

Breaking Barriers – Judging & Shaming

Your words are powerful – show clip

IKEA plant clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yx6UgfQreYY>



Yet how much more damaging are harsh words to people.



I'm sure most of us can remember harsh words someone had said to us, but struggle to remember the good things. (I remember a childhood incident from a playground more than 30 years ago & I am sure that the other person has never thought about it since!) Our words, & their misuse, can be a huge barrier in our relationships with each other and our relationship with God.

Now, I know it is Mother's Day & you are probably thinking – Tracey, what are you thinking?? But our barriers we are going to look at today are Judging and Shaming. Happy Mother's Day!! But seriously, this is a huge issue and an issue that affects us all, but I think is especially an issue that us ladies are especially guilty of. If we can confront this barrier on it will be a huge Mother's Day gift to ourselves, our families and to our church.

Let's look at something that happened to Jesus at the temple.

John 8: 2-11. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

What was the intention of these teachers of the law and the Pharisees – if we can place ourselves in their minds we can see some of the reasons we judge people. These guys wanted to show Jesus up, they wanted to lord it over Him and show their theological prowess. The lady here was really just convenient victim. (we also have to ask who was she caught in adultery with and where was he??) This poor lady was shamed for their benefit – to win a war with Jesus – to either get him to break Jewish Law by not stoning her or breaking Roman law by stoning her.

Really here it was not about the sin (although nowhere is this passage does it say that what she had done was fine- sin is serious & Jesus at the end told her to 'leave her life of sin') but it was about trying to show Jesus up.

But surely we are not as bad as the Pharisees – it is not like we drag people out and stone them? (Hotcross buns) We may not physically do so but harsh words are like stones, we easily ruin a reputation by gossip, a harsh Facebook post complaining or a side remark to a friend. We are sinners and have a huge capacity for meanness and ugliness towards others.

So why do we judge & shame others?

- **We judge to make ourselves look good**

Just like the Pharisees we judge to make ourselves feel powerful or good about ourselves. Pointing out the wrongs of others is so easy.

- **We judge when being right is more important than people**

Have you every met someone who just had to be right and spend all their effort proving it? When Jenny was three she had a huge argument with us about the bath – it ended ‘It’s my bath!’. For about 6 months after that every time she argued about something it ended with ‘But it is my bath!’. She could not let it go. We saw a couple of weeks ago when Neil looks at the barrier of Religion that keeping the rules and being right can be more important than caring for people.

- **We judge to condemn and to humiliate**

We too easily judge and right people off – we become judge, jury and executioner. They have a saying that hurt people hurt people. The Pharisees’ power was threatened by Jesus – He wounded their pride & threatened their position. Therefore, they lashed out. Yet Jesus reminded the Pharisees that they were in no place to judge.

Matthew 7.7 “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

Do you remember that thing we used to teach children about pointing your finger: When you point a finger at someone else remember that there are 3 pointing back at you? We need to lay down our stones – because we are in no better position than anyone else.

Jesus also said this about judging others:

Matthew 7: 1-5 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.³ “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?⁴ 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?⁵ 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.

I love the visual bible’s version of this – Jesus grabbed a walking stick from one of the crowd and held it up to show how ridiculous it is to look at the speck on someone else’s eye when there is a plank in yours.

- **You are not qualified to judge!**

You see we are just not qualified to judge – we may appear to have gotten it together on the outside, but the reality is that none of us are without sin, so none of us are qualified to sit in judgement over others. Yes, we must speak truth about sin we see in each other’s lives, but that goes hand in hand with receiving that same truth in

return – that’s not easy. It should come from a place of loving correction, not a place of condemnation and shaming.

Ladies, I think we are especially harsh on one another. Whether it be about parenting styles, to work or not to work, TV time, snack contents etc.

I saw this on social media the other day & loved it:



We need to be building each other up, not breaking each other down.

- **Judging of self**

But there is another form of judgement and shaming that we face also (take out the mirror) – the judging and shaming of self.

