

Pastors Retreat- October 12 –14

Session 1 – Matthew 7:1-6 – *Censoriousness and the Ministry*

Matthew 7:1-6 starts with the familiar phrase, “judge not, that you be not judged.” A phrase often used by some to discount their own sin. However, the heart of the warning here is against being censorious. Censorious is an adjective meaning often criticizing other people. It is a dangerous poison for pastors.

➤ **Avoid being censorious – v. 1**

- This is a sin to be avoided. It is one that is prevalent, especially among ministry leaders. We use social media and conference coffee breaks to criticize others who are part of the Kingdom.
- “The command to judge not is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous.” – John Stott
- Who are some of the people I am censorious toward?

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➤ **Censoriousness brings judgement – v. 2**

- We normally do not want others to be censorious toward us. In fact, if they are, we often return the favor. Jesus is clear that being censorious brings judgement. Do we really want to be measured by our own stick?

➤ **Censoriousness is hypocrisy – v. 3-5**

- Censoriousness can be like Jesus’ example. It could be seemingly helpful, but actually is a display of self-righteousness.
- When we judge in this way, we are hypocritical because we act as if we are not sinners too.
- “Jesus is drawing attention to a curious feature of the human race in which a profound ignorance of oneself is often combined with an arrogant

presumption of knowledge about others, especially their faults.” - Leon Morris.

- What are ways we may set a different standard than the one we want people using to evaluate us?

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➤ **Reflection:** Take time, by yourself, to complete these questions, and then, with a partner, discuss the following:

| | My personal life | My ministry life | My church |
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| How am I censorious in: | | | |
| How have I been hypocritical in my judgment of others in: | | | |
| How do I cultivate grace toward others in: | | | |

Session 2 – Matthew 7:12-20– *Faithfulness and the Ministry*

Matthew 7:12-20 provides us a description of the discipleship journey of a follower of Christ. As pastors we must strive for faithfulness in our following of Christ as we have been called to shepherd His people. Here are some principles to consider as we think about faithfulness and the ministry.

➤ **The Golden Rules is followed – v. 12**

- The pastor must do unto others what he would have done unto himself. He cannot have a double standard.
- What are areas where I struggle for this to be the reality of my ministry?

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➤ **The Narrow Way is chosen – v. 13-14**

- The pastor must make a definitive choice. This is the teaching of Scripture.
 - Deuteronomy 30:19 _____
 - Psalm 1:6 _____
 - Jeremiah 21:8 _____
- Ministry faithfulness might sometimes be likened to the old hymn, “Though none go with me, still I will follow; No turning back, no turning back.”

➤ **False teaching is avoided – vv. 15-20**

- Why should we both avoid false teaching and concern ourselves with not being false teachers?
 - On false teachers, “They appear harmless” but “they further their own interests” – Leon Morris
 - “They are dangerous and deceptive” – John Stott
- How do we know good teaching?

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- We should ask ourselves, what is the fruit Jesus talks of in this context?
 - Golden Rule
 - Narrow Way
 - “Sound doctrine and holy living are the marks of true prophets” - J.C. Ryle
- Fruit is a process. It takes time. Be cautious then as you inspect fruit.

➤ **Reflection:** Take time, by yourself, to complete these questions, and then, with a partner, discuss the following:

| | My personal life | My ministry life | My church |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| How do I cultivate following the Golden Rule in: | | | |
| How do I cultivate choosing the narrow way in: | | | |
| How do I cultivate avoiding false teaching in: | | | |

Session 3 – Matthew 7:21-27 – *Authenticity and the Ministry*

Matthew 7:21-27 causes us to ask ourselves an important question: Am I what you seem to be? As pastors we are often asked to put on a brave or longsuffering face even in the midst of our own difficult circumstances. It can become a tactic we use to survive. Our hearts may stray one way or the other, but we keep on seeming as if we are okay or something other than what we really are. This is dangerous. Here are the dangers:

➤ **You seem by word – v. 21a**

- We are told of those that seem by their words, but they do not enter the Kingdom. They are not at all what they seem to be. Their words are right, but they are not.
- Do you ever feel like this. Maybe you know someone like this. They have lots of words that sound as if they know the Lord, but you know better. Could this be true of us?
- What words that you use in your preaching or praise of the Lord, but you know you struggle with yourself?

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➤ **You see by ministry – vv. 22-23**

- We are pastors. We are busy. There is always something to do. So it is with these we read about here. They were busy in their ministry. There was much to do and they did it. However, they are told to depart. They were not true ministers, though they did much ministry.
- How are ways you sometime seem by ministry, but it is just part of your routine?

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- **You seem by appearance – vv. 26-27**
 - Those two houses looked the same. The only difference was the foundation. Everything else seemed right, but the storm showed what the houses were really made of.
 - Too often we put on a good face, but it may not match our heart. The outside looks good, but there is nothing underneath holding it all up.

- **The key to being rather than simply seeming is dependence on Christ.**
 - He did the will of the Father (v. 21a)
 - His ministry is thoroughly divine (v. 28-29)
 - He is the rock; the cornerstone on which the Father builds our salvation (vv. 24-25) [Acts 4:11]
 - Doing His will shows we are what we seem, enabled by His Spirit.

- **Reflection:** Take time, by yourself, to complete these questions, and then, with a partner, discuss the following:

| | My personal life | My ministry life | My church |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| How can I work to make sure my heart matches my words in: | | | |
| How can I work to make sure my heart matches my ministry in: | | | |
| How can I work to make sure my heart matches my appearance in: | | | |

Session 4 – Matthew 8:14-22 – *Authority and the Ministry*

If you do this Google search: “Who is the ultimate authority in your life” There are 1.28 billion results. The whole first page is about God. You would recognize and appreciate many of the entries. However, the only result on the first page that isn’t about God is very interesting. **Matthew 8:14-22** makes it clear that Christ is the ultimate authority.

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarayoungwang/2019/06/09/you-are-the-ultimate-authority-on-your-life-and-career-heres-how-to-own-it/?sh=51ce092157fd>)

➤ **Christ has ultimate authority over your health – vv. 14-17**

- Remember this reality when health challenges come our way. Christ knows what He is doing.
- Take better care of yourself than we often do. He has given you this body to use for His Kingdom.
- Understand these healings as a beautiful picture of the glorified bodies that await Christ’s children.
- What ways can we demonstrate Christ’s authority over our health?

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➤ **Christ has ultimate authority over your location and movements – vv. 18-21**

- Jesus has the authority to determine where you live and where you go. You will end up where he wants you and it may be some place you don’t like or never dreamed.
- Where you are and where you go are to be for His glory and not for your comfort.
- What ways do we sometimes try to put restrictions on God’s authority over our location and movement?

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➤ **Christ has ultimate authority over your priorities – vv. 21-22**

- As strange, and may as harsh, as it may sound, Jesus tells this man that he needs to tend to weightier priorities.
- Some of our obsessions need to come in line under the authority of Christ.
- Did your week look like Christ has authority over your priorities? How about next week’s calendar? If we had to sit down with Jesus and go over our plans, would they reflect His biblical plans and priorities for our life?

➤ **Reflection:** Take time, by yourself, to complete these questions, and then, with a partner, discuss the following:

| | My personal life | My ministry life | My church |
|---|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| How can I begin to place my health under Christ’s authority in: | | | |
| How can I begin to place my location and movements under Christ’s authority in: | | | |
| How can I begin to place my priorities under Christ’s authority in: | | | |