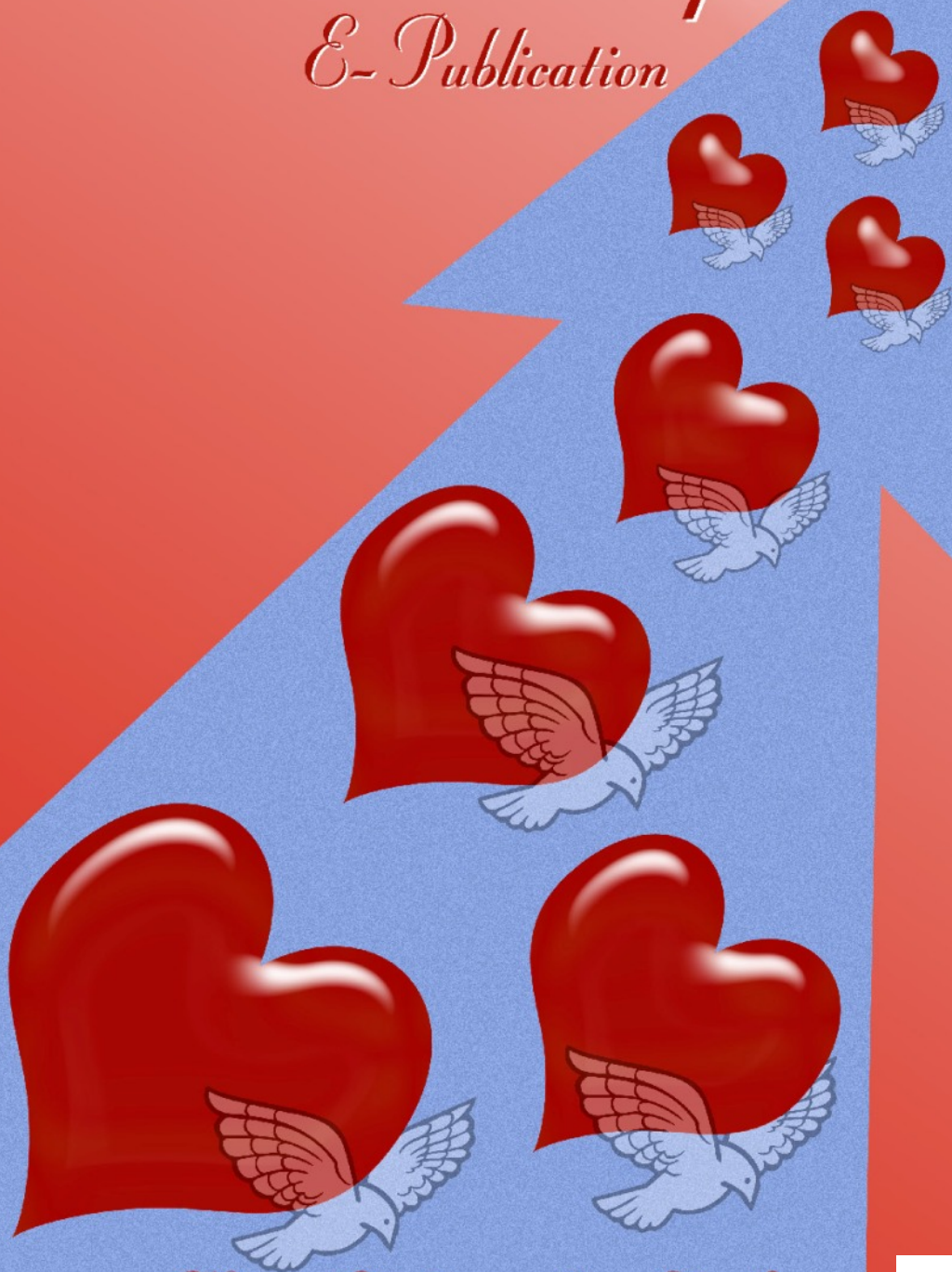


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CONTENTS (SEE OUR [ONLINE INDEX](#) FOR KEY TOPICS AND SCRIPTURES IN PAST EDITIONS)