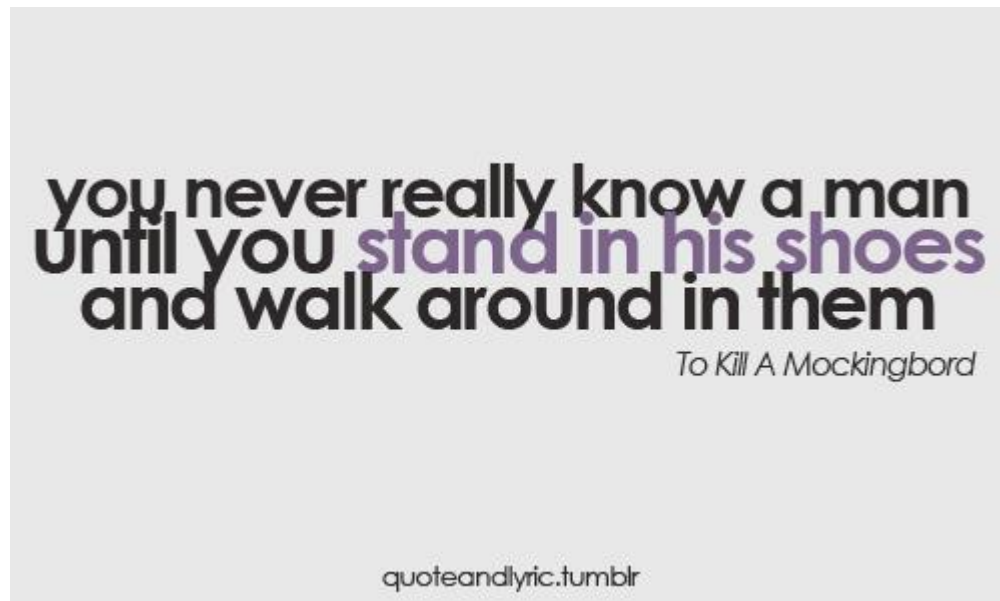
I honestly think that this one affects us all at some level and at different stages of our lives. If we were to do the same experiment as they did with the plants at Ikea and they played an endless recording of the words you speak to yourself how would that plant fair?

The bible has so much to say about our minds as there is so much going on there, you can have whole debates with yourself while busy talking to someone else. They are busy places and the mind is the source of sinful behaviour and habits. Jesus identified it in the sermon on the mount – if you thought about killing someone it is like you did.

Proverbs 23. 7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

So in our mind we can judge ourselves, often with less grace than God shows us. We compare ourselves to those around us and see that we don't measure up. There is always someone more beautiful, more successful, more happy. But what we often forget is that you are not always measuring yourself against reality – facebook is a carefully collated snapshot, not the whole truth. You have no idea what that person sitting three rows in front of you is going through.

When I was in school one of the books we were tortured with in English lit was to Kill a mocking bird.



Often you don't know who you are comparing yourself too and judging yourself based on their public persona, not their private one.

But we are also guilty of thinking we know what other people are thinking about us – we presume to be able to know how they think and heap that judgement upon ourselves also.

"You probably wouldn't worry about what people think of you if you could know how seldom they do."— Olin Miller

So how do we get to the point where we can smash up this barrier of judgement – of others and of ourselves? It has broken many a relationship, it has hurt people and stopped them from coming to church, or joining in and getting involved. Whether it be judging someone out loud, on social media etc, judging others in your head or judging yourself, how do we end it? It toxic and is a barrier in our relationships with each other and with God.

1. Examine yourself

Psalm 139: 23-24 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

We need to see ourselves through God's eyes and ask Him to show us our sin. We judge when we focus on the wrongs in others, instead of dealing with our own mess.

2. Have a proper perspective – God is the only one who can judge

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

We need to understand that only God is qualified to judge, only He is without sin, who is holy and perfect. We need to pack away our stones, and unarm ourselves. No one is perfect, no one is written off by God, everyone can be forgiven. There is no hierarchy of sin.

On Thursday we remembered Ascension Day – when Jesus ascended back to heaven after the resurrection. He is the one who had authority to judge us and the position – He is also the one who intercedes for us and asks God to show us grace rather than wrath:

Hebrew 1: 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

So get a proper perspective of who God is and who you are.

3. Guard your tongue

Proverbs 21.23 Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

The bible has a lot to say about thinking before you speak and watching your words. Words have power and lasting impact – what your tongue.

4. Take captive your thoughts

It is easier to watch your tongue if you are watching your thought life.

2 Corinthians 10: 3-6 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the

knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. ⁶ And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Sin starts in our minds – wrong judgements about people and hurtful words start in our mind too. It is easier to control your tongue if you are aware of your thought life.

And finally to help with judging self-talk

5. Know your worth

Psalm 139: 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

You need to understand that God did not make a mistake when He created you. The bible is full of verses that affirm how loved and how worthy you are – Jesus thought you worth dying for. Yes the bible also tells you that you sin and mess up, but you are worth finding a solution for. God does not abandon us or wash His hands of us when we mess up, so we should not do the same to ourselves or each other.

So looking at the three objects before us today which one do you need to lay down before God?

- Do you need to disarm yourself and lay down the weapons and stop judging, shaming and criticizing others? You are not qualified!
- Do you need to deal with the plank in your eye instead of focusing on the sawdust in someone else's?
- Do you need to stop speaking to the mirror and focus on who God says you are instead of the image you perceive before you?

I really want us to take these thoughts home today – implementing them is life and relationship changing. The only way that we can do this is by changing our way of thinking and filling our minds with what God says. So to help us I have a handout for everyone – you can pick it up at the door on the way out. It is a list of scripture of who God says you are. Take some time this week to read them and if you want pick one or two to memorise. When negative judging thought pop into you head call one of these up to correct your thoughts and take them captive. If your issue is judging others rather than yourself take this same list and instead of 'I am...' replace it with X is. Pray and ask God to help you see that person from His perspective, not from your little judge perspective. This can be a greatest Mother's Day gift you can give me – show yourself and each other some kindness this week.

Let's pray.