

In the Barn!

Barneys Newsletter



No. 25– September 13th

Isolation

has been teaching me this year.

One of the biggest challenges this year has been feeling so isolated and disconnected.

I personally have long-term health issues that have made my immune system weak. I'm very susceptible to illness, and even though as a young person

I wouldn't immediately come to mind as someone at high risk, my immune and respiratory issues make it likely that if I contracted COVID-19 I'd likely get very sick. I've had to make some hard decisions about seeing people and working since lockdown, having had to say no to a lot of things I wouldn't otherwise miss. I've been limited to seeing people one-to-one or in very small groups, and only working with individual clients. Even within these limitations, I have to be very careful about social distancing and evaluating risk

**by Elise
Brake**

I've been encouraged hearing from different people in our church family during the services about the challenges of life during COVID-19, the things they are thankful for and what God is teaching them. Here is a reflection on my particular challenges, reasons I am thankful and how God

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“Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged. For with the judgement you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

Matthew 7:1

had this thrown back in your face or at least said to you if you have ever suggested the way something is happening is ‘wrong’, “against how God would have us live” or sadly, if you have tried to point out to a fellow Christian some sinful behaviour in their life.

In reality, it’s likely that you have only been quoted the first three words “do not judge”. Probably in an attempt to shut you up or to make you feel guilty for mentioning anything.

As David so helpfully outlined for us on Sunday, this verse at the beginning of chapter 7 is not a blanket cover for us to never speak up against sin and injustice.

JUDGING AND DISCERNING

why we must not shy away from talking about sin.

It doesn’t mean we are to never take action to discern when something wrong has happened and it definitely doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be cautioning our brothers and sisters against sin we see in their lives.

In fact, in other parts of the Bible we are called to be discerning and wise and to use our judgement. In many places in the Old Testament people are called to judge against those who are unjust and to call out sin (Deuteronomy 1:16-17, Proverbs 27:5, Proverbs 28:23, Proverbs 29:15, Ecclesiastes 7:5).

In 1 Corinthians 2:15 (CSB), Paul says that the “spiritual person...can evaluate everything”, speaking particularly about God revealing to us His plan for how to live and for salvation and how we are to discern and understand it. Again in chapter 5, Paul talks about the importance of judging those who are claiming to be part of

the church and yet are living lives completely contrary to God’s way (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

In the letter to the Galatians, we see it is part of our duty as Christian family that when we see our brothers and sisters sinning, we are to rebuke them and urge them back to righteousness. God wants us to spur one another in love to be living for Him. “Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1, CSB)

These ideas of rebuking and judging are not spoken about as an opportunity to simply ‘be judgy’ about everything. Motive is so important. We are told to be gracious, to be motivated by love for each other and a desire to see God glorified in all of our lives.

Rebuking is also held in tension with the reminder that we ourselves are sinful and that we need to be wary of the sin in our own lives. Hence Jesus goes on to talk about taking the log out of our own eye,

before pointing out other’s sin. And in the letter to the Romans Paul reminds us that if we judge others and then do the same things; God’s judgement falls heavily on us (Romans 2:1-3, CSB).

It’s definitely a hard line to walk. To righteously judge and call out sin (out of love and genuine concern), but also to ensure that there isn’t some sin that we need to deal with first so that we aren’t hypocritical. I know all too well in my life that I am often too nervous, cowardly, or just don’t care enough about the salvation and righteousness of my fellow brothers and sisters that I often err on the side of not saying anything. I hope instead that someone else will mention it or assume “it’s just not really a big deal.” But sin is serious. It can lead us astray and damage or disqualify us from salvation and we should treat it as God does. We need to love our brothers and sisters by calling out their sin, but we need to be gracious in our manner and deeply aware of our own sinful nature too. We need to pray that God through His Holy Spirit will help us in this area.

by **Nicky Gangemi**

Thinking Further

- Do you sit down and assess your life and take time to be aware of the sin in your life and repent?
- Have you ever tried to rebuke someone? What were your motives (judgy-judgement? Wanting them to be righteous?)
- How can you open up more conversations with people about sin in your life and sin in their lives?

Spend some time praying.

over the benefit of in person contact. As someone who really loves being around people, this has been a very isolating time. I especially miss the joy of gathering in person in bible study and as a church community on Sundays.

Even though it has been a difficult time, I'm very thankful for how the period of lockdown and my present limitations have provided an opportunity to be much more intentional in relationships. While not the same as seeing

people in person, I am thankful for technology that enables me to be able to communicate regularly with friends, and to virtually 'attend' church and bible study. I'm thankful that we've been able to continue running Girls For God online, providing a space for the girls to connect and still teach them from God's word. It's really a highlight of my week to hear how the girls are going, listen to their hilarious stories and to see them grow in their knowledge of Jesus. The loss of regularly gathering at church in person has helped me to reflect on how special and important Christian fellowship is, and how it really

is a gift that God has given us to be part of the local and global church. I'm also thankful for how COVID has forced me to rest well as I've taken this year off studying to recover from burn-out.

God has been teaching me a lot about trusting in his sovereignty. I'm so thankful to have the assurance of eternal life in Jesus. Life is so uncertain and nothing is guaranteed, but we have a sure and certain hope in him. That means that no matter what we face in this life – sickness, grief, trauma, unemployment, a pandemic – we can trust that God is at work for his glory. We don't have to fear any of these things, because our security isn't in this life but in the life to come. We know that God is still working to grow his kingdom even in these difficult circumstances. One of my favourite verses, and one I've really clung to this year, is 2 Cor 4:16-18: *"Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."* I hope these words are a comfort to you, and that you are able to keep persevering in faith, no matter what challenges you are personally facing right now.

Find-A-Word - Judgement

Christian	Glorified	Listen	Righteous
Church	Gracious	Lockdown	Spiritual
Communicate	Highlight	Opportunity	Sunday
Definite	Inward	Proverbs	Tempt
Ecclesiastes	Limitations	Relationship	Unemployment

H S U N D A Y T X N E T S I L
 C T P M E T H I G H L I G H T
 R C O M M U N I C A T E M I M
 U B S B R E V O R P G Y Q A C
 H Y B L A U T I R I P S U Q H
 C S U O I C A R G T T L G H R
 S E T S A I S E L C C E Z L I
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