Key Words	
Judging, Correcting and Things that can Lead to Arguments, Part 1	4
Key In-Sights	
Receiving God's Direction, Advice and Guidance	10
Keys Website Alerts	11
"Hearts Up" Permissions Revised	
Wholesome Movie Added to LINKS page	
Discipleship Training	
Endnotes	13

KEY WORDS

Judging, Correcting and Things that can Lead to Arguments, Part 1

This article is Part 1 of a couple articles dealing with conflicts. Confrontation can be tough. Confronting without judging is even more difficult. It requires practice, not at “controlling” our feelings or “stuffing” them, but at transforming them in Christ whenever they arise. This requires a high degree of sensitivity, or alertness, to what is happening in our hearts. It involves renewing the mind, and training it to cooperate in concert with a peaceful heart. There is a lot that these topics involve, so realize this is not the short version. Jesus gave us the short version. Our goal here is to dive into that a bit more (another reason why this is Part 1!).

Satan loves to get us into confrontations and arguments! When this happens, even the godly heart experiences disturbances! The issue is not so much that our hearts are disturbed. This is a spiritually normal part of spiritual battles! Heart disturbances alert us to the fact that spiritual issues are behind the external situation we are facing. The problem with heart disturbances is that *rapidly* transforming them to peace in Christ is often challenging. This is probably among the reasons why Jesus, Himself, had a lot to say about confronting others. Jesus had much to say about not being judgmental when we are wronged by others. He also had a lot to say about issues that deal with our perceptions of being wronged and various issues that can easily lead to arguments, even among believers.

There are many Bible passages that deal with discernment as it relates to conflicts, as well as to encouraging (and commanding) us to deal well with one another. The verses in this article come from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. We’ve focused almost solely on words spoken by Jesus in order to re-emphasize that the goal in this article is to challenge us to spend a bit of time reviewing things that deal with, or can lead to, arguments during confrontations!

Who has the Speck? Who has the Log?

Jesus said:

Matthew 7:1-6 “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 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? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”*

* Luke 6:37-42 also capture most of these same sentiments on not being judgmental.

Most of you are probably familiar with these verses. Regardless, let’s make sure we understand what Jesus means by *judging*. The Greek word translated as *judge* is κρίνω, and it means “to judge, to

form and express a judgment or opinion as to any person or thing, more commonly unfavorable.”¹ You don’t have to be in a court room and declaring a bunch of facts to be considered by God as judgmental. Judging goes beyond that. Judging can include expressing an opinion that tends to be unfavorable about someone else! That encompasses a lot! Those who like to talk about the latest drama they know about need to watch out. Even if such behavior may not fall into the gossip category, Jesus’ selection of this particular word for judging means that expressing unfavorable opinions, solicited or not, can sometimes be considered by God as judgmental!

So, let’s take a look at who has the speck versus the log in their eye. Let’s say that someone says something about us, which is untrue; they’ve falsely accused us. The person, who is falsely accusing us, certainly “has a log in his/her eye.” It’s fair to say that we tend to see the person’s “log” quite well. In our minds, that person (the false accuser) would be the hypocrite to whom Jesus is speaking in the verses above. After all, if there were no log in their eye, then we wouldn’t feel wronged, concerned, upset, frustrated or whatever... right? Of course we feel those things when we’re wronged. It is part of what lets us know the other person does “have a log in their eye”... right?!

When we KNOW the other person has the “log” in their eye, our conclusion is probably that these verses on judging apply to them in the situation at hand. In other words, they have the log, we have the speck, and Jesus’ words are, therefore, directed at them, not us in this situation! Right? Right! At least this is the way we think.

The Log Versus Speck Analogy Applies to Being Wronged Too!

So, is the message of Jesus’ “log versus speck” analogy just for the wrong-doer? OR, does it apply to both parties, regardless of who is... right or wrong?

Jesus was quite aware that this is usually how we think when we feel like we have been wronged, or when the other person is clearly wrong about something. So, is the message of Jesus’ “log versus speck” analogy just for the wrong-doer? OR, does it apply to both parties, regardless of who is initially right or wrong? If it does apply to both, then how would it apply to the person who isn’t wrong, but is treated wrongly? To figure this out, let’s start by taking a look at the Greek words for *speck* and *log*. Remember, in some translations of the Bible *speck* is translated as *splinter* or *mote*. In some translations *log* is translated as *beam* or *plank*.

