

KITCHEN COUNTER MUSINGS OF REV. MARK

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Occasionally someone asks me a question like this: “Mark, what Scripture do you struggle with most?”

Unfortunately, the answer is too easy. One Scripture in particular highlights one of my most conspicuous flaws. It can be found in Matthew, chapter 7:3-5. There, Jesus says, **“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”**

Hypocrisy. I am often embarrassed by the judgment I pass on others while giving myself a, well, a free pass. Pointing out others specks while ignoring my own planks. Alas, I’m awfully good at it. Here’s the latest example:

I love to hop on my mountain bike at the end of the day and pedal away any frustrations I have. A relaxation loop on River Road in Mystic takes about 40 minutes, 35 minutes if I try to ride fast. I like fast, but to break my course record of 33 minutes and 47 seconds, I have to “roll” through about 4 stop signs downtown to keep up my speed. Now, I am always careful, but careful does not mean that car drivers know what I’m doing.

The other day, looking to set a new course record, I approached a stop sign, looked both ways, and was preparing to keep riding. Suddenly, I saw a car approaching that had been hidden by parked cars. I braked immediately but ended up about 2 feet over the white line at the stop. I was well safe of danger, but I scared the driver, who braked even though he didn’t have a stop sign. He had some choice words for me as he drove off. I felt a little bad, but I thought he was overdoing the anger of the situation. I wasn’t that bad!

Later that same evening, my wife and I drove to Groton Long Point to walk our puppies. Two kids rolled through a stop sign about 25 yards ahead of me. My wife was in the passenger seat, and I told her that some kid was going to get hurt if they didn’t pay more attention to traffic. My wife gave me that smirk—every husband knows what “the smirk” looks like—and I realized my hypocrisy. I was judging the speck in the two young riders’ eyes while ignoring the plank in my own. Less than an hour earlier, I had been behaving worse than those kids but justifying my own conduct.

Matthew 7 reminds me that I need to be more critical of myself and less so of others. How might others respond to my faith in God if I spent more time looking at my own behavior and less time examining their behaviors? Those three verses are one of my greatest struggle.

What’s yours? - Rev. Mark