

FLIPPED.

DEVOTIONAL

The Flipside of Judgmentalism | Matthew 7:1-6

By Jennifer Strand, Children's Ministry Director

Several years ago Tammy adopted a child with special needs. Not long after she brought Nadia home, Tammy took her to the pre-school story time at her local library. They had fun singing silly songs with the other toddlers. They laughed when the librarian used funny voices as she read a book about bunnies. When story time was over, the librarian stood at the door to give each child a bunny stamp on their hand. Nadia nestled into her mother's arms as they waited their turn. When they reached the librarian, Tammy held up her daughter's foot and said, "You can put the stamp on her foot."

"No," the librarian said firmly, "all the children get the bunny stamped on their hand."

"If you will stop and look," Tammy said with anger rising in her voice, "you will see. My daughter has no arms."

This story makes me sad. Not for Nadia, Tammy, or even the librarian - although I'm sure she wanted to sink into the floor. My sadness is for the people I injure when I don't take the time to stop and look - and see. Like the librarian, I often get caught up in my day to day tasks. Like the librarian, many of those tasks are good, helpful and important. But like the librarian, my tasks often keep me from seeing the wounds of those around me. And here is the big question, if I can't see the visible wounds of those around me, how am I ever going to see the invisible wounds?

The invisible wounds people carry manifest themselves in very visible ways. Your neighbor down the street who works too much and never pays attention to his kids? The only time his mother said a kind word to him was when he brought home a perfect report card from school. The bully who 'convinces' your daughter to hand over her Cheetos at lunch every day? That's her dinner because there is no food in the house. My view of someone's behavior determines how I react to it.

Do not judge or you too will be judged. What does that mean? It means I must change my view, my understanding. I cannot help someone if I cannot first understand them as a person; who they are and what motivates them. It's no coincidence that Jesus used vision as His example. He requires me to clear from my own sight any obstacles that keep me from seeing others as He sees them. Judging others protects me from seeing others clearly. Judging takes away my responsibility to love as Jesus loves, to see as He sees, and to be a visible witness that I serve God—who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3), When Jesus instructs me to remove the beam from my eye, He asks me to do the same thing that Tammy asked the librarian to do. **Stop and look. You will see.**

Jennifer Strand and her husband Mark first came to Pantego in 1997. They were so welcomed by a community of people who love Christ that they knew they had found a place to call home. Jennifer and Mark have 3 children: Rachel, Micah and Isaac. Jennifer began serving as a volunteer in Children's Ministry in 2000, when her daughter was a baby. Before coming on staff at Pantego, Jennifer worked with foster and adoption agencies as a case worker. Her main passion remains to train adults how to better understand and love their children and she can't imagine a better place to do it than in community here at Pantego.