

HOW TO CHANGE OTHERS

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All of us have, at one time or another, thought how much happier we would be if the difficult people in our life would change. Most of us, can testify, we have been hurt by family members, friends and associates who we think have slighted us in some way or another; or who have been rude or insensitive to our needs, and many of us have spent years in agonizing prayer, praying for troublesome people in our lives to change but have not seen the results we have so desired.

In order for others to change, we must first change ourselves. Jesus said in Matthew 7:3 “And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” In other words, Jesus is telling us that, before we can tell our neighbors what’s wrong with them, we’d best have “our own backyard” cleaned up.

First of all, how do I know I have a “log in my eye”? The answer is simple. I know I have a log in my eye when I am despairing over the behavior of another person. Secondly, what is a log and what is a speck? The speck is what is bothering me about the other person. The log that Jesus is telling me I must first deal with before getting the speck out of the eye of another, has to do with my own wrong behavior and the wrong responses I have made to my own mother and father, for instance. The person with the speck is just mirroring what God wants to change in me. I am reaping what has been sown because of my sin and wrong reactions to unhealed hurts, unmet needs and because of unresolved issues.

The law of sowing and reaping says we get the exact thing we plant, later than we plant and more than we plant. The Scripture says that the deeds of a man’s hands will return to him and by our standard of measure it is measured back to us. Deuteronomy 5:16 says “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee.” This Scripture teaches that life will go well for us in any area we can honor our father and mother, and life will not go well for us in any area we have not honored our mother and father. To honor means to forgive them by sundown for their poor stewardship of us. Ephesians 4:26-27 says, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.” In other words, we have until sundown to forgive; otherwise, we set in motion forces that cause us to reap in kind what we have sown.

When we encounter difficult people, there are at least two principles working. (1) Either I have treated others the way I am being treated or (2) I have judged my mother and father for treating me the way I am being treated. Repentance brings release. When I take accountability for my wrong behavior and/or judgments I have made on my own parents, then there will be change. When I deal with my log, I change. Others then will either change, my perception of them will change or no longer does it matter to me if they change. Usually, I find that, because it is no longer an issue in my heart, their speck just falls out of their eye.

1 John 3:21 says, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” Because my conscience is now clear, I now not only have faith and trust in God, but I have freedom of speech. If need be, I now have the liberty to talk with them unhindered about their speck. So, if you want others to change, you must first change yourself. Hallelujah! Glory to God!

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