

JUDGEMENT CALL : A SERIES OF DVD MESSAGES BY ANDY STANLEY

Message Three : "Don't Just Stand There", viewed at FBC on Sunday 14 June 2009

INTRODUCTION

This is a condensed version of the third of a four-part series by Andy Stanley about the confusing and often misunderstood topic of judging others.

In this episode from the series, Andy deals with the passage in Matthew 18 : 12-17, which reads as follows:

12. "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13. And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about the one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

A Brother Who Sins Against You

15. "If your brother sins against you, go and show him, his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'. 17. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

A lot of us hide behind the commonly held view that: 'It's none of my business....' ; and 'I should not judge, lest I be judged'.

Behind these sayings is an effort to dodge our responsibility to get deeply involved in the lives of other people. After all, if we don't have the right to judge another, we also don't have the responsibility to rescue our brother or sister in crisis from a poor decision.

Also, we are inclined to feel that getting involved is going to take up our time and, possibly, strain relationships. It could be awkward and, in any case, 'I'm not sure it will do any good', so we shirk our responsibility to get involved at a level that our heavenly Father has called us to be in the lives of those who are close to us and who have strayed.

BACKDROP

Using a situation that would have been familiar to his audience, Jesus illustrates that, just as they would value one lost sheep amongst a hundred and go after it until they have found it and brought it back to the flock, so too does God value the rescue of a member of his people who has strayed.

Against this backdrop, Jesus deals with the responsibility we have when one of our assembly or group or from within our realm of influence commits some transgression against us or wanders from the path.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

"....Go", says Jesus, "and show him his fault, just between the two of you".

He does not say 'Pray' or, as we have learnt from Sam Ennis in a sermon he gave on this passage sometime ago, 'Write'. Jesus tells us that we should physically go to the one who has sinned against us and have it out with him, as it were. Or, as Andy explains, be God's hand and feet and mouthpiece in the life of that person and show him or her, his or her fault.

We are seldom moved to do this. We would rather just pray, because 'its really none of my business' and 'we're not all that close after all' and 'I don't know the details anyway'.... and 'who am I to judge.....?'.

Jesus' approach is that if we tackle matters in the way in which he tells us to, its OK to judge, because that way we would also be embracing our responsibility to confront and show the other person his or her fault.

He goes on to say, in anticipation of what we experience often happens in these circumstances, that "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along....".

Just like the shepherd who would go after his one in a hundred sheep, Jesus is trying to convey to us that God wants us to feel passionate about bringing back into the group the one who strays and that people wandering off matter to Him. He doesn't want us to be casual about these situations or to hide behind excuses like 'I tried but it didn't work' . He wants us to try again and this time take someone with us.

If he does not listen to the one or two we take with us, Jesus enjoins us to "tell it to the church". The Greek word which has been translated as 'church', Andy explains, is a term for 'gathering'.

In other words, Jesus says, don't give up. This is the heart of God you are trying to reflect and God didn't give up on you. Be like the shepherd who doesn't give up. Go to that group of people or gathering that are familiar with this person and that know the situation and care about this person and involve them in the matter if necessary

Only if he does not listen to the church must we "treat him as...a pagan or a tax collector". In other words, as long as he is an insider, treat him like one. But, if that doesn't work, treat him like an outsider. The one thing we must not do is just stand there. Instead do something, say something. Throw him a rope bag, however clumsy that often is as a means of rescuing one. We don't do this because its neat but because its needed. Refuse to hide behind the façade of 'its none of my business'. Jesus tells us it is.

When we were dead in our trespasses and sin, God did something. He sent his son to die for our sins. And though we are slow on the uptake and don't repent very quickly, we must take our lead from God who has said that if I am going to judge, I am going to get involved. This is also our responsibility.

APPLICATION

MATTHEW :

1. 18 : 12

What are situations in which you would stop what you are doing to search for something that was lost?

2. 18 : 13

When have you lost something of value? What lengths did you go to in order to find it? What did it mean when you found it?

3. 18 : 14

How has God brought you back when you went astray?

4. 18 : 15

What is your responsibility when you see someone in your life going astray?

5. 18 : 16

Why is it wise to bring others with you if the person doesn't listen to you the first time? How far would you be willing to go in order to bring him/her back?

6. 18 : 17

After you have done everything in your power, what should you do if he/she still doesn't listen?

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