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Reframe: 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?

Luke 6:37-42

Jason Kramme

We have all been there. Sometime in the last few years, or last week, we've been online on social media or on a news site of some kind and we've read something that someone said, and we flipped into judgement mode.

"How could they be so ignorant!"

"Clearly they haven't thought about this!"

"Those people would think that way..."

So then, what do we do when we see these things that often trigger us? Well, some familiar things. We fight: we'll get into a knockdown, drag out, forever long back and forth online with these people wherein lots of productive dialogue happens, right? Wrong. Or how about freezing? We'll see what they say, how they say it, and we'll get locked into a "my people" and "those people" relationship that forever and always puts distance between you and that person so that you don't mix. Also, unproductive. Then, there is flight. We run away. We avoid it all. We avoid them. The digital version of that is we just unfollow the, because you know, good upper midwestern people we are, we wouldn't unfriend them, so we just slide them out of our view.

I do this more than I should. On my Facebook, I have two friends lists. The first is the list of people whose posts I want to see. But, then I have a second, hidden list of people that I really don't want to engage with. It's my digital version of the flight response.

So, how did they get there? Well, we disagreed—a lot and I wouldn't say on minor issues. That list has people from my family tree that I don't want to talk with anymore because they remind me of old family wounds. There are people whom I disagree with about politics. There are people who I have personal beefs with that I don't care to follow. Then there are all kinds of people that landed on the list because they just won't stop sharing memes. You know who you are.

There are days when I grieve the list and I wish that it could be different. When I think about the kind of life I want to have and that God says we can have, we weren't made to have a two-list life. God has more for us. So, how does Jesus help us reframe these situations where we disagree with people in a deeper, fuller way?

Our text for today comes from a semi-famous story in the New Testament where we have Jesus squaring off with the religious leaders and teachers of the law. These are absolutely people that you would expect him to just unfollow. Let's read it. This comes from Luke 6:37-42

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." Then Jesus gave the following illustration: "Can one blind person lead another? Won't they both fall into a ditch? Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher. "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God.

Now, if you had to distill this story down into a bottom line for Sunday School, then what are some of those bottom lines or t-shirt sayings you would include? We usually use it to mean that you shouldn't judge people because you have also done bad things, too. It's a moral rule that makes some intuitive sense, BUT it isn't the full sense of what Jesus is getting at here. So, what is the fuller meaning of how Jesus is reframing difficult relationships?

Richard Rohr said the point of following Jesus is to help us see ourselves the way that God sees us. Or to even, see God seeing us. AND to see others the way God sees them. So, more than just a witty way to say, “don’t judge others,” this passage is a call to deeper introspection and understanding of ourselves and others SO THAT we can begin to interface with people with the sight and heart of God. In other words, we need to change the way we see if we want to start teasing out the lists we thought about earlier. Do’s and don’ts, should and shouldn’ts are OK, but there is deeper work to do.

So, to that work we go this morning: we need to know what makes up our log or frame in our eye to change our relationships. For the sake of today’s teaching, I want you to think of a cross-section of a log. What will you see? Rings. Now, I want to suggest that each of these rings is an important part of the current way we see ourselves and the world around us that we need to address if we are to begin to see differently. So, what are those rings. I’m going to need your help.

Definition: Culture is the shared set of (implicit and explicit) values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior that allow a social group to function and perpetuate itself.

Example: We live in what many anthropologists, or people who study people, call The West. And the West has a culture. What are some of the hallmarks of that culture and where do we see them?

Here in America, we value freedom of the individual. Autonomy. Self-determination. We can see that enshrined in our legal documents and in what TV Guide says is our favorite TV show, Yellowstone. Additionally, we value independent thinking, not being told what to think or how to behave. We can see this in both libertarian political thinking and liberal arts education that encourages us to have new ideas. Finally, we value exploring and creativity. We are the culture that created Star Trek, the next generation, Star Wars, the Marlboro Man, and again, Yellowstone.

This is but one culture in the world, and it is but one culture in America. There are many. What are some of the other cultures that you are aware of and what are their values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior?

The second ring in our log is the ring of experience. Definition – Experience is a fairly simple idea. The definition is simply, “events that someone has lived through.”

Example: An interesting way to think about how experience shapes the way that we see is by considering the major generational experiences from the youth of each generation. Gen Z, you’ve got a pandemic. Millennials lived through 9/11. Gen X saw the Challenger explosion and the gulf war. Boomers went to space and Vietnam. The silent generation went to Korea and picked up the pieces after WWII. The greatest Generation saw the Great War.

