

How to Be an Excellent Disciple, Humility, Part 1

Luke 6:41-42

Today, we're considering this second principle of pursuing excellence in discipleship, a principle of humility and it's set in contrast, really, to the sin of pride, which is manifest in spiritual hypocrisy. Jesus takes this metaphor of spiritual vision, whether blindness or being able to see clearly, he takes this metaphor just a little bit further and frankly, he paints a pretty funny, almost cartoonish picture for us, Luke 6:39-49. Take a look at the verses there.

We'll start reading in verse 39 and just read through the verses we're going to cover today. "He also told them a parable," verse 39. "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. "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? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in

your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye," and, "then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

Evidently, Jesus did not like hypocrisy. It's not just Jesus that doesn't like hypocrisy, is it? It's not just the absolutely perfect holy one who hates hypocrisy. Even for us, as defiled, depraved sinners, whether redeemed or not, we all recognize and hate the sin of hypocrisy. How many times have you heard non-Christians speak of their own opposition to the church on the basis of this moral superiority, they say, quote, "I could never join a church because it's filled with," what? "Hypocrites."

And yet, while they moralize at you about religious hypocrisy in you and others, you know, obviously insinuating you yourself who go into a church are a hypocrite too. They fail to notice the wickedness in their own hearts, don't they? They overlook that. They overlook the depth of sins in their own lives. Oh, yes and including this sin of hypocrisy.

I want you to imagine for a moment that you develop an, an irritation in your eye. It starts small. It's something that's gotten into your eye. And that itching has given way to burning. Now your vision's getting blurry. It's just not going away. So you visit the eye doctor's office, and they prescribe for you a minor procedure to have an ophthalmologist come into remove the irritant and to clear up your vision.

When the ophthalmologist arrives, you can't help but notice there is a six-inch railroad spike protruding out of his eye socket. He carries on normal chit chat as you fill out forms and he prepares his surgical tools. It's as if the spike didn't bother him at all. You're understandably concerned. You're totally puzzled and you're even a bit skeptical. How is he able to see well enough to perform a rather delicate surgery on something that really means a lot to me? Like my eyeball.

So you try to ask very delicately, how long has that railroad spike been sticking in your eye there, Doc? And how has he learned to perform surgery with such a significant impediment

to his own vision? He turns to you and asks, what railroad spike? Let me ask you something. Are you going to stay in the chair for one more minute? Let him perform surgery on one of the most delicate parts of your body? Such an irreversible consequence to the condition of your vision should he get it wrong, which is likely?

What if after you leave the office, you conduct a bit of research, discover that he's destroyed the vision of many patients before you? Are you going to recommend that guy? Would you warn others using just principles, but not naming names? Or would you name names? You know who's going to be first, the first to expose this guy as a quack, as dangerous? Other ophthalmologists. Why? Because they don't want their good profession to be sullied by a guy like that. They don't want patients whom they care for to be ruined.

Now let me ask you a different question. What's the more sensitive and consequentially important part of us as human beings? Our sensitive eyes or our sensitive souls? In our time, in this secularized, materialistic age, we've placed a whole lot

more value on body parts, which are temporal, rather than on our souls, which will live forever somewhere.

So you're going to have to excuse me when every now and again I warn you about bad spiritual physicians. The destruction of souls by blind physicians is happening all the time and that's exactly what Jesus is telling us here in Luke 6:39 and following. It's his concern to alert us to the reality of spiritual blindness and to the influence and consequence of following blind guides.

And here in verses 40, 41-42, Jesus addresses the nature of spiritual blindness, which is more dangerous than any physical blindness. Those who are physically blind, they know it. They understand. They realize they need at least one of those canes that helps them to navigate around obstacles. They need someone to lead them through dangerous areas. But those who are spiritually blind, according to verses 41 to 42, their condition is hidden from them because of what Jesus describes here as the sin of hypocrisy. Spiritual hypocrites do not realize they're blind. They think they see clearly.

In John 9, after Jesus had healed a man born blind and he was examined before the Pharisees, you may remember that the Pharisees, end of the chapter, they heard Jesus talking about spiritual blindness. And they overheard this, and got the sense, that he may be talking of them. And so they asked Jesus, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

That is to say, the sin of hypocrisy deceives those who are spiritually blind. Incredibly, they actually think they can see clearly. Listen, like that blind ophthalmologist I described, they want to keep on doing surgery. They don't realize they're blind. And that's what makes hypocrisy such a danger for Jesus' disciples, who will influence other people. We've got make our, make sure that our own vision is clear, that we're dealing with our own sins before we help other people.