The Greek word translated as *speck* or *mote* is κόρφος, and it means “anything that is dry and light, such as straw, stubble, chaff, a little splinter of wood, a mote”² (as in a mote of dust that floats in the air). The Greek word translated as *log* or *plank* is δοκός, and it means “beam or rafter used in building, a joist.”³ The log versus speck analogy clearly makes some big contrasts and distinctions!

So, back to the question, “Does Jesus’ contrast between logs and specks also present a warning to the person who knows they are being wronged?” There are two big clues in the context, not just of Matthew 7:1-6, but of its place in the whole Sermon on the Mount. These clues indicate the answer is yes, this passage does also warn those who are clearly wronged.

Jesus’ Caution Against Judging Applies to Those Who Are Wronged, Clue # 1

Jesus said,

Matthew 7:6 “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

This verse comes right after the log versus speck analogy. Often I’ve heard it used as if the nugget of truth it presents is separate from Jesus’ discussion on not judging. I’ve heard it used by people as the excuse for not approaching someone with whom they have an issue. So, I’d like to suggest that while the truth of this verse may apply to many situations, it definitely applies to believers, especially when we’ve been wronged!

Matthew 7:6 says “Do not give what is holy to dogs...” and therein lays the clue. We tend to assume Jesus’ words in the five verses preceding this one are meant solely for the hypocrite (as if a person is usually insightful enough to know when this applies to them). However, if we consider the idea that perhaps Jesus *is* speaking to us when we are in situations where we are about to respond to a false accusation, then Matthew 7:6 takes on a whole new meaning.

When we are wronged by another, then Satan has accomplished his goal in getting the other person to fall. However, Satan doesn’t stop there. Once a person falsely accuses us, or in some way wrongs us, we are often quick to respond. This response may be “justifiable” because we know a truth that the other person doesn’t, yet Satan can achieve his goal against us if we wield that truth in an improper way. Hence, Jesus says, “do not give what is holy to dogs,” i.e., you may be wronged, cheated or otherwise violated by someone, but be immensely careful in those moments

not to respond with your insights and truth in judgmental ways. If we are not careful, we too can fall into that category of being judgmental, even at times when we are actually right!

*If we are not careful,
we too can fall into
that category of being
judgmental, even at
times when we are
actually right!*

*The real enemy is
the temptation to
slip into arguing,
even without
meaning to do so!*

In Matthew 7:6, Jesus is saying that when you’ve been wronged, falsely accused or mistreated, the first reason to hold back is because this can be a holy experience for you! Satan typically gets us to jump back at a person with our reasons and proofs that we were wronged. Satan seeks to get us to “correct” the situation in a judgmental way, an ungodly way. Even though we may be mistreated, as believers we are not to respond except in very specific ways and with the proper heart! In short, Jesus is saying that the real issue

behind being wronged is falling to Satan’s temptation to argue. The real enemy is the temptation to slip into arguing, even without meaning to do so!

In Matthew 7:6 Jesus goes on to give a second reason why we must be extremely cautious in responding to someone else’s mistreatment of us. While we may have solid proofs and good reasoning, Jesus says, “...they (the initial wrong-doer) will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” How many times have we experienced this? We are wronged, and the more we try to prove it, the more we get walked on, disregarded and torn to pieces either verbally or emotionally! We respond to the wrong-doer with our proofs. The wrong-doer “does wrong again” by rejecting those proofs with more wrong proofs. And, before you know it, *you too* are in an argument – not an act of holiness.

There are times when “not giving away something which is holy” is accomplished by being silent! Ooohhh! WE DON’T LIKE THAT! That can be some tough guidance. But, it is pretty much what Jesus did during His “fair court hearing” prior to being sentenced to death! The clue from Matthew 7:6 implies that discernment is required in order to avoid judging, especially when we are right! This discernment involves recognizing that there may be times when the “wrong-doer,” our brother, may not be open to hearing us. He or she may not be at peace themselves; as such, the brother is not able to see the log in their eye. As such, if we aren’t careful when we are wronged, we will miss the log in our own eye... the log represented by an old self tendency to argue or judge in the course of proving we are right!

