



“The Disposition of a Disciple”  
Luke 6:37-45

**Idea:** Christ’s disciples offer judgment without being judgmental.

**Intro:** Don and Sally are believers, and they had at one time been extremely faithful members in their local church. They both had trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in high school, and their conversion experiences were radical. You see, they both came from homes that were agnostic at best, so they knew nothing about Christ or His church. When they met Jesus, however, everything changed. They turned from their sin and began to follow Christ and instantly were different people. The taste they once had for the things of the world was replaced with a genuine hunger and thirst for righteousness. They loved sharing the gospel and their story with others and serving through their church.

These high school sweethearts got married in college and began to build a Christian home together. They were very involved in the collegiate ministry on their college campus and in a local church. After graduation, they moved to where they live now and joined a vibrant, gospel-centered church. For years, they raised their children in the church and served in numerous ways. Unfortunately, over time something began to change in them. The passion they once exhibited for the things of God began to dissipate. As a result, their church attendance and involvement began to steadily slip. The church’s leadership and members of their small group noticed the change. They even noticed that Don and Sally no longer displayed the passionate affection for one another that they once had. Something was noticeably off in their relationship.

The pastors wanted to help. They saw the signs of destruction on the horizon. The same was true of those in Don and Sally’s small group. As their friends, they were deeply concerned and heartbroken, but what could they do? They feared how Don and Sally might react if they said something to them about it. They wondered if their “prying” would destroy their friendship. The pastors did not want to run Don and Sally off. They wondered how they might address the situation of what was clearly visible without offending them. In the back of all their minds was the fear that by confronting Don and Sally they would be committing the most heinous of crimes. After all, in American culture the worst thing a person can do is judge someone else. It is immoral to do so because there is no way a person can know what is in the heart of another person.

Luke 6:37 serves as the *Magna Carta* of much of American culture today. There are many people who cannot recite a single verse in the Bible. Some of them do not even know that the Bible contains both an Old and a New Testament, but if they feel the slightest disapproval from someone else, they will instantly quote, “*Judge not, and you will not be judged.*” Is there really no room for judgment in our relationships and society? Does the Bible not also say, “*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy*” (Prov 27:6). Can we not or should we not make judgments and speak into situations? Honestly, it seems impossible to not

make a judgment in any situation. Think about it...we make a judgment soon after the barista hands us our coffee. "This is good," or "This is awful."

In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus is teaching His disciples, and specifically His apostles, how to make disciples. They are to love the unlovable, be kind to the unkind, be generous to the needy, and simply mimic the Father's example. Part of discipleship, as we shall see, is correcting error in our fellow brothers and sisters. In following the example of the Father, Jesus points out that correction is necessary. By definition, a correction involves judgment because an action is deemed to be in error. This judgment, however, is not to be judgmental.

Luke 6:37-45.

**Inquiry:** As we have learned in the sixth chapter of Luke, Jesus is greater than and the fulfillment of the Sabbath (vs. 1-5). He is the repose that this weekly day of rest foreshadowed. We have discovered that love compels the Lord to seek and heal broken people (vs. 6-11). He is our Life-Giver. We have also seen that out of His desire to heal the broken, Jesus appointed twelve men to preach the message of the Kingdom and demonstrate its presence by performing signs and wonders. These apostles would continue the work of Christ after He was gone. They would establish the Church and its doctrine.

Following the appointment of the apostles, Jesus came down the mountain with them to a "level place." There He presented the apostles with an object lesson. He offered lessons on discipleship. In verses 17-19, Jesus taught them then importance of standing on level ground with others and being with the people. He then went on to describe the profile, perspective, and practice of His disciples (vs. 20-36). In this next pericope or passage, we see the disposition of a disciple, and we understand that Christ's disciples offer judgment without being judgmental.

There are four words that I believe describe the disposition of a disciple presented by the Lord:

## 1. Magnanimous

How many times have you used magnanimous in the last week? The answer is probably none. We rarely use this word, which is a shame because this old word is beautiful. It is derived from two Latin terms, *magnus* ("great") and *animus* ("spirit"). Literally, the word means great spirited or great souled. It describes a lofty spirit that is generous and forgiving, especially toward a rival or less powerful person. Therefore, I agree with R. Kent Hughes that magnanimous is precisely the disposition the Lord commands His disciples to possess.

Jesus offered three characteristics of this magnanimous disposition.