You'll notice in verses 41 to 42 that Jesus had turned from the parable in verse 39 and the principle in verse 40, both of those, the parable, the principle, they're non-specific

statements, generalizing, but in these verses, verses 41 and 42, Jesus is now speaking directly to us. He's teaching and exhorting us, his disciples. Notice there, the second person address and it's, I could tell you in the Greek, it's singular.

He's speaking to each of us individually. He says, "Why do you," that's singular, each one of you individually. "Why do you," personally, "see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you," personally, individually, you "do not notice the log that's in your own eye?" This is us he's talking about. The verbs here are in the present tense, they're indicating habitual practice. Something that you and I, Jesus is saying, that we can be guilty of as a matter of course.

When we're practicing this sin that he describes here, that is, trying to remove the speck before dealing with our own log-sized sins, we're guilty of hypocrisy, verse 42, he says it, "You hypocrite." So Jesus has turned from the blind leaders of the blind and now he's speaking directly to those who would follow him as disciples. He doesn't want his disciples acting like the rest of the world's religious leaders.

Most notably in their day, the scribes, and the Pharisees, they embodied this; they're the prototypical hypocrites. And Jesus is warning us, his true disciples, about the subtle sin of hypocrisy, which can creep up on all of us. Jesus wants us to be wary, for every would-be disciple, for everybody with leadership, with everybody with influence, there must be no prideful hypocrisy. We must, instead, pursue the regular habit of practicing personal repentance. The habit of practicing a lifestyle of self-confrontational humility.

So let's consider the text before us. And learn to be wary of this tendency toward spiritual hypocrisy that's in all of us. That non-Christian who moralizes to you about sin of hypocrisy in the church, you've just got to say, you're right, but we're growing. You're right, but we're repenting. You're right, but we're confessing. What about you? Jesus Christ has forgiven us of all our hypocrisy and sins whether specks or beams. All of it is taken away and crucified in the cross. And that's what makes this Gospel such good news. That's what you need, my friend.



So we want to be wary, though, of this tendency toward hypocrisy. We want to find out how to promote spiritual humility, teachability. The practice of honest self-examination. Because this principle of humility, this is what is going to make us useful and productive as Christians. It's going to make us careful and obedient. It's going to make us genuine disciples, maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. That's what we all need to be.

So like a divine ophthalmologist, really, Jesus Christ, the great physician, he's now teaching us here how to diagnose hypocrisy in verse 41, how to identify the symptoms of hypocrisy in verse 42. And then he provides us with the antidote to hypocrisy at the end of verse 42. So first point, let's talk about the diagnosis. Here's the bottom line: the hidden cause of spiritual hypocrisy is spiritual pride. Not too difficult. Hidden cause of spiritual hypocrisy is spiritual pride.

Look at verse 41, "Why do you see," verse 41, "the speck that's in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" So again, this is a cartoonish picture. It's a ridiculously unreal contrast. Because no one walks around with a

literal beam sticking out of their face. You can't, you would never see that. It's a laughable cartoonish picture.

A speck refers to something that's pretty insignificant. That's easy to see. It's a, the word *karphos* can refer to a, something as large as a piece of straw or chaff or, you know on the large end, it can be like a really small chip of wood like when you're whittling a stick and that little shaving comes off. It could be that big, but on the small end, it's more like a tiny piece of dust that's floating around in your drink. You notice it and you're like, Oh, I'm going to get that; kinda of tap the surface and get that thing out of there. That's the idea.

In either case, whether it's a large or small *karphos*, *karphos* is something that's on the surface of your eye. And if it's on the surface of your eye, it's going to cause a little bit of irritation. But the log, by contrast, is quite noticeable, like that railroad spike. And it's very relevant. The word *dokos* is the word here. It's, refers to a large beam that was maybe if picture like in an old castle, a beam that was meant to bar the door or the gate to the city. That's the size.

Or it could be like a heavy timber that was used in roof construction. I remember when the guys were dealing with pulling out the walls back there behind the door, there's this huge beam and you do not want to cut into that beam because that's a loadbearing beam. You pull that thing out, this whole ceiling comes down like, you know, that Philistine hall on Samson. So we do not want that to happen.

