

Another consideration is the fact that once an opinion is formed about a certain issue, the handling of it is inappropriate. How you confront the situation is another matter altogether which is outside of the scope of this article. The way we act or react may either bring healing or destruction to those involved. We must always strive to bring the truth in a loving way.

How Are We to Judge?

1. We are to judge righteously. Jesus commands in John 7:24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Judge by the Word of God and Its principles, not by someone's skin color, whether they are tall or short (inherited physical traits), etc.

2. We are to judge without hypocrisy. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom 2:3)

Judge yourself first to see if you are guilty of that sin. Live what you preach. Only after you get your life cleaned up by turning from your sins and receiving pardon through repentance and faith in Jesus (i.e. you get saved) you can go and help others to be saved too. If your life has been transformed by the love of Christ, by all means, go and help your brother.

3. We are to judge only by what we know. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both [are] abomination to the LORD." (Prov. 17:15)

If you do not have clear evidence of intentional wrongdoing by your neighbor, assume the best before making a judgment. For us to be 100% sure and ready to condemn someone over extra-Biblical issues, we must have 100% of all knowledge concerning the situation, and sometimes only God will have complete knowledge. For example, fornication is wrong 100% of the time - it is in the Bible, there are no questions about it. But someone's personal preferences for dress, whether they watch TV, go to doctors for healing, etc, largely depends on circumstances, their knowledge on the subject, their heart motivation, or outside factors that we may not be aware of. In such cases, agree to disagree and assume the best about your neighbor.

It is just as wrong to condemn the righteous as it is to justify the wicked. So we must be careful to be accurate and gracious in our judgments.

4. Remember to always bring everything back to the Bible and in a spirit of love. If we compromise the truth, it is for everyone's loss. Only the truth shall set them free (John 8:32). We must boldly declare and stand up for the truth. If the truth is brought by the Spirit of Christ, you will know that you've done everything you could in an excellent way. The results are up to God.

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JUDGE NOT

by Dr. John Duncan, Th.D.



The most misquoted verse in the Bible is probably Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that ye be not judged."

Having traveled full-time through the USA, from Florida to the state of Washington we would be rich today if we gathered a penny every time this verse was quoted to us. At Troy State University in Alabama, a professor we met during an

open-air event even said that "Judge not" was one of the Ten Commandments. Too often we hear even sincere, misinformed Christians and unbelievers alike say, "I don't want to judge anybody, but..."

Ironically, often the one who screams "judge not" is the one passing judgment on you during outreaches on campus, bars, or streets. As soon as Christians stand up for righteousness, they are bombarded with the screams of the world.... "judge not lest ye be judged!"

Let's See What the Bible Really Says About Judging:

"The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment." (Psa 37:30)

"With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." (Psa 119:13)

"Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." (Prov 31:9)

Jesus commended Simon, "Thou hast rightly judged." (Luke 7:43)

"Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations." (Ezek 22:2)

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." (1 Cor 2:15)

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (1 Cor 6:2)

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor 6:3)

There are many other passages and verses in the Bible about judging. While God is our ultimate Judge of all things, He has also commanded us to judge according to the Word of God.

According to the **Webster's Dictionary**, to judge means "*to discern, to distinguish, to form an opinion, to compare facts or ideas, and perceive their agreement or disagreement, and thus to distinguish truth from falsehood.*" Therefore, when you say that your neighbor is a "good person," you are passing a judgment (forming an opinion) just as much as when you say that the thief is a "bad person." A judgment simply means to form an opinion!

If there were no judgment...

- All the prisons would be empty and thieves, serial killers, drug dealers, rapists, and murderers would be loose in your neighborhood.
- You could not discipline your children and teach them not to steal, lie, do drugs, or give in to peer pressure.
- School could not be mandated (by parents or the government) but if children did attend, they could not be evaluated as to their progress. Everyone should graduate regardless of their advance. Students could not be graded or disciplined.
- You could not judge any false doctrine and would have to allow it to be taught from your church's pulpit ("discerning" is the same thing as "judging").
- You should leave your children with anyone who said was qualified to be a baby-sitter. You should not bother to check his/her background. Later, you should not be upset if this baby-sitter turned out to be a child-molester, because "thou shalt not judge."
- You should marry anyone that asked. You shouldn't worry about his/her character or beliefs. What if he beats you up? What if she cheats on you? You shouldn't get so mad because "thou shalt not judge."

