



## The Christian's Attitude Toward Judging

What is your attitude toward judging? That is, what is your mindset toward judging others and being judged by others? Do you view judgments as something that must be completely avoided or view people as having some role in making judgments? To “judge” another is to form an opinion about something that has been done or about somebody, determining whether something/someone is right or wrong. It is common for people to believe that Christians must never make any judgments about others. However, Christians must be careful to understand the Bible’s teachings about making judgments so as to reach the right conclusions.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn the need for judgments to be made, understand which judgments must be avoided, and learn to judge with righteous judgment.

### **Judgments Must Be Made**

**Do not judge.** Matthew 7:1 is commonly believed to forbid all judgments. However, to properly understand this verse, you must consider the entire passage (Matthew 7:1-6). The context reveals that Jesus is forbidding hypocritical judgments and showing that great care must be involved in judging others (recognizing we will be judged for how we judge)!

Is Jesus teaching that one should ignore the splinter (speck) in your brother’s eye? You would have to conclude “yes” if you can never judge another. However, Jesus is condemning the hypocrisy of judging your brother’s splinter while you have a beam (plank) of wood in your own eye! This is like an alcoholic judging someone who has an occasional drink!

Jesus is simply teaching the proper order for judgments so no one is guilty of making hypocritical judgments. First, you must make the proper judgments about your own life and correct them. Then, you will

be in a position to see clearly and help your brother. So, neither the beam nor the splinter are approved of God and judgments must be made in both cases. But, the order matters to God! Similarly, Jesus gives another example of making judgments in verse 6, judging who are like dogs and pigs regarding their rejection of God. Therefore, this passage that many use to forbid all judgments actually teaches us to make judgments!

**Judgments that must be made about others.** Not only does Matthew 7 *not* forbid all judgments, but the Bible even teaches us to make certain judgments. Consider some examples.

First, we must judge false teachers so as not to be misled by them (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Peter 2:1-3). Second, we must judge what is sinful among Christians so as to help them repent and not extend fellowship to those who refuse to repent of sin (1 Corinthians 5:3-5, 9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Matthew 18:15-17). Third, we must judge disputes among Christians so Christians do not take each other to court to resolve such conflicts (1 Corinthians 6:1-2, 5). Fourth, we must judge those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to Christ's teaching and take action against such people (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11). Fifth, we must judge who is an evil person in the world so we can be careful about who we associate with and their influences (Proverbs 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:33). Sixth, we must judge who are lost and in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ so as to diligently share the gospel with them so they can be saved (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). These are just a few examples of the judgments we *must* make as Christians. However, we could never do these things if we could not make any judgments about others!

### **Some Judgments Must Be Avoided**

**Hypocritical judgments.** Hypocritical judgments involve judging others according to a standard you do not hold yourself to (Matthew 7:1-6; Romans 2:1-3). Rather than practicing hypocritical judgment, we must develop the proper habit of self-evaluation before we apply God's words to others. Then, we will be able to help others make their lives right with God.

**Rash judgments.** Rash judgments involve rushing to judgment without gather the proper facts and patiently coming to the proper conclusions (Proverbs 15:28). Consider the example of a rash judgment made against Paul in Acts 21:28-29. We must be careful to gather all the necessary information before making a judgment and not to spread any rash judgments we have made (i.e. gossip)!

**Appearance-based judgments.** Appearance-based judgments are judgments rashly based on how things appear from an outward perspective (John 7:19-24). Again, we must consider all the facts available before reaching a conclusion. Although there are times outward appearances must be judged (i.e. if you see someone steal something), the point is that you cannot assume you know the entire story based on one piece from something you see.

**Merciless judgments.** Merciless judgments are unwilling to extend forgiveness whenever one has committed sin (Luke 5:30; Luke 7:39; Luke 18:9-14). Instead, we must all recognize we have sinned and need God's forgiveness/mercy and patience. Now, we must demonstrate the same patience and mercy toward others, not using God's law mercilessly but to show people the way to the freedom that exists through Jesus (James 2:12-13).

**Opinion-based judgments.** Opinion-based judgments will use your opinions to approve or condemn something rather than God's word. This may result in accepting things God does not accept or condemning things God does not condemn (Mark 7:1-5). Romans 14 deals with issues concerning Christian liberties (things God approves but does not command, i.e. whether to eat meat). In these cases, we must not bind our personal judgments and convictions on others (Romans 14:3). Only God's word is the proper standard of judgment.

**Final judgments.** Final judgments position yourself as the one who judges the eternal destination of another. However, we must recognize that such judgment belongs to God alone (Romans 14:10-12)! Although it is proper for us to use God's word to instruct, rebuke, correct, and encourage people to take specific actions in connection with their eternal salvations (2 Timothy 4:2), we can never condemn someone to Hell or welcome someone to Heaven! We must leave final judgment to God and simply focus on doing our parts in applying the Scriptures to our eternal salvations and helping others do the same!

### **Judging With Righteous Judgment**

**There is righteous judgment.** Jesus taught we must judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24). Although there are many judgments that do not fit with righteous judgment, we must now learn how to judge with righteous judgments. Consider some principles.

**Use the right standard.** The only standard that is always right and will make our judgments pleasing to God is His word! We must remember that Jesus's words will judge us all on the Last Day (John 12:48)! Judging

others by our own human ideas, traditions, opinions, teachings, etc. does nothing to help people live to please God (Matthew 15:13-14).

**Have the right motivation.** There are many improper motives people can use when judging others – position yourself as superior to another, justifying yourself, engaging in gossip, wanting to condemn/find fault with another, etc. However, these will always lead to a distorted judgment. Instead, the Christian's motivation for judgment should be love and concern for your soul and theirs (Matthew 22:39; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)!

**Get the whole story.** Many false judgments are made by failing to get all the available information. So, do not give an answer until you have thoroughly heard the situation and confidently know what the right conclusion is (Proverbs 15:28). And, always be careful when your information has come from another person (or multiple people).

**Be patient and use wisdom.** How you conduct yourself with the judgments you make (even when they are right judgments) can impact how people respond to God's message of truth. Everyone needs patience in correcting their lives (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 2 Timothy 4:2). So, wisdom is needed in how you conduct yourself (Jude 1:22-23)!

**Show mercy.** The point of a judgment is not to catch people in sin so you can place a label on them they can never escape from! Rather, whatever judgment you make must be merciful. First, the judgment must recognize that God's mercy is willing to forgive the sins that have been committed. Second, the judgment must stand ready, willing, and eager to extend the same mercy God has extended you – or He will not show you mercy (Matthew 18:21-35)!

### Conclusion

Has this lesson described your attitude toward judging? People often go to extremes on judging – either saying that no judgment should ever happen or becoming overly judgmental about everything by applying their own standards. But, you must simply judge with righteous judgment! Then, all this teaching should also be applied to how you receive judgments from others – appreciating the love one shows in making righteous judgments of your life.

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