

He Slammed His Fist Down

Written by Bill Perkins

One day a man sat across from my desk and accused me of insensitivity. Not a novel observation. In the past my mother, father, wife, children, best friends, casual acquaintances, and strangers had pointed it out to me. That's why his insight didn't bother me. One thing did bother me though. I disliked the sledge-hammer way he delivered the message.

The Jack-Hammer

I thanked him for his reproof and told him I'd pray about it. A few days later he dropped by my office again. This time he traded the sledge-hammer for a jack-hammer. After he had banged away for a while, I gently suggested perhaps what bothered him about my personality flaw was that he too possessed it.

Never in my wildest dreams could I have anticipated his response. All reason fled as he exploded with the rage of a harpooned whale shark. He slammed his fist down on my desk. "How dare you suggest I'm like you?" Veins stood out on his bull neck, strong hands, and powerful arms. Only the desk separated me from his wrath. He stood, turned, stomped out of my office and slammed the door behind him.

After he left, when the adrenaline had washed out of my system, I wondered how he could continue to deny the truth about himself. He hated in me what characterized him.

The Speck and the Plank

Jesus talked about this flaw when he said, "How can you tell someone, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye, when you don't see the beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from someone else's eye. "For no good tree produces rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree produce good fruit." (Luke 6:41-42).

It's not that we shouldn't point out other's weaknesses. But we need to realize what we condemn in others is often a problem we possess to a greater degree. The "plank" Jesus referred to was a large piece of wood that a carpenter would shape into a beam. As the carpenter worked on the plank, chips of wood would fly into the air. In essence, the "speck" was a small piece of the "plank."

We All Are

I too am guilty of this. We all are. Why? Because we're all afflicted with pride. It's the ugliest of sins because it's the root of all sins. Such awareness should drive us to follow Jesus' advice and humbly deal with our own weaknesses rather than focusing on those of a friend or adversary.

You may insist you're not like him. You don't have her defects. I know how you feel. My pride prickles at the thought that I possess the very weakness I see in someone else. But it was no pop psychologist who made the observation. Jesus did. Would you accuse him of being wrong? Such a thought smacks of . . . hmmm. It smacks of pride, doesn't it? Don't underestimate the persuasive and deceptive power of pride. It urges us to view our weaknesses through a telescope and our enemies through a microscope. Humility turns it around.