

1. Judging others.

Principle –Knowing that we are all vulnerable to sin, we are not to be harshly critical of the sin of others, but in a loving way we are to deal with sin amongst us.

Key Scripture:

James 4:11-12 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the **law** and judges it. When **you judge** the **law**, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbour?

Romans 14:3-4 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you **to judge** someone else's **servant**? To his own master he stands or falls.

Matthew 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as **snakes** and as innocent as **doves**.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Matthew 7:1-5 "**Do not judge**, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Comment

Scripture cautions us not to put ourselves above the law nor to take on the role of passing judgement on God's behalf. We are each individually answerable to God for our actions, so we are not to set ourselves up as judges of our "fellow slaves". However we are challenged to be discerning about our own behaviour and the behaviour of those around us. This must be in the context that sin in others is viewed mercifully – with the Scripture charging us to be harsher on our own sin (the plank) than the sin of others (the speck). We are to be alert to the sin around us (snakes) but gentle in our response (doves). It is God's job to judge the sin of the unsaved, but it is our collective job as Christians to deal with any serious sin that is amongst us (ie within the Church/Body of Christ).

Application in daily life??

- Ignoring our own sin while focusing on the sin of others is part of our fallen nature.
- When we take our eyes off Christ, we easily fall into the habit of trying to perfect our fellow saints. This is God's job (ie someone else's servants – and often the things we focus on are a matter of personal opinion – these things we should leave to God). We should only respond to those things in the lives of our fellow Christians that are clearly and obviously sin – and when we do, with gentleness, knowing that we too are vulnerable to sin.
- Just because we have not (yet?) succumbed to certain temptations, we should not condemn or look down on those who have.
- Equally, we are to encourage people to deal with sin in their lives, otherwise we send the message that sin is OK (when clearly it isn't). The best way to do this is to focus on dealing with our own sin, rather than the sin of others.
- Beware self-righteousness! This comes when we think that we are "not like other men". (Luke 18:11). This makes us hypocrites. I believe the Institutional Church

has often fallen for this trap by rejecting people who exhibit certain “unacceptable” sinful behaviour (eg homosexuality), but at the same time accepts people who have “acceptable” sin (eg love of wealth and status). A perfectly legitimate opportunity for Satan to accuse us!

- Avoid the trap of trying to justify our own sin by comparing it to the sin of others. God’s standard for holy living is absolute, not relative.
- Be aware that others see the contradictions in our lives as readily as we can see it in theirs – do we want them pointing this out as often as we want to do it for them?

Our example?? Do we have Christ’s understanding of the consequences of our fallen nature – that we all struggle with temptation and sometimes we fall into it. Do we give others the same understanding that we expect when we sin?