### 1) Accepting

Jesus calls for an accepting disposition by issuing two negative, mutually defining charges.

*Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned...* (vs. 37a)

These statements are two of the most misunderstood and misapplied verses in the Bible. This misuse comes from the failure to understand them in their context as well as to take into consideration the Bible's over all call for believers to judge and condemn sin. The very context of this verse calls for a judgment to be made (vs. 43-45). And Paul called on the church in Corinth to make a judgment decision in regard to a church member who was engaged in grievous sexual morality (1 Cor 5). He later pointed out that believers will "*judge the world*" (1 Cor 6:2).

Jesus' urging to "*judge not*" and "*condemn not*" was not a suggestion to be morally neutral or to abdicate any moral responsibility. It was not a call for tolerance of sin in a person's life.

Instead, He was warning His disciples against a judgmental disposition that is so easily adopted, which is seen more clearly in a second characteristic.

## 2) Forgiving

*forgive, and you will be forgiven* (vs. 37b)

Again, as we read the words of this sermon, it is important to note that it is not the gospel. Jesus is not teaching how a sinner is forgiven and finds new life in Him. He is teaching His disciples how they are to live out the new life they have in Him. Therefore, we dare not read this verse as saying that we can and will be forgiven of sins by forgiving others. The point Jesus is driving home is that a forgiving disposition provides evidence that the person has received forgiveness of sin.

Christ's disciples can and do forgive others who have sinned against them. Obviously, this is not necessarily easy. Certain situations are so egregious that they can cause a believer to struggle with bitterness and hatred. Believers do not always immediately forgive due to the pain and severity of the sin, yet they, through the power of the Holy Spirit, work at forgiveness and ultimately do forgive. This brings us to a third characteristic of a magnanimous disposition.

## 3) Generous

*give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.* (vs. 38)

Contextually, this verse has nothing to do with how much believers tithe or place in the offering plate. The principle could be applied to biblical stewardship, but that is not the point. Rather, it speaks to how we regard and treat other people. Jesus calls for generosity in our judgments toward others. In that regard, when it comes to our judgment and perception of others, what goes around, comes around. If believers avoid a judgmental disposition toward others, then generally speaking this characteristic will be replicated back to them.

The disposition of Christ's disciple ought to be magnanimous. It is a lofty spirit that accepts, forgives, and is generous toward others because that is exactly how Jesus acts toward us. Disciples are not judgmental, but they do make judgments, which leads us to a second aspect of the disposition of a disciple.

## 2. Moral

Read Luke 6:39-40.

Disciples are disciple makers. The Great Commission personifies this truth (Matt 28:19). Jesus has been modeling this before His disciples. As He listens to and obeys the voice of the Father, He teaches His disciples to do the same. Verses 39-40 reflect the way in which spiritual life is imparted from person to person. Here the Lord utilizes two short parabolic examples to make the point. In the first, the idea of a blind man leading a blind man stresses the necessity of sight. The disciple must be able to see. In other words, he or she must be growing in Christ if those being led are to do the same. The better his or her vision is, the better disciple he or she will be.

In the second, the point is further made through the picture of a fully trained disciple resembling his or her teacher. It is important to note that during the first century, one's teacher was everything because there were no libraries or online training courses for the student. What was to be learned came from a teacher. Therefore, claiming to be above a teacher would have been the height of arrogance.

This image of a disciple being “*like his teacher*” was Jesus’ way of saying that the lives of disciples had to model spiritual vitality, which resulted in Godly morals. There is a great need for morality. What we are in our lives, our disciples will become. For this reason, there are few things more important in the life of a discipler than the authenticity of his or her life. The subtle flaws and faults in the teacher will often become the great flaws and faults of the student. At the same time, this is equally true for virtues. They can and do sometimes blossom beyond the teacher’s wildest imagination.

For disciples to be able to speak into the lives of others rightly and spiritually, there needs to be a strong commitment to morals. You cannot point out the pitfalls without a biblical understanding of and a commitment to what is right and wrong. Consequently, the disposition of a disciple is one that is moral.

Humility, however, is crucial, which brings us to a third word.

