

View

A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ, 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA

November 25, 2007

How Do You Judge Others?

One of the surest signs of a lack of love is to judge people on appearances and fail to give them the benefit of the doubt.

You've probably had the experience of some brother or sister giving you what seems like the proverbial cold shoulder – ignoring you, acting as if you don't exist. Or maybe someone has said something to you that sounds catty or cutting or nosey or irritating; or maybe they looked at you funny. I've had these experience several times. I remember one case in which I looked at someone and asked how she was doing and she looked back at me with a scowl (I thought) and said nothing. It was so disconcerting, I felt awful, until I mentioned it to her later. She was completely oblivious to the whole moment and didn't know what I was talking about. She certainly intended no unkindness.

There are a couple of ways you can analyze these kinds of situations: (1) you can assume that the brother or sister has some problem with you and is therefore shutting you out; or, (2) you can assume that they have other things on their minds besides you, and that they do not realize, because of the burden they are carrying, that they are appearing to be unfriendly.

The first choice is self-centered, the second is others'-centered. The first choice seeks to judge their motives as evil, the second chooses to give them the benefit of the doubt. The first choice assumes the brother or sister would not do the right thing (come

to you if they have a problem with, per Mt. 5:23-24), the second believes they would, if it was really about you. The first choice is inherently divisive, the second inherently uniting.

We cannot function in unity for long if we concoct scenarios in our head that make assumptions about the motives of others based upon how they look, or even, necessarily, on what they say. If what they say is capable of two meanings, why would we put the most negative construction on it?

Paul said that those who love express it in this attitude: "love believes all things..." (1 Cor. 13:7). In simple terms, that means love causes us to give people the benefit of the doubt. While their actions may suggest evil motives, we doubt that they would be involved in evil and, therefore, we extend that benefit to them. We give them the benefit of the doubt unless we are given some solid reason to change our view of their actions (love is not gullible and naïve and undiscerning). That means we will put their words and actions in the best possible light, and judge it in that light.

Jesus says, "By your fruits you shall know them." But sometimes we choose to see bad fruit, even though that is not the only choice, and we know it. Unless the fruit of a brother's or sister's life is clearly rotten, we should choose to see good fruit. Otherwise, we risk becoming "judges with evil motives" (Jas. 2:4) who judge unrighteously, "according to appearance and not according to truth" (Jn. 7:24). Why would you want to go to hell for that??

What is really amazing is when people criticize others for the very same things they do themselves! I say it's amazing, but that's exactly what Jesus is talking about in Mt. 7:3 – "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" He was talking about the sin of "projection." We project in others what we feel in our own hearts. If we have bad motives, we'll project bad motives onto another person.

For example, if I'm conceited, I may project conceit onto others' who are actually quite innocent of the sin. I might pick up on any little thing they may say or do that seems to draw attention to themselves and then chalk them up as "proud." That would be pretty good evidence that I am the one who is proud. I see that speck in their eyes because it is a log in my eye. When a preacher seems to get stuck on one subject and keep bringing it up, watch out (unless it is a current issue that has plagued the church). He may be struggling with it himself. He projects into the audience the very sins he is guilty of himself.

Several years ago a preacher held a meeting where my dad was an elder. The man would not even look at a woman – he would not allow his eyes to come in contact with a female. He talked about the sin of "lust" a great deal (especially considering the meeting was on "evangelism"). My mom thought it was weird that he wouldn't even look at a woman when speaking to her. Others may have thought it was noble; after all, Job made a covenant with his eyes, "not to look on a maid" (Job 31:1). Turns out, this man had a problem. A few years after the meeting, he left his wife for another woman.

Be careful what you find distasteful in others; it may be God's way of telling you to examine yourself: "judge not that you be not judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged." Let's not end up going to hell because we insisted on looking at everything and everybody in the worst possible light. What does that accomplish, besides Satan's purposes?