*...if we aren’t careful
when we are wronged,
we will miss the log in
our own eye... the log
represented by an old
self tendency to
argue... in the course of
proving we are right!*

Jesus’ Caution Against Judging Applies to Those Who Are Wronged, Clue # 2

Let’s look quickly at a second clue showing us that Jesus’ message on not being judgmental also applies to those who are wronged. This comes from the beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:3-14

- 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5 “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- 7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- 8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- 10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
- 12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

(Italics are part of translation)

These verses, particularly verse 10, reiterate a point that we looked at earlier. Look at verse 10. This verse clearly addresses the issue of being wronged. When we are wronged, we are experiencing a kind of persecution, and this can be a "holy" experience. When, in a given situation, we are trying to act in a righteous manner and yet we are falsely accused, then we are being "persecuted for the sake of righteousness." This can be a blessing for the heart that transforms to be holy, but it certainly won't be a blessing if we "give away what is holy" (Matthew 7:6) by judging the wrong-doer! Verse 11, of course, certainly points out that it is indeed a blessing to be treated wrongly and falsely because we stand for the Lord. Verse 12 spells out how to do this. We do this by centering ourselves not in this world, but in the reality of the next world in which we are with our Lord in heaven!

*...it certainly
won't be a blessing
if we "give away
what is holy" by
judging the
wrong-doer!*

So how do verses 3-9 fit in with this? In the past, I used to view each of these verses as addressing separate aspects either of life or of the kinds of personalities people may have. You know, some people seem more "poor in spirit" (verse 3), more "gentle" (verse 5), more "merciful" (verse 7), or more "pure at heart" (verse 8) than others. So, I thought these verses were saying that people with greater tendencies in those directions would not be forgotten by the Lord, but blessed. As far as "mourning" (verse 4), this beatitude seemed to be another example of how the Lord understands our pain and promises to be there for us when we lose a loved one. To me, verse 6 seemed to be a more universal call for all of us to "hunger for righteousness." And the "peacemakers" in verse 9, well that seemed to me to be kind of like a blanket blessing for all those people who, in the course of their jobs, help to bring peace in this world of spiritual war. I guess I once thought the "peacemakers" part would apply to preachers, ambassadors, diplomats, missionaries, mediators or others who focus on resolving conflicts between people. I suppose that made sense to me because God is the God of peace, and people in such professions might have a special place in His heart.

*The spiritual qualities
Jesus lists... are ones
we cannot exhibit ...
UNLESS we are
centered in the Lord
in the moment!*

Some of those kinds of perspectives may have been somewhat true. Now I realize they didn't capture the spiritual relationships shared between them, particularly when it comes to what Jesus had to say about not judging, as well as other subjects He discussed in His Sermon on the Mount. The spiritual qualities Jesus lists (in verses 3-9) are ones we **cannot** exhibit when someone is wronging us, UNLESS we are centered in the Lord in the moment! These are qualities of holiness, which we must practice in order to pass the test of being treated wrongly. Without

exhibiting what *God* deems the appropriate amounts of these qualities during a potential confrontation, it is going to be hard to restrain ourselves from falling to the temptation of judging back, and entering into an argument with a log in our own eye!

BOTTOM LINE SUMMARY FOR THIS ARTICLE (PART 1): When Satan has succeeded in getting a person to judge us, insult us, or somehow treat us wrongly... that person definitely has a “log” in their spiritual eye! God sees it; you see it. However, our righteousness is not yet proven in such a trial just because we are wronged. It all hinges on how we respond! Jesus challenges us to avoid judging in turn, when the log of justifiable reasoning and proofs remains in our own eye. If we do judge, then BOTH parties will have a log in their eyes: the log we see in the other person; the log God sees in us. Jesus makes it very clear that *because* we have the chance to experience holiness in response to insult or wrong-doing, the “log” in the other person’s eye is as only a speck! Slipping into judgmental attitudes in response to a wrong-doing is the same as forfeiting a wonderful opportunity for which we can be JOYFUL (Matthew 5:12)! In short, we would be forfeiting the opportunity to be HOLY (see also 1 Peter 1:14-16)!

Next month we will look at Part 2 of this topic on judging and dealing with confrontation and potential arguments. We will look at how forgiveness fits in. We will look at how to address wrongs amongst ourselves within the Body of Christ. And, we will look at some ways to handle arguments, but without arguing.

