Today I am sharing the second message on this series called “*Relationslips*.” What is a *relationslip*? Last week I spoke to this and said that a *relatioslip* is when we say or do something we shouldn’t have that hurts someone and breaks the relationship.

One way we hurt our relationships with people is when we talk negatively about them by criticizing, judging, and emphasizing their wrongs so everyone can take notice.

This is the second message of this series of sermons on *Relationships*. Today we are learning about the behavior that has been normalized in today’s society but one that Jesus warns us against: judging others.

Not long ago, I read the story of a woman in the airport who sat down at her gate to wait for her plane with a good book in hand and a bag of cookies. She hardly noticed when a man had sat down just two seats away from her and began to read his newspaper. After just a minute or so, she noticed the bag of cookies on the seat between them. She pulled it a little closer, opened it up, and took out a cookie.

In the next moment, this man she hardly noticed before, she now very much noticed because he leaned over, reached his hand into the bag, and helped himself to a cookie. A little surge of outrage pulsed through the woman’s body, but not wanting to create a scene, the woman said nothing. For the next few minutes, she would eat a cookie, and then he would eat a cookie. Her indignation increased with each cookie he ate. She was beside herself with anger boiling inside her as this continued until there was only one cookie left in the bag. She watched as this man reached in, pulled out the last cookie, broke it in two, and smiled as he gave her half. “Of all the nerve!!” the woman thought. “It’s amazing how some people will act,” she said to herself in total disgust, not knowing what to do.

Just then, the announcement came on the speaker overhead that the flight was boarding. Without acknowledging her, the man got up and headed toward the plane. Still pretty heated, pretty bothered by this whole episode, the woman grabbed her handbag, opened it to put her book away, and inside she saw her bag of cookies tucked away in the side pocket!

Who of us hasn’t had a similar moment like this one? You are so mad at someone only to realize at the moment (or maybe ten years later), “ohhh…I was doing the very thing that I was so disgusted I thought they were doing.” This is more common than we would like to admit. It happens in silly ways and more serious ways in our life.

Have you ever ask yourself why you have lost friends or communication with your family? There could be many reasons for this, sometimes just misunderstandings, but other times we caused it because of how we talk about and treat people. And then we wonder why our relationships don’t get any better or why we are **lonely** or **angry** or **disgruntled** all the time.

My friends, this is not God’s will for our lives. **It is not God’s will that we live divided and without talking to each other.** The attitudes and behaviors that keep us apart do not reflect the character of Christ. Jesus did not come to take us apart but to bring us together.

In Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus talks about what causes a division between friends, family, and churches. He addresses the issue of hypocrisy when we judge others while neglecting our own shortcomings. He said,

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye?

If I had to do my translation, it would say this, **“How can you be so upset at the thought of someone eating your cookies when it is you eating their cookies?!”**

This silly story of the woman and her cookies bag shows our propensity to be so unaware, so naïve, so oblivious to where we mess up, all while being on hyper-alert for where other people mess up!

This attitude causes a lot of harm.

For example, it happens to employees outraged at the work ethic and their co-workers’ performance when they are not much better themselves; they just hide it better. It happens to husbands and wives who blame each other for a struggling marriage when both have to admit they are checked out. But it is always easier to see where your spouse falls short than you do. It happens to men and women gossiping to their friends about how ridiculous it is that their other friends are gossiping about them. Think about it. It is like, “I just can’t believe he talks behind people’s back so much, especially when it sounds like his kids have some major issues that he is not addressing.”

The reality is that it is easier to find the wrong in others than in ourselves. **We often think that all our relational problems result from those pesky specs in other people’s eyes, not from the logs in ours.**

Sadly, this causes harm to our relationships; it harms people; and, we lose those friendships and personal relationships. **But the saddest part is that this behavior dresses as a pious one, but its goal is not to help but incite judgment against others.**

Of course, this in no way implies covering up, justifying, or excusing someone else’s wrongs, but make us aware of the responsibility we carry on how we choose to respond to it –and gossip is just not a good one.

Jesus explained this when he said Matthew 7:5,

First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

This leads me to believe that **Jesus is not telling us not to correct bad behavior but to be honest about our motivations.** Do we call out the wrong in others to accuse and make sure everyone knows, or do we do it with compassion to help bring healing and reconciliation?

It is clear to me that Jesus is telling us to help each other clear out the specks and logs in our eyes. Jesus is telling us **to look after each other, lift each other, reconcile with each other through compassion and forgiveness, and rejoice** when the speck and log have been cleared from our eyes, celebrating each other’s healing and success.

If you wonder how we can do this without becoming judgmental, let me tell you that you already know. It happens when you notice that someone is not looking well because they are behaving in an unbecoming manner and struggling (they may be hurting themselves or hurting others), and instead of talking about their issues with other people, you approach them and check on them asking, “Are you ok?” “What is hurting you?” “What is making you upset?” “You know, I struggle too.” “I am here if you need me.”

I do this often when people come to me because they are struggling with broken relationships, substance abuse, ill behaviors, and so on. And guess what, we all struggle and have issues, and that is what Jesus was saying. But unless we understand suffering and compassion, we are hardly going to be able to help others. So, I believe any healing process starts with us first, so then we can share our experience with others. Remember this, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”? (Matthew 7:12)

I know you know what I am mean because most likely you have been there, getting help from someone else, and then you pass it on. Then **you begin desiring to help as you have been helped, not to incite criticism or judgment; you act out of an honest desire to help make things better for others because your life has been made better by others too.**

**And this good, this is what Jesus is telling us.**

So, what relationships could heal or flourish if you chose to lay down accusations? How would your life change, your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing benefit from this?

Maybe it is a spouse. Maybe it is a co-worker or an employee. Maybe it is a sibling. Maybe it is a close friend.

Whatever issues we may have with other or others may have with us, my friends, let’s not act like enemies but like peacemakers. Like I said last week, as Christians, we make things better, not worse.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

**If you have hesitated to make peace with others, bring healing to your relationships, don’t hesitate anymore, this is God’s will. Make the phone call, send the email or text. Don’t worry about how it will be received or if you will get the reply you want; do not make it about you. Just do and say what you know is right in your heart and let God deal with the rest.**

I leave with this. I want to you encourage to this:

Always be kind. If you see someone falling behind, walk beside them. If someone is being ignored, find a way to include them. If someone has been knocked down, lift them up. Always remind people of their worth. Be to someone else the person who you needed in your life when you were going through hard times too. And, always leave things better than you found them, especially people.