

May: Reform Yourself not Others

Introduction

Jesus said, "Why worry about a tiny little speck of dust in your friend's eye when you have a dirty great log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the dirty great log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the dirty great log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the tiny little speck in your friend's eye." Matt 7:3-5

I don't know about you, but I find that I am very good at seeing exactly what's wrong with other people. Better at it than them anyway. It always amazes me just how easily people can miss their glaringly obvious faults. If I had any faults I certainly wouldn't be that blind....

It's easy to point out other people's faults isn't it? We do it without thinking. And we've been doing it for a long time too. In one of the very first stories in the Bible, we hear Adam saying, "It's not my fault; Eve gave me the fruit," and Eve was no better, "It wasn't my fault; it was the snake..."

Whenever there's something wrong with one of our relationships, it's easy to think that it's the other person who needs to change. She just needs to stop trying to control my life. He just needs to be more romantic. Mum just needs to stop being so annoying. If only my kids would just do what I say. The same thing happens for larger groups. Atheists need to stop attacking us. Muslims need to learn to fit in. Refugees need to stop getting in boats.

But this kind of thinking doesn't solve anything. It doesn't bring peace or harmony or positive change. A lot of the time it just brings more fighting and more brokenness. Jesus knew that we will only find peace and harmony between us if we are willing to take a good hard look at ourselves first. We have to look first at our own weaknesses, with humility, and work to take away some of those dirty great logs first. Only then will we be able to see clearly enough to help others with their issues.

The challenges this month are to help us take that good hard look at ourselves, to help us start to get rid of those dirty great logs in our own eyes. This month we hold a mirror up to ourselves to humbly take stock of our own shortcomings. It might be helpful to let you know right at the outset that this is not the easiest month you'll do in your big year. Anyone who's done a big year before remembers this month. This month can be brutal, especially if you haven't done the humility month yet and still think you're awesome. But it can also be one of the most meaningful months you'll do. Jesus knew that sorting out our own problems sets us free to live life more fully, and enjoy it more deeply. This is the kind of life he wants for all of us.

As we go about this, it's important to keep in mind Jesus' well-known tip at the end of this section: "Do to others whatever you would like them to do for you." The idea of this month is not for us to spiral down into a pit of despair, demoralized by our own failures. One of the good things about acknowledging our own weaknesses and then working through them is that when we do, we become much better at helping other people with their issues.

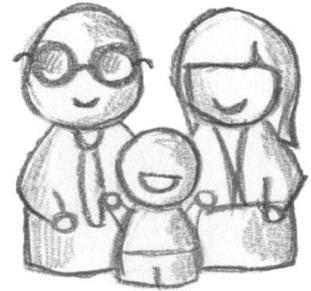
Think about it. The best person to help someone struggling with an addiction is someone who has gone through addiction and come out the other side. Only someone who has worked hard to reform themselves knows how hard it is for someone else to change. We reform ourselves so that we can help others. Even this month, while we're spending time looking at ourselves in the mirror, it's not about us. We do it so that we can help others. Once we've removed the dirty great logs, we will be able to help others with their little specks.

This month the challenges are about working to correct our own weaknesses, and also about learning to see people with more compassion and humility. If you were a refugee who'd just arrived in the country, what would you want people to do for you? If you were a Muslim living in Australia, how would you like to be treated? What would it look like to respect atheists the way we would like them to respect us? If you were gay (or if you were straight), what would you want from people in the other group? Or maybe a little closer to home: if you were your sister, or brother, or mum, or spouse - what would you really wish people would do for you?

It might not be easy, but we encourage you to face up to the challenges well this month. Work hard on getting rid of those dirty great logs, so that you can become part of the solution for others.

Challenges

REFORM YOURSELF NOT OTHERS



FAMILIES



MONK

- ☆ Write out Colossians 3:12 and stick it onto your jar. Read it out every day as you go to get dressed. Talk about how we 'wear' our character clothes each day as well as our actual clothes.
- ☆ What is it like to 'walk in someone else's shoes'? One day this month switch shoes with someone else in your family. Walk around for a little while and think about what it might be like to be that person. What their daily routine is like, what they might worry about, what makes them happy. Pray a short prayer for that person.



CHEERLEADER

- ☆ Have each person in your family or group get two rocks - a smooth rock and a rough one. For one day each week, carry the two rocks around in your pockets. Throughout the day when you put your hands in your pockets, think about the choice you have as to whether you say something positive or something negative. Put all the rocks in your jar for the rest of the month to remind you about this.
- ☆ Write each person's name on an envelope and put them into your jar. Throughout the month, write down the qualities about each person that you really appreciate on a small piece of paper. For example, you might write 'kind', 'helpful', 'generous'. Put these pieces into the person's envelope. At the end of the month distribute the envelopes and for each person to have.



ACTIVIST

- ☆ Each member of the family, write down the name of someone you find it hard to get along with and put the paper into your jar. Pray for them every day and see if God gives you any ideas about how you can change to make things better with them.
- ☆ Find a way to celebrate International Families Day on 15th May. Have a family games night, talent show, special dinner that everyone cooks together. Afterwards, let each person take a turn to talk about what they can do to help the family become closer, healthier or happier.