

# Flourishing as a Follower

## Introduction

What would you consider to be the most well-known verse of Scripture?

D. A. Carson—my generation's J. I. Packer—in a commentary on John suggested that until recently, the best known verse in the Bible was John 3:16—and most people reading this article would probably agree. You could see this verse on signs at sporting events and it is easily the most Googled verse in the world. However, Carson adds that today it has possibly been displaced by Matthew 7:1.2 Matthew 7:1? You may not recognise the reference, but you will know the content: 'Do not judge, or you too will be judged.' Carson might equally have referred to Luke 6:37a: 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged.' This teaching forms part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and his Sermon on the Plain in Luke. And it is the passage we deal with today.

## Main Idea

Bring together a couple of ideas:

- Flourishing, the good life, the combination of Greco-Roman wisdom literature and Jewish apocalyptic tradition - *this is the context of Jesus' teaching*
- Instructions for his followers and the community of followers – general charges as opposed to specific examples - *like Proverbs, general truths about how to live as a disciple of Christ in the world*

To flourish as a disciple you need to have the posture/attitude/disposition of a disciple and you need to act accordingly.

To flourish as a follower of Christ one must have a posture of Christ-like love thereby loving others and being loved by God. To flourish as a community of followers of Christ we must relate to each other with Christ-like love and in turn will receive God's love.

To flounder and falter as a follower of Christ one need only take on a harsh, critical, hypocritical posture and thus receive the same treatment from God. To flounder and falter as a community of disciples we need only treat each other with stinginess, callousness, and greediness.

The community aspect becomes clear when one considers the application points in regards to having a godly posture of love that encourages flourishing: be careful who you follow, be careful who you learn from, be careful how you lead and teach.

3 Statements that in D.A.C. He writes...

## Luke 6:37-42 ESV

<sup>37</sup> “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> 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.”

<sup>39</sup> He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. <sup>41</sup> Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

## 4 Commands and 4 Rewards

### 2 Negative Commands

**“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned;”**

What this admonition doesn't mean:

- It does not mean we are never to evaluate anything from an ethical or moral standpoint - *which is what the culture thinks and why they have adopted this verse*
- *Seen emphatically in Matthew* In Matthew: **Matthew 7:1-2, 6 ESV** <sup>1</sup>“Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup>Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.
- In Luke: **Luke 11:42-44 ESV** <sup>42</sup>“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>43</sup>Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. <sup>44</sup>Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.”
- “forgive, and you will be forgiven”

It is an admonition to evaluate our attitude and posture towards others.

We are to consider our deportment in our relationships and responses to others.

It is a call to consider whether we are arrogant, harsh, and hostile in our evaluation of others.

Do we only offer guilt and shame instead of grace, mercy, and hope?

Are we overly critical and fault-finding to the point of being hypocritical and engaging others with a superiority complex that belies our hard-heartedness?

*★ personally convicting - I have a predisposition to be cynical, critical, and harsh.  
- Is that my posture? Is that my attitude?*

## 2 Positive Commands

**“forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.”**

Having admonished and exhorted his disciples with the negative examples Jesus now expresses similar sentiments positively.

We are to love others demonstrating a gracious and merciful posture towards other; we are to forgive others who have, presumably, sinned against us.

**Ephesians 4:32 ESV** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

This is not a call to ignore sin or deny guilt but rather to not withhold forgiveness to those who repent.

We are also to display an attitude that promotes our flourishing and the flourishing of others by, in love, giving generously to others.

### **Proverbs 3:27-28 ESV**

<sup>27</sup> Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

<sup>28</sup> Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it” —when you have it with you.

We are to give to others, and as we will see in a moment, what is pictured is overflowing generosity.

These 4 commands or admonitions all come with the promise of rewards.

→ 2018 giving

- 98% of budget
- 3rd best December
- spending - prudent therefore surplus
- good start to 2019

## Rewards

- Why should we not harshly judge others? So we will not be harshly judged.
- Why should we not condemn others with hostility? So we will not be condemned in a hostile manner.
- Why should we forgive? So that we will be forgiven.
- Why should we give? So we will be given to.

The universal truth of reaping what we sow comes in to play here.

Jesus is saying the posture we take with others will be the posture God takes with us. Actions coming out of unloving attitudes will be met with ~~the same~~ <sup>seriousness</sup>. Deeds arising out of a gracious disposition will be met with the same.

We often like to think that virtuous Christian living should be bereft of any consideration of reward; that we should do it just because. And yet that is not how God has revealed his will for us ... rewards are mentioned far more often than not. What's more, Jesus wants not only to get his disciples thinking about reward but he wants them motivated by it. He wants them to be excited by it. So much so that he presents a vivid illustration of the reward.

## In Your Lap

*ice cream cone* *popcorn*  
**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."**

The illustration demonstrates the desired disposition: if you are graciously and generously loving towards others God will treat you graciously and generously.