All of these experiences shape the way our generational cohorts experience the world at a macro level, but we all have our own individual and communal experiences that shape our worldview as well. Kids, marriage, health emergencies, jobs, friends, vacations, and so on. What are some of the experiences that you would say are significant to the way you see the world?

The third ring in our log is the ring of Family. We all have a family of origin.

Definition – This is the unit of people that cared for you as a child and the accompanying learned relationship cues and culture. First of all, notice that I did not say “biological family.” People come from a whole range of family systems. Additionally, notice the addition of “relationship cues and culture.” Families are a micro-culture unto themselves with their own values, roles, responsibilities, and worldview.

Example: So what are some examples of families of origin? Many people come from blended families that have been recombined through divorce and remarriage. Other people have been raised by grandparents. There are folks who have been raised in foster care or have been adopted into new families. Some people live in multi-

generational households. Some people live with one parent, two moms or two dads. The bottom line is that there are many more families of origin than our typical Norman Rockwell vision of the nuclear family would have us imagine.

Now, they are also microcultures. Each of these families have values and rules and ways of organizing power. Some families are open, and welcome outsiders and influence. Others are very closed and conservative of their culture. Some families have certain beliefs around gender roles, finances, religion, school, and sports that play out in significant ways.

What did your family of origin look like and what were some of the unique cultural artifacts that impact how you see the world?

Our last ring is the ring of personality.

Definition: Personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns

Example: We live in the golden age of personality profiles, don't we? Everyone's a number, color, animal, sign, or pattern. Rather than exhaust a list of personality types, suffice it to say that there is variation, whether by nature or nurture among people. Those variations impact our seeing and can lead to connection or disconnection.

All that, right in there. Wow! So, how do we change it? What do we do with these now that we know they're there? I want to suggest a four-step process for you.

Step One is to get curious rather than cautious about your frame. The deep wisdom in this text, and the great irony Jesus is pointing out in the religious leaders he is using it on, is that they don't see the log in the first place. The reason is because they are cautious about challenging something that is so established and that feels so integral to who they are. It feels weird when you see how different cultures, personalities, and families' function. It causes you to wonder, "am I wrong?" and then "if I'm wrong, then am I bad?" Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying abandon

your culture, family, and personality. Instead, become curious. Be a learner. Honor it by investigating it.

Step two is to dialogue rather than denigrate the many other ways of seeing the world on offer. Many times, what we do when we're exposed to difference is feel as though we have to be the standard bearer for our way of seeing. One way of doing that is by trying to poke holes in the way other people see. The logic is that if I can lower them, then it'll make me higher. While that may work in the news media and politics, it isn't so good when you're trying to grow as a person and maintain relationships. To dialogue certainly means that you get to define and describe your frame, but mainly it means to let others do that first. It is to lean into the reality that you have two ears and one mouth.

Step three is to embrace grace and not guilt in your process of reframing. As the last few years have progressed, I've learned a lot about my frame, about the log in my eye that causes me to see the world in the way that I do. My initial reaction is guilt. I've done something wrong or bad. And you know what, there are times when that is a very real thing. My frame has caused me to alienate people, participate in systems that oppress people, and the like. It is right to acknowledge that. However, when we're trying to grow and connect, guilt can't be what we ultimately hold onto for ourselves and others. It has to be grace. Grace is so powerful because it exists not in spite of what we do wrong, but because of it. Paul says that the more he sins, the more God gives grace. It's true. Grace is what keeps us moving forward, keeps us curious, keeps us in dialogue—even when it is hard because it reminds us that doing so is drawing us deeper and deeper into the world that God is making in us and through us.

The last step is to repeat. The process of discipleship isn't a magic pill. It's a lifetime. God's claiming us is all at once, but our claiming new life is day by day. It is the renewing of our mind and spirit every single day. One day at a time, the Recovery Community says. To see the way that

God sees you, seeing others, you'll have to come back again and again for the rest of your life, trusting that the journey was the goal the whole time.

Friends, Jesus says that in this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world. You are going to encounter difficult people for the rest of your life, so instead of our natural fight, flight, and freeze response, let's follow Jesus' advice and reframe how we see people. Starting with how we see them. Let's do the hard work of getting curious about our stories and the stories of other people. Let's hold them together in dialogue so that we can learn and grow. Let's show ourselves and others grace more than we try to nail them for their guilt. And let us not do it just once, but as a practice that is integral to our discipleship.

Let's pray...

Pray

God, please open our eyes so that we can see you in all your fullness. And Lord, would you open the eyes of our heart so that we can see ourselves and our neighbor the way that you do. We pray this all in the name of your son, Jesus, Amen.