But that thing's sticking out of your eye, that's noticeable, right? Loadbearing beam of the house, that's the idea of a *dokos*. One, one source actually cited the use of *dokos* by Josephus, who used the word to describe a, "a huge beam of wood," this is a quotation, "huge beam of wood as long and thick as the mast of a ship that was used by Vespasian for a battering ram."

So imagine this mast of a ship, Vespasian says, take that thing down and let's make that into a battering ram. This massive beam was armed with a huge piece of iron on the front that they would cast in the shape of a ram's head and the

battering ram was so heavy and powerful that even one blow from it caused the mighty walls of Jerusalem to shake. Imagine that ship's mast battering ram sticking out of someone's eye socket. You get the picture.

Look, the only way you don't notice that, the only way you don't feel the pain of something that sizeable sticking out of your eye, the only way you don't notice the damage or recognize the significance that is to your vision as an impediment, the only way you don't notice that is due to one of two things. You're either dead, or you're dull.

You're either a spiritual corpse, that is, you're not a Christian at all and thus, have no spiritual life, no feeling, no conscience, no spiritual nerves alerting you to the presence of such a large and significant foreign object or you've drifted so far from Christ in your sin that you're insulated from all spiritual feeling by your pride and your self-centeredness.

So you're either spiritually dead, or you're spiritually dull. But either way, it's a problem. And it's going to have an

effect on the way you're able, are able or not able to see things. Repentance is in order, right? You simply must get the beam out of your eye.

So that first contrast, it's the obvious difference between a *karphos* and a *dokos*. It's the difference between the size and the relevance of sin represented by the mote and the beam. But there's another contrast here. It's a contrast to the verbs in verse 41. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not *notice* the log that is your own eye?"

*See* versus *notice*, it's another contrast. The word, *see*, is the word *blepo*, *blepo*. It refers to sense perception, just looking, just seeing, but when you use the word *blepo* here, we're talking about that which can be observed on the surface. The superficial thing that we can see or perceive with the naked eye. We all know that idiom, don't ever judge a book by its cover. It comes from the realization that we don't always judge rightly what we see superficially.

The next word here is translated as, notice, that's the verb *katanoeo*, *katanoeo*, set in contrast here to *blepo*, it refers to deeper insight, a more profound sense of spiritual perception. Now remember, the focus here that Jesus has, it's not on indicting the Pharisees at this point. Jesus is talking to us here. He's talking to his true disciples. He's talking to you and me.

As one commentator put it, quote, "In the hearts of all, including even Christ's followers to," to, the extent to which grace has not yet fully transformed them, they're houses of Pharisee." End quote. So the warning here is for you and me. Jesus is pointing out the tendency within every single one of us to become dull in our spiritual perception. The continuing presence of sin within us, this sin nature, this sin principle that still entices and deceives and seeks that which does not please God, that is very real.

When you're not actively and daily mortifying your sin, we're all in danger of dimming spiritual perception and even blatant spiritual hypocrisy. The contrast here between the verbs *blepo* and *katanoeo* is the contrast between that which is easy to

see on the surface and that which requires more thoughtful insight to notice. That which is not so easily observed on the surface, namely our own thoughts and our attitudes of sin.

So “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye?” Because the speck in his eye is easier for me to see. It does not take effort to see and observe the sin of others. Right? You see your brother’s sins. You see your sister’s failures. No congratulations are in order for that. Anyone, even an unbeliever, can point out the sins of others.

But on the other hand, “Why do you not notice the log that is in your own eye?” Because that’s harder to see, isn’t it? That takes more effort. The uncomfortable practice of self-confrontation, which is the fruit of the spirit-produced virtue of humility. Much harder for us. You have to be intentional to notice your own sins. You must have a habit of daily self-examination. You have to be committed as a conviction to personal repentance for a lifetime.

You have to be committed to pursuing righteousness before God in thought and word and deed. That kind of commitment, beloved, is found only among those who are Christians. And only among those who are humble enough to know that they, although redeemed, they're wretched sinners in need of daily grace.

Listen, this practice of self-examination, it's essential for Christian, healthy Christian discipleship and the way to avoid the practice of blinding spiritual hypocrisy is to revisit repentance. Self-examination requires an internal attitude of humility, which is the fruit of those who remain amazed by God's amazing grace. I know you probably have seen this, just as I have, that we continually run into Christians who seem to lose that amazement.

But they cease to be wowed and wooed by the cross. It's so disappointing. We just need to revisit the Gospel, don't we? All the time. Because those who know the depth of their sins and those who reflect on what God did to forgive them. God crucified his own beloved son on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the guilt of me, for the guilt of all guilty sinners. They're the ones who are filled with thanksgiving.