One commentator, J. Jeremias, writes, *"The measuring of the corn is a process which is carried out according to an established pattern. The seller crouches on the ground with the measure between his legs. First of all he fills the measure three-quarters full and gives it a good shake with a rotary motion to make the grains settle down. Then he fills the measure to the top and gives it another shake. Next*

he presses the corn together strongly with both hands. Finally he heaps it into a cone, tapping it carefully to press the grains together; from time to time he bores a hole into the corn and pours a few more grains into it, until there is literally no more room for a single grain. In this way the purchaser is guaranteed an absolutely full measure; it cannot hold more" (cited in Darrell L. Bock).

⇒ This is God's disposition towards us... we should reflect on this AND anticipate this!

J. C. Ryle summarizes this passage nicely, writing,

*In the last place — our Lord assures His disciples that the practice of the high standard of charity He recommends, shall bring its own REWARD. "Do not judge — and you will not be judged. Do not condemn — and you will not be condemned. Forgive — and you will be forgiven. Give — and it will be given to you." And He concludes with the broad assertion, "For with the measure you use — it will be measured unto you."*

*The general meaning of these words appears to be that no man shall ever be a loser, in the long run — by deeds of self-denying charity, and love. At times, he may seem to get nothing by his Christ-like conduct. He may appear to reap nothing but ridicule, contempt, and injury. His kindness may sometimes tempt men to take advantage of him. His patience and forbearance may be abused. But at the last, he will always be found a gainer — often, very often, a gainer in this life — certainly, most certainly, a gainer in the life to come!*

## GOSPEL

I want to address the idea of "the believer always being found a gainer" to those of you here this morning who have yet to come to Christ, who have never surrendered your life to God through Christ by repentance and faith.

One reason I believe many people resist coming to Christ is they rightly recognize that there is loss involved: the loss of autonomy and sovereignty over self (an autonomy and sovereignty which I would say is contrived), the loss of pleasure, the loss of a peer group, the loss of family relationships. And in a sense, that is correct way to think about becoming a Christian. But, it is an incomplete way of thinking of becoming a Christian.



There is loss. But, at the last, the Christians will always be found a gainer. And that is emphasized when we consider how much mankind has already lost; we live life apart from Christ as those who are infinite losers.

Through sin—the things we do contrary to God’s will—we have lost everything. We lost innocence. We lost our freedom being unable not to sin. We lost peaceful co-existence with each other. We lost moral perfection. We lost spiritual life. And most importantly, we lost God!

But, when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our gain is infinite: we gain *everlasting* forgiveness; we gain infinite purity; we gain ultimate freedom; we gain eternal peace with humanity; we gain perfect, eternal righteousness; WE GAIN GOD! And all this gain comes because Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty our sin merited and through his death we have all these blessings, the greatest of which is reconciliation with the Father.

Unbeliever, do not think that any man comes to Christ in faith and leaves a loser. You will always be found a gainer. I encourage you this morning to consider Christ and avail yourselves of Christ’s work.

### 3-2 Illustrative Applications

These applications are coming out of the beatitudes which discussed flourishing as disciples in the kingdom of God which requires a present and future oriented perspective that sees God as central, as opposed to our circumstances, and results in virtuous living. These applications flow out of the “love your enemies passage” which laid out the necessity of love for the flourishing of disciples. And these applications flow out of today’s passage which illustrates and emphasizes and delineates the posture and practice of love over against the arrogance, conceit, and self-seeking of the world. With this in mind Jesus presents the importance of humility through self-awareness and self-examination.

### Humble Self-Examination

**<sup>39</sup> He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.**

Jesus employs rhetorical questions to indicate that many people who would want to lead others are blind and that is a recipe for disaster. The word used for pit here does not mean a slight depression. It means a massive, dangerous chasm. The implication for his disciples is clearly that they need to consider their own blindness in regards to things of the kingdom of God. *and specifically in regards to what he has just instructed!*

And since generally disciples ~~will be~~ <sup>are</sup> called upon to disciples, and these specific disciples would be called upon to lead and teach the church, Jesus reminds them of their place—not above him—and encourages them that they will be like him if they are able to evaluate their own blindness, be humble, and learn from him.

**Main Application:** Through humbling self-examination, be like Christ (particularly in regards to the flourishing posture of love).

How:

1. See the standard – the teacher *(+ God's revealed will)*
2. See the shortfall – the disciple
  - a. **Robert Murray McCheyne:** “Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief!
3. Pray to the teacher for help to reach the standard

**Secondary Application:** Be careful who you follow; be careful how you lead!



### To Remove a Speck, Remove a Beam

<sup>41</sup> Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Speck = flake of wood, straw, or chaff (in this case wood)

Beam = main beam of a building

This has the tone of a rebuke. An unloving, selfish, conceited, anti-flourishing posture is evident when one tries to deal with other's problems while ignoring their own faults.

If you are not prepared to humbly examine yourself, trying to help others is both unwise and unhelpful.

⇒ particularly susceptible - when you hear/read an "ought not" and you think of someone else!!

If you humbly examine yourself and deal with your own issues, you will be able to wisely help others.

Humble yourself. Help others.

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To flourish as a follower of Christ one must have a posture of Christ-like love thereby loving others and being loved by God. To flourish as a community of followers of Christ we must relate to each other with Christ-like love and in turn will receive God's love.

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