KEY IN-SIGHTS

Receiving God's Direction, Advice and Guidance

We get fire ants fairly frequently here in Texas. Today I noticed the tell-tale sign in the yard... a small mound of dirt piled up on the lawn. I got the ant bait and spread it out about a foot or more away from the pile, in a circle, surrounding their little mining operation.

I came back a bit later to see whether they were taking the bait. They were. As I sat there and watched, it occurred to me that in some ways, we are like the ants. I get that the ant bait is designed to kill the ants, but the analogy deals with how the ants prefer to receive their food!

In case you live somewhere that doesn't have an ant problem, here's how it works. The little ant worker guys pick up the bait and take it to the queen, she eats it and they all die. Pretty simple. However, what I've discovered from experience (not from reading the directions, LOL) is if you put the bait right on top of the mound, the ants are more likely to pick it up and get rid of it. You'd think they'd like the bait being right on the mound. They don't have to walk as far, or work as hard to get what they think is food! Maybe ants aren't into convenience! Nevertheless, the truth is, fire ants don't like the bait (food) on the mound. Because they are also busy excavating dirt, the bait gets in their way. It was with this observation that I thought of people, and how we often receive advice, direction or guidance.

While we may say we want answers and guidance, the truth is that when it "gets in our way," we tend to reject advice and guidance, even when it is good. We do this with people; we do this with God. When we get guidance from God, from His written Word or through our hearts from His Spirit within, we aren't always jumping to embrace it. This happens when we don't like the guidance, or when a higher worldly cost comes with it! We often resist it when that guidance or direction implies we must change something about us (our desire to not pay the higher worldly cost). We usually don't like that.

Like the ants preferring to walk a farther distance to get their food, our lives seem to demonstrate that clearly we must prefer to have to work more for our understanding of what God wants us, instead of having it handed to us! Maybe one of the reasons Jesus spoke in parables is because He knew that only when we have to do some work to really "get it" do we really appreciate what He'd like us to learn.

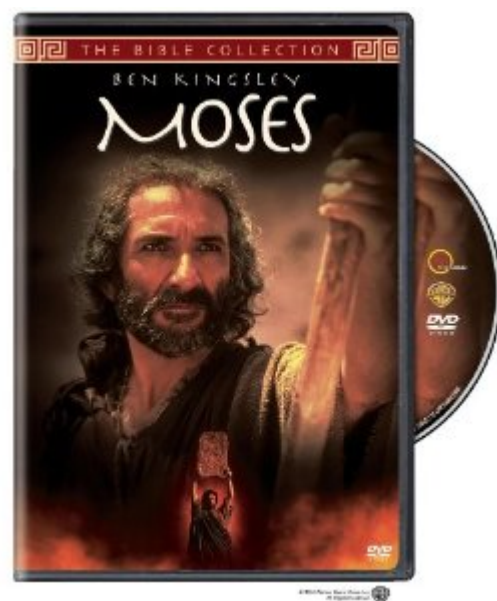
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This change will make it even easier for believers world-wide to continue encouraging each other and building each other up by using “Hearts Up” articles as one of the many tools available to them. We (authors) are glad for this change, which also corresponds to last month’s 3rd anniversary of the e-Publication, making it what we (authors) consider the 4th major publication from the *Keys To Understanding Life Series*.

WHOLESOME MOVIES. Don’t forget to check out the movies we’ve listed on our [LINKS To Other Hearts](#) page on the *Keys* website. You may find some of them helpful tools for generating discussion and learning. You might consider some of them useful for variety in small groups, study groups or even to help you discuss various life issues with your kids in the privacy of your own home! We do recommend that you preview the movies first in order to ensure they will meet your needs and goals for using them.



(photo from Amazon.com)

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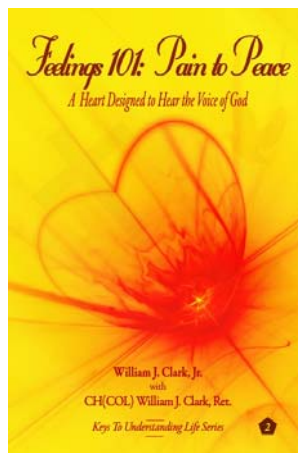
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ENDNOTES

¹ Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, G2919.

² Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, G2595.

³ Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, G1385.

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God bless you.

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