### 3. Meditative

Notice the hypocrisy that Jesus highlights in verses 41-42. He calls for a self-examination of one’s life. It is hypocritical to point out the sins in someone else’s life while denying or even covering up the glaring sin in our own lives. Once again, Jesus is not calling for an abdication of responsibility. It is important for believers to help one another out. A major part of discipleship is helping our brothers and sisters as they seek to put sin to death in their lives. We do this by confronting sin when it is seen. The approach we ought to take is redemptive and never penal. We want to encourage others to chase after Jesus. Therefore, in pointing out sin and areas of spiritual immaturity, the goal is to see Christ redeem and restore those areas for His glory and the good of the disciple. The struggle and challenge is to remain humble in doing so. There is a need, then, for believers to remain meditative. Self-examination, confession, and repentance ought to be the norm in the lives of those who profess to know Jesus Christ.

There is a fourth word that describes the disposition of a disciple.

### 4. Magisterial

As a disciple and as a disciple maker, judgments are good and necessary. There is a right and a wrong. There is a good way and a bad way, and it is important to make the distinction. While we know this biblically, we also recognize that our culture wants nothing to do with moral judgments. The preference would be to have morality without moral judgment, but it is impossible to have one without the other. I believe most people understand this principle even though they might deny it.

In verses 43-45, Jesus offers a horticultural proverb to address this issue and relates it anthropologically. His point is that empirical evidence makes it possible to know with complete certainty the kind of fruit a tree or plant is going to produce. In other words, if you plant an apple seed, then you will grow a tree that produces apples. At the same time, if you find a tomato plant growing in your garden, then you know it is not going to produce lemons. The fruit matches the root. As it relates to humanity, good fruit comes from a good heart, and bad fruit comes from an evil heart. What is in a man will come out of the man.

When a person comes into relationship with Jesus Christ, he or she is positionally transformed and made righteous. However, the person is not yet practically righteous. There is a need for ongoing sanctification as the person is conformed into the image of Christ. Some parts of the believer’s life that have not yet been sanctified are visible to the believer, and he or she is tackling and putting them to death. Others are not so visible. In some cases, the believer chooses not to recognize the areas. In this situation, it is important for fellow Christians in the church to come alongside and point out areas in need of growth. Therefore, we see here that the disposition of a disciple is magisterial. Disciples do make judgments. This is good and right. It is part of discipleship.

How should believers make judgments? Here are five suggestions from R. Kent Hughes:

- Humbly – Be aware of your own sinfulness and frailty.
- Prayerfully – Confession of your sin is necessary.
- Biblically – Judgment must be in accordance with God’s Word, nothing more and nothing less.
- Lovingly – Have the best interests in mind for the other person.
- Mercifully – This is at the core of how Jesus engages with us.

How should believers offer judgments?

- Exemplarily – Let your life reflect the goodness you are calling out in others.
- Privately – It should always begin privately (Matt 18:15).
- Gently and Constructively – The goal is redemptive restoration (Gal 6:1-2).

**Conclusion:** Don and Sally were walking at a guilty distance. The sweet fellowship they once enjoyed with the Lord, His church, and even between themselves was lost. Something was noticeable off, and everyone who knew and loved them could see it. They wanted to step in and help, but how could they do so? What if Don and Sally were offended by their prying? Would it not be judgmental to bring into question their walk with the Lord and marriage?

This situation and others like it are difficult. As a brother or sister in Christ, we want to step in and help because we clearly see the danger they are heading toward. At the same time, we do not want to hurt their feelings, bring shame to their lives, or come across as being judgmental. The easiest thing would be to do nothing and look the other way. Is that, however, the disposition a disciple should have? The Bible would say, “No!”

*<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

– Hebrews 10:23-25

The “*confession of our hope*” speaks of the covenant we have made with one another as fellow church members, and the consideration of “*how to stir up one another*” speaks of our willingness to get involved and not let a brother or sister walk at a guilty distance. There are times when the “*faithful...wounds of a friend*” are necessary (Prov 27:6).

The pastors and a couple small group members at Don and Sally’s church heeded Jesus’ words and humbly confronted their friends. They refused to leave them alone in their sin, but instead, they sought to win them back. The confrontation was difficult. It was messy, but in the end Don and Sally repented and returned to fellowship with the Lord, His church, and between themselves.

The goal in this kind of confrontation is always redemptive. The disposition of a disciple should be magnanimous, moral, meditative, and magisterial as the believer sees and seeks the best in others. Is this not how the Lord works toward us?

How are you responding to the people around you whose lives are burning to the ground? Are you willing to step in and help? Thankfully, the Lord is always willing and wanting to step in our lives.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Do you need to be forgiven?