



JUDGING

"Tsk, tsk, tsk...you're judging again!" Ever heard that? You blush and think, "O my goodness, I shouldn't be judging." Is it wrong to judge others? Not necessarily. We have swallowed a lie: most Christians believe they should never judge anyone but that simply isn't true.

1. There are just as many verses in the Bible telling us *to* judge as there are telling us *not to* judge others.

2. JUDGE ACCORDING TO ESTABLISHED FACTS, NOT MOTIVES, SUPPOSITION, OR CONSCIENCE. If you're guessing, don't judge; but if you're certain of your facts, don't hesitate to judge others.

3. The apostle Paul judged the overt sins of believers (1 Cor. 5:3). As he penned these words, Paul had already judged a believer in the church at Corinth guilty of incest ("someone has his father's wife," 5:1) and pronounced sentence ("deliver...to Satan for the destruction of his flesh," 5:5). He rebuked the church for not removing him from their midst (5:2) and commanded them to do so (5:13). It was a known sin with many witnesses. It was open, public, widely known—a well established fact.

4. Judging is necessary to obey many New Testament commands.

- a. Rebuke is possible only if you judge those who sin against you (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3).
- b. Judging precedes public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20). John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles called people "vipers, dogs, pigs, wolves, hypocrites, fools, blind men, blind guides, whitewashed tombs" (Matt. 3:7; 7:6, 15; 12:34; 23:13, 16, 17, 27, 33; Luke 3:7; Acts 23:3; Phil. 3:2). NAME-CALLING IS OK IF THE METAPHORS ARE ACCURATE.
- c. Judging precedes spiritual warnings (2 Tim. 4:15).
- d. Judging precedes separation (1 Cor. 5:9–11).

5. Local churches are expected to judge their own members (1 Cor. 5:12–13). Church leaders are to judge known sin within the church. "Do you not judge those who are within *the church*?" (5:12b). And pass sentence. "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (5:13b). Church leaders are also to judge disputes within the church—to establish the fact of sin (1 Cor. 6:2–4).

6. Paul judged sinning Christians publicly, by name, and in writing—stating their sins and their sentences (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:16–17; 4:10, 14–15). Naming names and their sins *is* judging, but not gossip or slander. It's protecting the sheep from wolves through specific warnings. Gossip reveals past sins that have been confessed and forgiven in order to darken someone's character; judging reveals present sins that are continuing in order to warn people about someone's lack of character—to keep them from being hurt. Both seek to destroy reputations.

7. Don't judge motives or behavior based on supposition (Matt. 7:1–2; Luke 6:37). Don't judge if you're guessing, if you don't know all the facts, or if it's one person's word against another. The way things appear is not always the case: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). And don't judge motives since you have no way of knowing for certain what they are. You can't read minds. Leave motives for the Lord to judge at the Judgment Seat (1 Cor. 4:5).

Do not judge [wrongly], lest you be judged. For by the judgment with which you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure with which you measure out [false judgment], it [true judgment] shall be measured out to you (Matt. 7:1–2 RCL).

And do not pass judgment [wrongly] and you will not be judged; and do not condemn [wrongly], and you shall not be condemned (Luke 6:37).

The following two verses must be seen in this light, otherwise Paul sinned in speaking against and judging Hymenaeus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Phygelus, Philetus, and Demas.

Do not speak [wrongly] against one another, brethren. He who speaks [wrongly] against a brother, or judges his brother [wrongly], speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge *of it*. There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judges your neighbor [wrongly] (James 4:11–12).

Judging others wrongly attributes sins where there are none—and unjustly damages their names, reputations, finances, jobs, careers, ministries, and lives. God is forced to avenge them by disciplining you for all the harm you caused. God has promised to repay (Rom. 12:19).

8. Don't judge another man's freedom by your own conscience (1 Cor. 10:29b–30; Rom. 14:3–4, 10, 13a; Col. 2:16). Don't judge as sin what isn't

sin. Be sure you know what sin is, otherwise you may judge someone guilty of committing sin when in fact they have committed no sin. The weak in faith often judge the strong in things God accepts (cf. Rom. 14:3). This is judging the conscience of others by your own conscience or judging the freedom of others by your own freedom (or lack of freedom). A good example is found in the controversy over Jesus' disciples picking grain on the Sabbath: "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matt. 12:7).

9. What you judge in others you judge in yourself (Rom. 2:1-3; cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-7). In judging others you stand in judgment over yourself. In condemning the sins of others you condemn them for everyone. In making these judgments you are without excuse because you have demonstrated your knowledge of right and wrong, the law, or the Word of God.

10. Judge yourself, lest you be judged (1 Cor. 11:31). Judging always precedes confession. Conviction leads to a knowledge of sin; knowledge leads to judging yourself guilty; and self-judgment leads to confession.