





Into The Ditch

Matthew 7:1-7
Matthew 15:14
Luke 6:39-42

Teachings of Jesus

This is part of the teaching Jesus taught that we call the “Sermon on the Mount.”

Matthew and Luke construct the passages slightly differently, but they both reference the same sermon. We can see from the passage in Luke that the “blind leading the blind” passage is clearly connected to the passage on judging others and looking at your own eyes first. Matthew separates these in chapter 7 and chapter 15, but there is more information in Matthew 7 and it will be easier to teach from this passage, and reference the verse in Matthew 15.

Jesus was speaking of the Pharisees, and he said, ...They are blind leaders of the blind. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

Discuss:

What does this mean?

Would you ask a blind man for directions? Would you ask a blind man to lead you somewhere you had never been? This would not be wise. You want someone to lead you and guide you who can see what is ahead. Someone who can see where you are going.

The Pharisees were the respected Jewish leaders of their day. They were the leaders in the church. They were studied and knew the scriptures, especially the Torah, which was the law of Moses, and all the Talmud, which were the writings and additional laws they put into place to explain and enforce the Torah, or Mosaic law.

Although respected and knowledgeable, the Pharisees were very proud. They had allowed their hearts to harden and puffed themselves up. They thought of themselves more highly than they should. They also obeyed the ‘letter of the law,’ but missed the heart of the law. This meant that technically they were keeping the laws, but they were not doing it with the right heart, or the right motive. And this is something that Jesus addressed again and again.

For example, the Pharisees would continually be angry with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, saying that healing was “work” and he violated the Sabbath. But they missed the whole heart of God. Jesus told the Pharisees that if one of their sheep fell in a ditch on the Sabbath, they would rescue it, and healing is the same way (Matthew 12:11-12). It is God’s heart to save his people.

These Pharisees made up their own commandments and taught them as doctrine (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7). Jesus said the Pharisees shut off the kingdom of heaven from the people. He said they were not going into the kingdom themselves, neither were they allowing others to enter either (Matthew 23:13). He was saying that they made it seem so difficult, if not almost impossible for the common people to enter into the kingdom of heaven. They would make it seem as if they were the only ones who would make it. But Jesus corrected them, saying that they were not allowing others to enter the kingdom, but they themselves would not be able to enter.



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The risk in having knowledge is that it can “puff up” or make you arrogant (1 Corinthians 8:1).

The more knowledge that you possess the more you might feel qualified to judge others. This is why Jesus says, don't judge, so that you will not be judged.

You will be judged in the same way that you judge others, and the way that you measure, is the way that it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2).

This is not only applicable to the Pharisees, but to us as well. Many scholars believe that this is referring to the way that we will be judged by God, and others say it pertains to the way that we are judged by people in this life. Either way, it would be better to not make ourselves judges over others (Romans 2:1-3).

Jesus tells the people that when a person tries to correct, or judge, another person, it is like trying to pull a speck of dust out of someone else's eye when you have a stick or branch in your own eye (Matthew 7:3).

Discuss:

How does it feel when you get something in your eye? Have you gotten a piece of dust or dirt in your eye?

How does it feel? Does it make it hard to see? Do you have to squint?

Does it also make it difficult to focus to see out of the good eye?

It would be very difficult to try to help someone get something out of their eye when you have anything in your own eye, even if it was just a speck. Jesus uses this analogy to help us understand the principle.

We seem to often see so clearly when we are judging someone else and their actions. But in reality, we are completely blind to our own actions and what we are doing. This is the literal translation of the “blind leading the blind.” Jesus tells us, You hypocrite! Pull the branch out of our own eye first, then we will be able to see clearly to pull the speck of dust out of someone else's eye (Matthew 7:5; Luke 6:41-42).

What is a hypocrite? Jesus used this word for the Pharisees many times.

A hypocrite is someone who tells other people what to do, but they themselves do something totally different.

Notice he doesn't say, pull the branch out so you can pull a branch out of someone else's eye. It seems that if we pull the branch out of our eye first, we usually realize that it is just a speck in the other person's eye. Realizing our own mistakes and shortcomings often puts everything into perspective with regard to others.

So what if you really do have a good perspective and insight, you have checked your own motives and “cleared your eye” and want to help someone. Is it right to offer advice?

Not always. This is what Jesus addresses in the next verse. Not everyone is ready to receive correction or wise counsel. He tells us not to ‘give that which is holy to dogs, or give pearls to pigs, or they will trample them with their feet and turn again and tear you to pieces,’ (Matthew 7:6).



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Discuss:

What does that mean?

Would you make a really nice meal, an expensive dinner that you cooked all day, and give it to a dog? Probably not. The dog would not appreciate it at all and it would be wasted.

Would you take your nicest clothes and jewelry and put it on a pig? Of course not. The pig has no understanding of what is nice or not. It would trample your nice things and bury them in the mud.

In the same way, you can discern whether someone is open to your insight. You can waste good advice on people. If you give it when they are not ready to receive, it can also ruin a future opportunity when they might be more willing to listen. This is the paradox explained in Proverbs 26:4-5. You have to determine how to respond to someone who seems foolish.

How do you know when and how to respond? That is when the next verse comes into practice. Pray about it.

“Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened unto you,” (Matthew 7:7).

Jesus in the Story



Jesus sums all this up in Matthew 7:12.

The heart of the law comes down to this, which we often call “The Golden Rule.”

The NKJV says:

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

A more simplified translation simply says:

Treat people the way you want them to treat you.

Jesus said this sums up the law, and all the prophets. Basically, the Old Testament law can be condensed to this: If we treated other people the way we want to be treated, it would equate to loving them as much as we love ourselves. This would completely change almost all of the interactions in our lives.



Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

25. City On A Hill

1. In Matthew 5:13, to what did Jesus compare his followers?
2. What did he compare them to in verse 14?
3. In Matthew 5:15, what does he say that people do with a candle and why?
4. What will people do when they see our good works?

Philippians 2:14-15

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

26. When You Pray

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. We are supposed to ask God for what to be done on earth and in heaven?
2. What does God want us to ask him for every day?
3. We are supposed to ask for forgiveness in the same way that we do what?

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

27. Into the Ditch

1. What do people try to pull out of other's eyes?
2. What does the scripture say is in our eye?
3. How can we see to take something out of someone else's eye?
4. Explain what you think this means.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

28. How Much More?

1. If we ask, what will happen?
2. What happens for everyone that asks?
3. What happens for everyone that seeks?
4. What happens when we knock?

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.