

When God Turns the Mirror on Us: Bible Study Handout

Matthew 7:3–5 (NKJV)

³ *“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”*

⁴ *“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?”*

⁵ *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Introduction

Standing Honestly Before God

In last week’s Bible study we examined the parable of the **Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14)**. Jesus told the story of two men who went to the temple to pray. One man proudly listed his religious accomplishments, while the other man humbly prayed, *“God, be merciful to me a sinner.”*

Jesus shocked His listeners by saying that the humble tax collector went home justified rather than the religious man who believed he had everything together.

That story teaches us a powerful lesson: **spiritual growth begins when we stand honestly before God.**

Instead of comparing ourselves with others, we bring our lives honestly before the Lord and ask for His mercy and grace.

This week’s lesson continues that same theme. In **Matthew 7**, Jesus uses a striking image to teach about self-examination and humility.

He asks:

“Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”

Jesus invites us to consider a difficult but necessary truth: it is often easier to see the faults of others than it is to recognize our own.

A Mirror for the Soul

Jesus' teaching functions like a **mirror** for the human heart.

A mirror does not create the problem we see. It simply reveals what is already there. In the same way, the Word of God reveals the true condition of our hearts.

Scripture describes this idea in another passage:

James 1:23–24 (NKJV)

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”

James reminds us that hearing God's Word without responding to it is like looking into a mirror and walking away unchanged.

God's Word reveals the truth about our hearts so that transformation can begin.

The Lenten Connection

This teaching is especially meaningful during the **season of Lent**.

Lent is a time when believers intentionally reflect on their spiritual lives as they prepare their hearts for the celebration of Easter. The church historically practices prayer, repentance, and self-examination during this season.

Rather than focusing on the failures of others, Lent invites us to ask deeper questions about our own lives.

Where is God calling me to grow?

What attitudes or habits may be hindering my spiritual life?

Where might pride or comparison be shaping the way I see others?

Lent reminds us that honest reflection is not meant to discourage us. Instead, it opens the door for God's grace to transform our hearts.

Point 1: The Temptation to Focus on Someone Else's Fault

Jesus begins with a question:

“Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”

The contrast between a **speck** and a **plank** is intentionally exaggerated.

A speck represents something small, such as a tiny particle or splinter. A plank represents a large beam used in construction.

Jesus uses this striking image to reveal how easily our perspective becomes distorted.

We often magnify the faults of others while minimizing our own shortcomings.

It is easy to notice someone else’s mistakes.

It is easy to point out someone else’s behavior.

But Jesus challenges us to pause and examine our own hearts.

Supporting Scripture

Psalm 139:23–24 (NKJV)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

David’s prayer reminds us that spiritual growth begins when we invite God to examine our hearts.

Point 2: The Danger of Correcting Others While Ignoring Ourselves

Jesus continues:

“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?”

The image becomes almost humorous. A person with a massive plank in their eye attempts to perform delicate eye surgery on someone else.

Jesus calls this behavior **hypocrisy**.

In the ancient world, the word “hypocrite” referred to an actor who wore a mask on stage. A hypocrite presented an appearance that did not match reality.

Spiritual hypocrisy occurs when we try to correct others while refusing to examine our own lives.

Supporting Scripture

Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

This passage reminds believers that restoration must be carried out with humility and self-awareness.

Point 3: The Freedom of Clear Vision

Jesus then offers the solution:

“First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Notice that Jesus does not say we should ignore the struggles of others. Instead, He teaches us the proper order.

First deal honestly with your own life.

Then you will see clearly enough to help someone else.

When God removes the plank from our vision, our hearts begin to change. We begin to respond with patience, compassion, and humility.

Supporting Scripture

1 John 1:8–9 (NKJV)

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Confession leads to forgiveness, and forgiveness leads to transformation.

Living the Lesson

When God turns the mirror toward our lives, the goal is not condemnation but transformation.

Through repentance and grace, God removes what blocks our spiritual vision.

As our hearts change, we begin to treat others with the same grace that God has shown to us.

People who have received mercy learn to extend mercy.

People who have been forgiven learn to forgive.

People whose vision has been cleared become instruments of healing in the lives of others.

Lenten Reflection

During this Lenten season, consider setting aside time each day for prayer and reflection.

Ask God to reveal areas where growth is needed.

Allow Scripture to function as a mirror for your soul.

Remember that Lent is not about guilt or shame. It is about preparing our hearts to experience the transforming grace of the cross and the hope of resurrection.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it is often easier to see faults in others than to recognize our own?
2. What does Jesus' image of the speck and the plank reveal about the dangers of spiritual pride?
3. How does the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14) connect with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7?
4. How does Scripture function like a mirror for the human heart?
5. What practices during Lent help believers grow in humility and self-examination?
6. How can remembering God's grace toward us help us treat others with compassion?
7. What is one area of your life where God may be asking you to allow Him to "remove the plank"?