*

That's right. You don't do it with a critical spirit; you do it for the sake of purity of the church. Church discipline is not something you do to a person; it is something that God works in a person. It's not something we do; it's something that God works in a person.

Go to Galatians 6:1. Boy, you guys are all over the place today. {LAUGHTER} Either that or I'm all over the place today. Whichever. Well, we prayed that it would be more about Jesus and less of us, and I hope that's happening. Now, here's a corollary to our examining the fruits of believers inside the church. Luke 6:1, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."

Before you can go to somebody else, you've got to look at yourself. That's judgment. That's not with a critical spirit; it's with a discerning spirit. That means before I go point out somebody else's flaw, what do I do? I've got to take the boulder out of my own eye before I go take the speak out of his eye. I've got a two-by-four in my own eye. Before I go do that, I need to remove that before I do the speck in somebody else's eye. Do you see that? That's means you do it with a spirit of gentleness. You've got to examine yourself first. That's what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7. You've got to understand what judgment means. It means discernment. It means examination. It means evaluation. It doesn't mean having a critical spirit to find fault. That's what it means.

I find it interesting that he uses, in Matthew 7, if we can go back there...the idea of using the eye as an

illustration. I think for a couple of reasons, perhaps. One reason might be that the eye is one of the most sensitive ingredients of the human life. It's really very, very sensitive. What he's saying is you've got to be sensitive when you examine yourself. You've got to be careful and make sure that you remove the boulder or the two-by-four out of your own eye before you take the speck of somebody else's.

Then also I think in Matthew 7, Jesus uses the illustration, and actually I'm in Matthew 6:22-23, he uses the illustration of the eye to teach us how to have a spiritual outlook on life. In other words, you and I have a spiritual outlook on life because it comes through the eyes because of how we see. That reveals the soul. I think there is some significance here about using the eye as the point of entry because biblically, the eye is the means of describing how you view spiritual life. Do you have a Christian world view or do you have a temporal world view? It all comes...the idea of using the eye is just to help us. How do you look at things? How do you see things?

Seeing things means more than just visually seeing an object. It means to understand. It means to gain the knowledge of. It's our understanding of knowledge, understanding...wisdom, knowledge and understanding. You see, when we see something...

That's why Jesus, when he said to Nicodemus in John 3, "Unless something supernatural happens to you, Nicodemus, unless you're born from above, you can't even see the kingdom." The word see means more than just seeing a point. It means seeing how to get there. Understanding how I get there. It means understanding what it's about. It means understanding the benefits of it. It's much more than just a visuality. It's really an understanding of the expressiveness of what that means.

Jesus uses here in Matthew 6 and Matthew, reminding us to be sensitive as to how we look at things through the vision of life, because of how we understand things. Again, it's a reformation and an explanation and an illustration of what I would call, be discernment.

We must not pass judgment on others' motives. We should examine their actions and their attitudes, but we have not been given the ministry of being motive checkers. The image of the eye also teaches us another truth, I think. That means we must exercise extreme love and tenderness when we seek to help other people. (Ephesians 4:15) In other words, because...the object of the eye is probably the most tender aspect of our physical being. It's very, very sensitive. I think as we look at people, we need to do it with sensitivity and compassion. That would be Galatians 6. Examine yourself before you go to somebody else.

The whole issue here in these first seven or eight verses is our being discerning, examining ourselves. We cannot be useful to somebody else until what? We remove the plank out of our own eye. Then you can be helpful to somebody else. You can help them remove the speck from their own eye. You've got to deal with yourself before you're going to be useful. If you want to be useful to somebody, be used for the kingdom, you've got to examine yourself. Evaluate yourself. We've done that by looking at the tests and the traits of 1 John.

With that in mind, we'll pick up next week. I'd like you to read verses 6-20, and we'll talk about our judgment of others. We need to give some careful consideration to what this means about our responsibility to manage the holy things that God has given us. As God's people, we are privileged to handle and manage the holy things that God gives us. He's entrusted to us the precious truths of the Word of God. We must regard them carefully. That means how do I respond to certain people who may

be different? You don't have a canned speech just for everybody. We need to talk about that, because as he says, you don't throw your pearls before swine. What does that mean? That has something to do with our responsibility of how we handle biblical truth. We may just give it to everybody, because we need to find out what that means. That's what we'll talk about next week. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that hopefully Lord Jesus, this was more about you and not about us. Father, remind us again to fight through the life struggles that we go through. Give us the grace not to fall back upon our human default system, which is our human effort, but rather, may we be childlike in our faith, our trust, and our dependency, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. All the Brave Men said...Amen!