

TO JUDGE, OR NOT TO JUDGE

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If I would ask you today, should we judge others, or not? The answer may overwhelmingly be 'No! We should never judge others. Being judgmental is one of the worst sins.' We truly believe that we should not judge anyone, and that is according to Jesus's command in Matthew 7. A good friend is described as: 'She does not judge me.' Never before were people so sensitive to being judged. The world today also has the unwritten rule: 'don't judge me'. But what actually happened, is that judgment went underground. We still judge, isn't it? We do that in our minds all the time! We just don't feel we should say it, and if we say it, it many times comes out in frustration, or worse, we tell someone else about it, thus creating gossip.

God created us as moral beings – we each have a compass inside regarding right and wrong. We just cannot get away from judging/evaluating right and wrong – we were designed to do that. We are the crown of God's creation, destined to rule the world; and in order to do that, the most basic skill we need, is to discern between what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong.

It is also a subject we do not like to talk or think about. We are happy, we should not judge, so all I can do if I see my friend acts or speaks wrongly, is to 'love' him or her and pray for them. God will take care of the rest.

But is that right according to the Bible? Are we not missing something? Are we not stretching this command of Jesus 'do not judge' too far, and miss out on the blessing we need to be for one another? Even if it comes at a price we have to pay? Are we sincere and truthful towards one another? Is there a chance that in not judging and correcting a friend, is actually selfish and not sacrificially loving at all?

We have to face the fact that we are living in the last, last days of the earth; the end of life on earth as we know it, may be closer than anyone would imagine. Jesus's return and the Great Judgment Day is closer than ever before. And Jesus said in Matt. 24:8-14 that there will be many false prophets – many will be deceived, will be hated by the world, lawlessness will abound, and love will grow cold.

Lawlessness will increase. People are told that nothing is right or wrong, everything is conditional – depending on the situation, culture and fashion. People are even moving away from defining anything as 'wrong' or 'evil', except being judgmental, of course. And people themselves want to make the rules about right and wrong, good and evil. Like in the time of the Judges in the Bible – everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

It is critical to have God's understanding on right and wrong. I myself saw while I was meditating on this, that I still have a lot to learn about the subject, I myself need to change deep-seated thinking patterns and behaviour and reactions. I need to correctly understand God regarding my responsibility towards my brother and sister in Christ; and my responsibility towards those not belonging to the family of Christ.

The Bible has a lot to say about this topic. If God says in one scripture: "Do not judge," we need to compare it to other verses that also speaks about judgment, to get the full picture. The Bible never contradicts itself. All is true at the same time, if we understand it correctly.

Here are a few Scripture verses about judging:

Firstly – do not judge:

1. **Matt. 7: 1-5** Jesus said: *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*
2. **James 4:12** *"There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbour?"*

Secondly – judge:

1. Commandment to Judge: **Joh. 7:24** *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*
2. **1 Cor. 5:12** *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*
3. **1 Cor. 6:2-3** *Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!*
4. **Ezek. 3:18** *If I (God) say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.*

Basically, all the books in the Bible have content that either directly or indirectly judges people's actions, thoughts and attitudes.

Thirdly, God the Ultimate Judge:

1. **Joh 8:50** *“Yet I (Jesus) do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and He is the Judge.”*
2. **Rom 2:3,6** *“Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ... He will render to each one according to his works.”*
3. **Ps. 76:8-9** *“You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed of the earth.”*

All these Scriptures should be examined properly, within context, and so on, but the point I want to make is that there is much more we need to explore and understand about judging – God is clearly telling us we need to judge, and in another way ‘not to judge’. We cannot be salt and light in this world if we do not understand our task and our responsibility regarding judging correctly.

How to judge/reprove	How NOT to judge
When we judge, we should only be stewards, messengers of God’s judgment – what He taught us in the Bible regarding right and wrong.	We should have no personal judgment of our own , from our own understanding or perspective – regarding God Himself, or others or even myself.
We can only judge according to people’s actions and words , not their motives and intentions.	We cannot assume to be knowing someone’s thoughts, motives or intentions – that is God’s speciality. Only God can judge the hearts of men.
I always need to first examine myself according to God’s Word , taking the measurement and standard of God to evaluate my own life. Get qualified to judge.	We cannot pronounce future judgment (condemnation) on people.
Confess my own sins to a trustworthy brother/sister. Work towards all bondages to be broken in my life.	We must not try to sit in the judgment-seat , to make our word a law to everybody.
Correct others gently .	We must not use judging to speak evil of another person. Don’t judge too harshly .
Let rebukes (stern correction) be few and far between.	We cannot despise the one we judge.

Speak the truth in love – if you love, you will weigh the words and deeds of your brother/sister in light of God’s Word. You will bring the truth, even if it is hard for both you to do and him/her to receive it.	We cannot judge others with revenge, unforgiveness or bitterness in our hearts.
We need to be absolutely impartial when we reprove someone.	We must not judge rashly , nor pass such a judgment upon our brother that has no clear evidence but is only the product of our own jealousy and sinful nature.
Be absolutely humble and gracious when you judge, knowing that it is only God’s grace that you didn’t fall into the same sin.	We must normally not judge a person after only one act or word .
Show full respect to the one you are trying to correct.	If you are currently guilty of the same sin you feel to correct your brother; you are not qualified to do that. Get yourself in the right position, then speak the truth in love.
When you judge, do not consider your own comforts or safety , focus on saving a soul from death. Do not choose the easy way out!	Don’t judge selfishly or like a hypocrite .
It is our duty to judge correctly. Follow Jesus and the Apostles’ example in judging.	It is not our duty to play God by inventing my own set of rules.
Put yourself in the other person’s shoes , then judge. Have a readiness to also be judged.	Don’t judge unimportant things .
Do not throw you pearls to the dogs .	No point in judging someone who hates correction .
Judge ONLY according to the Bible , the Word of God.	Use no popular or secular measures to judge.
Judge prayerfully , in complete dependence on the guidance and wisdom given by the Holy Spirit .	Do not decide not to judge, to avoid conflict .

God’s Word and the standards set in His Word and remedy given in God’s Word is the only thing that will bring true transformation and blessedness in life.

It is our duty as believers to judge everything with God's standards, to keep an eye on each other, showing love, even when it hurts to tell or hurts to hear the truth. Then also to do it humbly graciously, knowing that I too can fall easily.

Our community of believers are responsible for one another and accountable to one another. We need to be a community that give each other the permission to judge one another. We all have blind spots and need one another to lovingly correct us.

Be judge of myself first, with standards according to the Bible – listen to the Holy Spirit, Who will convict us of sin, if we allow Him and stay sensitive to His Voice. We should be watchmen over one another. And we should speak truth in our community. Then we are truly the salt of the earth. May God have mercy on us to perform this duty of ours faithfully.

Prayer: Father, I humble myself. Forgive me for judging or correcting people in a loveless way and without the prompting of your Holy Spirit. Help me to be salt, to speak the truth but always in love and with the desire to see someone saved or growing in the spirit. Amen.