



Specks and Logs

(based on Matthew 7:1–5, 12)

Jesus was traveling around the Sea of Galilee, telling people about the good news of God’s love and how to live in God’s ways. People gathered to hear his message. And though his message was sometimes hard to hear because it asked for people to turn from sinful ways and follow God’s ways, Jesus offered hope and new life.

One time, the crowd of people was so large that Jesus had to walk up a hill so that the people could see and hear him. He looked out over the gathering of women and men, youth and children. He spoke words of blessing and comfort. He challenged them to think and live differently than they had been. He taught them about God and how to live together as God’s people.

At one point, Jesus said, “Don’t judge others so that you are not judged by them. What I’m saying is, if you pick on people, if you criticize their faults and failures, you open yourself up to being treated the same way.”

People looked nervously at each other. Everyone knew that at one time or another they had been quick to criticize a neighbor or cousin. It was easy to pick on a brother or sister for mistakes they’ve made.

Jesus picked up on their discomfort, so he thought of something that might help them understand. He said, “Telling someone they have done something wrong is like seeing a speck in their eye. You point it out, saying, ‘Hey! Look at that speck in your eye! You must not be able to see what you are doing. Let me help you be a better person by pointing out that speck.’ But what you don’t realize is that you have a log in your own eye!”

“A log?” the people gasped. Children giggled. It was funny to imagine a log sticking out of someone’s eye! Jesus sure was funny.

“Yes,” Jesus continued, “a log. Some blunders are so big and ridiculous that it would be like having a giant log in your eye. How can you even begin to see the faults of others when you have some yourself? Why do you criticize others? Don’t you see you’ve made your own mistakes? Take care of yourself before you start picking on other people’s problems.”

The people nodded understandingly.

Jesus said, “Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you. That’s everything that our law and prophets have taught us—to love our neighbors as ourselves.”



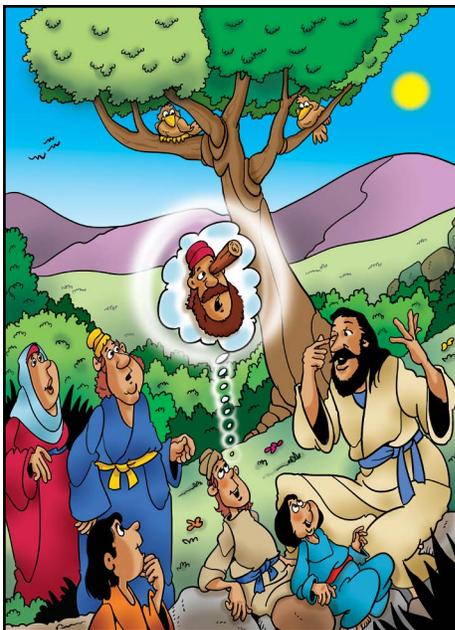
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Watch the YouTube video “Bible Theater: Matthew - Log and Speck - LifeKids.tv” (bit.ly/2BPAes4). Discuss the meaning of the word *judgmental* and how you can treat others.



Responding to God's Grace

- Read the poem “Speck-tator” by Marty Nystrom. Go to bit.ly/2H4rEsp to read the poem.
- Create a comic strip of Jesus’ story of the speck and the log in someone’s eye.
- Read the book *Do Unto Otters: A Book about Manners* by Laurie Keller (Henry Holt and Co., 2007) or watch the YouTube video “Do Unto Otters: A Book About Manners by Laurie Keller (Read by Richard Moeller)” (bit.ly/3xwBH2i). Talk about ways that you can offer kindness and not judgment to others.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Find a tall tale or make up an exaggerated story with your child. Enjoy how silly it is when something is made larger than life. Recall Jesus’ story of a small speck and a large log in someone’s eye.
- Make rice-krispie treats. Put a treat in a plastic sandwich bag with a tag, “Treat others as you want them to treat you.” Share the treats with others.
- Pray this prayer each day this week.

Dear God, help me to treat others the way I would like to be treated. Thank you for loving us always. Amen.