Hopefully you can see the perils of such doctrine by now. The devil has been successful to push the church further and further into a corner, while everyone else comes out of the closet with their sins. The church is "not to judge them," while Christ's body is being judged by the world. Our belief that Jesus is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6) automatically makes us "intolerant" and some Christians have backed away from declaring these truths from the Scriptures. The Webster's Dictionary definition given above says that to judge is to "distinguish truth from falsehood." If Christians cease to stand up for what is right, they cease to be the salt of the earth.

Most often, those who tell you "not to judge" them do so because they are hiding something and want to continue committing that sin without reaping negative effects for it. After all, their conscience already bothers them and they do not want any added influence bringing guilt, shame, or remorse as a result of their sinful behavior. However, the Holy Spirit is given to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. You can run but you can't hide.

In the campuses where we have been, students say that we shouldn't judge (form an opinion of) fornicators, drunkards, liars, homosexuals, or the like. Unfortunately they fail to realize that sin harms them and their neighbors. A caring, loving Christian will judge all situations according to the Word of God and bring the truth for deliverance and healing. Only the TRUTH will set men free and if Christians back away from the truth, there will be no healing in our land. Conviction of sin is given to us for our own good! A loving God has programmed us to feel guilt, shame, and remorse as an effort to make us turn from these destructive behaviors.

The church has become intimidated by the opinions of the world as they scream, "You religious bigots, hatemongers, homophobics, and intolerant people (which are judgments in themselves), do not judge me!" However, God clearly commands us to judge so we won't be deceived. Why would the command to judge be so vehemently attacked in society? Obviously, if the church stops judging and using our common sense, we will no longer be able to distinguish good from evil, we will buy into the politically correct idea of moral relativism (what's good for you may not

be good for me), and we will bow down to the devil's wishes to deceive us, our family, and our friends.

Even more disturbing is to see church leadership saying, "do not judge." Many pastors lead their sheep astray and keep them under their manipulative control by telling them that they are "judgemental," "prideful," or "have a critical spirit." While some times this is true, many times the sheep are trying to do is to discern the truth and to be good Bereans (Acts 17:11). If a church is teaching un-Biblical doctrine, we should seek to discern the truth by the Bible and avoid letting the blind lead the blind or both will fall into a ditch (Luke 6:39).

Now let's take a look at the famous verse that is so misquoted today and put it in its proper context. If we are intellectually honest when looking at this passage, we will find that it is actually teaching us to judge, not to refrain from judging! We have inserted a few comments in brackets.

Mat 7:1-5 "Judge not, that ye be not judged [do not judge others if you do not want to be judged by others; everyone will be judged by God]. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again [if you judge others, they will judge you by the same measures]. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye [how can you judge someone when you are guilty of the sin yourself]? Thou hypocrite [this is the audience in the context; a hypocrite is one who is not living what he is preaching], first cast out the beam out of thine own eye [FIRST judge yourself and get your own life cleaned up]; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye [THEN after you get your life straight, you will be able to discern clearly and you are commanded to help clean your brother's eye!].

Other misquoted Scriptures:

Romans 14:3-10. This is about dietary preferences, things that are not essential to salvation.

Romans 2:1-3. We have the same scenario of Mat. 7. We should not judge others if we are guilty of the same things. We must first clean up our own lives through repentance and faith, then we are qualified to judge others.

James 4:11 says that we are not to speak evil of other "brethren" -- those who are obediently doing the will of God (Mat 12:50). This does not apply to those living in willful sin.

Why Judging Has Such a Bad Rap

While judging is clearly Biblical -- and not only allowed but commanded in the Bible, people have committed "errors in judgment" that have brought much pain, misery, and misunderstandings in the body of Christ and the world. But it is also wrong to "throw the baby out with the bath water." You may have misjudged someone and caused much pain but that is not a reason to stop judging all together. Repent, make restitution where applicable, and learn from it.

Some people are indeed given to where "the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*... variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:19-20). These are people who are quarrelsome, bringing dissention, division, conflict and controversy. They are usually divisive and have a self-righteous, pious, and prideful attitude. From such stay away.