They're not interested in casting a disparaging eye at the sins of others, looking down on other people, all that's plainly visible on the outside. They're too busy with repentance, considering what's in their own hearts, which causes them shame and dismay. So in response to this incredible gift of salvation, the redeeming grace of God in which we daily walk, we pursue repentance.

We reflect on our sins that came, cost Christ his life, we reflect on our sins, we reflect on the cost of our forgiveness, we reflect on our gratitude and all that is evident in an attitude of meekness. We're possessed then of a, a cautious, teachable spirit that's eager to learn, eager to repent, eager to pursue holiness in the fear of Christ. Listen, beloved, we should be eager, never reticent, but eager to receive correction and instruction.

Those who don't want to be corrected by anybody, that's a danger sign, beloved. That's a danger sign. Don't fall into it. We should long for instruction in righteousness, that we might

confront ourselves first. And then consider how to love by instructing our brother. That's what this is all about. Love.

So Jesus here begins by helping us with the diagnosis. He looks beyond the symptoms as only the great physician can do. And he says, let me tell you what's going on in the heart. Let me tell you the cause of all these symptoms you see. It's pride. It's pride. He identifies the hidden cause of hypocrisy, which is pride. So we need to cultivate a heart of humility to combat the pride.

He also develops, or helps us to develop here, discernment. He teaches us to observe the outward and visible signs of hypocrisy. So that's a second point for your outline. You can put down the word observation. Point number two, observation, the visible symptoms of hypocrisy. Observation, the visible symptoms of hypocrisy.

There are several observable signs of hypocrisy, which are symptoms of the hidden disease of spiritual pride. Most often, spiritual pride is the result of dead religion. That is, no

regeneration. It's the bad fruit of a rotten tree. Proof positive that regeneration has not happened. But even Christians can fall into patterns of sin, which they become blinded to due to the dullness caused by spiritual pride.

Jesus here, in verse 42 asks another rhetorical question. He says, "How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?" You may not pick it up, but Jesus is here expressing dismay. The grammar is clear that Jesus is here offended at this blatant show of hypocrisy. "How is it that you are able to say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck.'" "

And then here's the literal way this is written for emphasis, but you yourself, the in your eye log or beam or mast of a ship battering ram, you're not seeing it! It's the idea of, how could you? Listen, this hypocrisy offends him. It's not just a fact of trying to remove the speck while being blind to your own log-sized sins. It's the fact that you would presume to do this to a brother. That's the issue.

You say, where else would you be making these kinds of judgments but in the church and among brothers? Right? After all, we're not running around trying to confront all the sins of the unregenerate, unbelieving world. True, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:12, "What do we have to do with judging outsiders? God judges them and they are in fact already under the just wrath and condemnation of God." So we do not need to run around shooting at easy targets like Hollywood, like Washington D.C., or wherever. Those people are our mission field, right?

Our prayer and interest is in the salvation of those kinds of sinners because such were some of you, right? Their condemnation is so clear. And their sin is so crippling and destructive, degrading. We want to see them saved. So, yes, it's true the context of this presumption of trying to remove the speck when you've got the beam, this, the context of this presumption to conduct spiritual eye surgery on the lesser offense while being blind to your own greater offense. Yes, this happens in the church. And it happens among so-called brothers.

So why does Jesus seem to be so offended here? The offense is this: the hypocrite presumes to correct others in order to put on a show of fake spiritual maturity. That's the issue. The hypocrite is actually presuming and preying upon the affection and receptivity of a fellow brother, because a fellow brother is wide open to your correction. He's taking advantage of the spiritual sensitivity of another disciple who is by nature prone to self-examination.

So to abuse a brother's spiritual sensitivity, to take advantage of the humility and tenderness of a Christian all for the sake of posturing, all for the sake of reinforcing your own spiritual pride and position, that stirs up the indignation of Christ. It's not just the injustice that is the one who's in truth immature and blind, hypocritical, and perhaps, even unsaved. Such is the injustice of that kind of guy pretending to be mature.

What offends Jesus here is that someone would dare take advantage of the spiritual sensitivity and tenderness of his beloved sheep for whom he died. How dare you! That angers him. And believe me, you do not want to be around when Jesus comes to

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recompense unrepentant hypocrites who take advantage of the sheep to fake their own holiness.