

ILIFE PART FIVE
CONDEMNATION ENGINEERING
MATTHEW 7:1-12
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S-1747

The Sermon on the Mount lays out the life we long to live—but living it seems so far out of reach. However, it must not be impossible because Jesus invites us to enter in and enjoy.

In Matthew seven Christ's life of love is put into practice in terms of how we so often try to evaluate, fix and fix other's behaviors.

In Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus deals with the deadly way in which we try to “manage” or control those closest to us by blaming and condemning them and by forcing upon them our “wonderful solutions” to their problems.

In Matthew 7:7-12, Jesus shows us a truly effective way of helping the people we love. The way of asking, seeking and knocking actually works, because it draws people into the kingdom rather than into the web of our devices and plans for them.

JESUS ENCOURAGES US TO REFRAIN FROM CONDEMNATION ENGINEERING.

“You Should Stop Doing It Like That” (Matthew 7:1-5).

We have great confidence in the power of condemnation to “straighten others out.”

Condemnation engineering is trying to mold behavior by scolding and condemning.

The path to transformation is not by condemnation engineering.

Most families would be healthier and happier if their members treated one another with the respect they would give to perfect strangers (Ephesians 4:29-30).

Condemnation always involves some degree of self-righteousness and of distancing ourselves from the one we are condemning.

When we condemn others we really communicate that he or she is, in some deep way, bad—and they and their behavior are to be rejected. Soon we are moving them into the realm of shame. Condemnation engineering can deeply wound to the very soul.

Condemnation brings anger. In return anger will attack back. If a counterattack is unacceptable, as often it is in a family setting, anger may be shoved beneath the surface and then come out in a variety of improper behaviors: perfectionism, procrastination, rejection of authority, or passive/aggressive tendencies among others.

Condemnation is the “board in our eyes.” We cannot “see clearly” how to assist others because we cannot see others clearly. We will never know how to truly help them until we have grown into the kind of person who does not condemn.

Who Can “Correct” Others (Galatians 6:1-2)?

We cannot surrender the valid practice of discerning how things are in the lives of others. We can, however, train ourselves to hold people responsible and discuss their failures with them—and even assign them penalties (if we are in positions over them) without attacking their worth as individuals. The spirit of agape love makes this possible.

Galatians 6:1-2: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

We don't undertake correction unless we are absolutely sure of the sin. Correction is reserved for those who live and work in the agape-love lifestyle of Christ.

Correction is not a matter of "straightening them out." The aim is to bring them back on the path of Jesus by a proper attitude of love.

The ones restoring must minister with the knowledge that they could well do the exact same thing they are attempting to restore in others. This attitude removes any sense of self-righteousness or superiority.

"I Know How To Fix It. You Ought To Do It My Way!" (Matthew 7:6).

The problem with pearls for pigs is not that pigs are unworthy. The problem is that pigs cannot digest pearls; and, dogs cannot eat Bible verses. The reason these animals finally "trample and tear us to pieces" is that one day when we attempt to give them another load of pearls—we are the one they can eat.

To a great extent, what matters in our approach is not just what we do, but how we do it—and when (Matthew 10:16).

JESUS ENCOURAGES US TO DRAW PEOPLE INTO THE KINGDOM RATHER THAN INTO THE WEB OF OUR DEVICES AND PLANS FOR THEM (Matthew 7:7-12).

Our approach to influencing others is simply to ask them to change, and to help them in any way they ask of us. "You might consider this..."

In our intimate relationships the request is often enough to bring the desired result, unless those relationships have been damaged by previous experience or the persons involved are too deeply scarred.

The "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12) perfectly captures the meaning and purpose of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 7:1-12 (and, in fact, for the entire Sermon). Instead of harassing others with our judgments and treasures, we stand before them with our helpless requests, while simultaneously standing before God Almighty King with our requests for them.

In the previous eleven verses agape love is concretely illustrated in three ways:

Not condemning or blaming those around us (vv. 1-5)

Not forcing "wonderful things" upon them (v.6)

Simply asking for what we want for them—and from God (vv. 7-11)

In kingdom life we extend the respect to others that we would naturally hope others would extend to us. This is how love behaves.

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