

SESSION 1: THE PLANK IN YOUR EYE

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 7:1-5; Ephesians 4:15

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it easier for us to see the faults in others instead of in ourselves?
2. How do self-reflection, reading the Bible, and absorbing the Word and grace in the divine services work together to help us grow to be more like Jesus?
3. How can you speak the truth in love? Give some examples.
4. Why is it important to take time to reflect on your own faults?
5. How often do you contemplate your sins and faults? How do you confess them to God?
6. Why is the sin referred to as a plank in your eye, but as a speck in your neighbor's eye? In other words, your own sin should look like a big deal to you, and another's sin should seem small in comparison. Discuss this different perspective.
7. When Jesus says, "remove the plank from your own eye," is He saying we must be faultless in order to help our neighbor? Is this even possible?
8. Are people more judgmental towards others who have the same faults as them, or those who have different faults?
9. Why would it be easier to help someone overcome a sin that you are working on overcoming yourself? How could you reach out to someone in this situation?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: THE PLANK IN YOUR EYE

In this session, we'll look at Jesus' lesson of removing the plank in your eye.

In Matthew 7:3-5 we read, *"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

The message of this passage is simple: we should not point out the faults of others while having yet to identify and work on getting rid of our own faults. But if this concept is so simple to understand, why is it hard to actually do? If we don't take the time to reflect on experiences we've had and mistakes that we have made, then we may not truly recognize our own faults. And so maybe we read this passage in Matthew 7 and think it doesn't apply to us, that we don't have many faults, or that they are not important, and that we would never judge others for theirs. It is important that we analyze our own behavior and realize that God's Word always applies to us and that there is always something we can work on within ourselves.

Nobody likes to admit their faults, whether it is to ourselves or to others. When we admit our faults, we make ourselves vulnerable. We are honestly saying that we are not good enough. However, in this moment of truth, we are close to God because we are forced to see our dependence on Him. Only He has the grace to forgive us for our faults, and only He has the strength to help us overcome them. It may be scary to be this open to ourselves and to our God, but making the choice to be honest about our faults shows our trust in Him and allows us to recognize that He will always love and help us.

Identifying our own faults and our need for forgiveness, is a crucial element in helping our brothers and sisters with their faults. When there is a plank in our eye, our vision is obscured and it is very hard for us to clearly see and point out the speck in our neighbor's eye. We may even be misguiding others if we attempt to help them with their faults without recognizing our own. In addition, if we point out the mistakes of another while still making our own, we are hypocrites. The word hypocrite is perhaps common for us to hear and maybe we don't give it the weight it needs to cause us to change. Maybe we hear this word and think, Being a hypocrite is bad, but there are worse things one can be. We can look to the first couple of verses

in Matthew 7, which connects to the law of retaliation that we discussed last time. Verses 1 and 2 say, *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."* Being a hypocrite is more than just a label; it is something that has spiritual implications. If we are going to point out others' faults before even addressing our own, then we are judging them and opening ourselves up for judgement from God. This is why it is so important to reflect on our faults and failings, to identify the things we need to change, and to acknowledge our need for forgiveness. Then together we can support and encourage one another as we strive to overcome and follow Christ.

Our love for God finds its expression in loving concern for our brothers and sisters. So while He does not want us to judge each other for our faults, He has created us to be in community with one another and depend on each other. Part of this dependence is holding each other accountable. How should we do this? Ephesians 4:15 tells us to *"speak the truth in love."* This is a big responsibility. Because of our human nature, if we see someone do something wrong, we may feel justified in judging them and making them feel bad for their fault. However, that is not our role to play. We are called to love our neighbor. When we speak to each other in love, that is, when we approach someone who has a speck in their eye, while mindful of the plank in our eye that God has forgiven, we go in humbleness to help and restore, rather than to hurt and judge. This takes humility and courage, but it is what Jesus calls us to do. We will have to find patience when dealing with one another, and strive to understand when it seems difficult. When we are able to do these things, and after we have examined our own shortcomings, then we can better help those around us to remove the specks from their eyes.