Paul tells me to esteem you better than me and to look out for your interests as well as mine (Phil. 2:3-4). I'll readily admit that I struggle with those statements. Do I really...really hold you in higher esteem than I hold myself? Really? I know I've got to work on that one each day.

The challenge of looking out for the interests of others is very different than the challenge of esteeming others' better than me, at least for me. The latter is a personal, psychological issue: it's a decision that I need to make and re-make, nearly every day; but it's still personal, a decision of the heart. On the other hand, looking out for the interests of others is task-oriented, specific, practical work. I give the ride, take the meal, visit with... job's done. But do I really "esteem (or 'judge') them better than myself"? That's the big question and one we must constantly wrestle with.

In any case, if I'm busy judging on appearances, I know the answer all too well.

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged
at your convenience.

For more information,
visit our web site at:

www.folsomchurch.com

Agenda

The Lord's Day, November 25, 2007

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching

Sermon: The Story

🕒 Preaching: David Posey

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Singing, Preaching

🕒 Sermon: David Posey

"How Would Jesus Raise a Child?"

5:30 PM: Bible Classes, All Ages

Adult Class Offerings

🕒 Room 11-12, SeedSowers

🕒 Auditorium, Deuteronomy

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

10 AM, James class, at the building (final class for the year).

7:30 PM, Bible classes for ages 18 months and up,

Auditorium: Deuteronomy (David Posey)

Notes

Most sermons are available in MP3 format on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon).

Must all take the Lord's Supper when some do?

Robert F. Turner

The following question appeared in the "You Know What?" section of *Plain Talk*, April, 1979. The question addresses the issue of whether everyone must participate whenever the Lord's Supper is served. For example, is it scriptural for those who were not present in the morning to partake without the participation of everyone else. Since some view the Lord's Supper as a strictly a "congregational" activity, they don't believe only a few can participate unless all do so. *dp*

Bro. Turner:

How can one reason with people who partake of the Lord's Supper twice on the Lord's Day? They say we also sing and pray in morning and evening; and we cannot exclude anyone, as each must examine his own right to partake (1 Cor. 11:28). We surely cannot restrict these brethren, while we allow non-members to partake.

Reply:

The Lord's Supper is a memorial symbol, a living monument; and is NOT in the same category as singing and praying. (Having something in common, as, being a part of our worship on the Lord's Day, does not make them the same in all respects.) Prayer and song have no symbolic significance as does the Lord's Supper. Their frequency is regulated differently (Jas. 5:13; 1 Thess. 5:17). Reasoning (?) "we sing and pray more than once" shows a marked failure to understand the nature of the Lord's Supper— and may also show a failure to understand the proper use of prayer and song in public worship. These are not ritualistic "items" to be performed.

The second argument (?) also shows a misunderstanding of 1 Cor. 11:28. The Lord's Supper is clearly for the saints, and has significance to them only. Paul was correcting misconduct among saints when he wrote, "Let a man examine himself," and was not saying that self-examination can eliminate the difference in Christian and non-Christian. (David) Lipscomb's comment on this is excellent: "Let him ascertain by earnest consideration whether he is in a proper state of mind for commemorating and proclaiming the Lord's death; whether he feels a suitable gratitude for the sacrifice it commemorates, and is firmly resolved to observe the injunction of its founder."

We do not build a fence about the Lord's Table – it is not a "sacrament" subject to official administration or withholding. One does not forbid total strangers to look upon a family monument in the cemetery – though the stone has little significance to such. "Let a man examine himself" is sometimes carelessly used if a non-member inadvertently or ignorantly partakes of the elements. Charitably, we may mean we do not claim to be able to judge the heart, and in the case of a stranger, cannot know his life. We are simply saying, "God knows if he is a Christian." But this is far from saying the Lord's Supper was given to aliens; or that we should be content with continued misuse, and make no effort to teach those who seem not to know the nature of a memorial act.