

Toothpicks

Faith Lutheran Church in Georgetown has thousands of crosses on the wall. One of these crosses is made out of toothpicks. As a group of visitors recently inspected the walls, one gentleman remarked, “I sure wish I could use one of those toothpicks right now.” Have you ever needed a toothpick, but it was just out of reach, or you saw one at the restaurant, but now are on your way home wishing you had grabbed one?

Sometimes, we need the help of others to notice the broccoli in our teeth. There are also times when we need the help of a friend to realize our sin. A group of coworkers were discussing the issues at work, and then a new hire entered the conversation and quickly spoke up. The new hire pointed out how the people being talked about probably were unaware of how their actions were impacting others. Hush fell over the group as they realized their sin of gossip.

We like to be quick to notice the errors of others, but not of our own doing. As with all of the concerns in our lives, Jesus spoke about this topic, too. *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”* (Matthew 7:1–5).

Is it wrong to help our brothers and sisters in Christ know the errors of their ways? No. However, we are told how to handle this situation. *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* (Galatians 6:1–2).

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

A common passage which speaks about how to handle helping others is Matthew 18:15–18. The goal of helping our brother see their sin is not to prove we are more holy than they are, but to help them restore relationships between themselves and God and with other people. We are all weak, and we are all sinful.

Praise be to God that He is not just barely out of reach. He is with us, and helps us in our weaknesses. Praise God for the gift of forgiveness through His Son for all who believe, so we may share that forgiveness with others.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Toothpicks

Written by Kayla Winkler

*Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League Texas District
Christian Life Committee, 2024*