

Myth #4: Christians Shouldn't Judge

The fourth in the series: *Urban Myths: Debunking Christian Clichés*
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Communion

Intro:

If there is a single biblical saying that people love to quote, it is "Do not judge!" Christians and non-Christians alike use this phrase to excuse their behavior and evade accountability. *I can do whatever I want and you can't say a thing about it because Christians shouldn't judge.*

Is that *always the case*? Are we to *tolerate anything*? Are we to *reject any absolute standards*? No, *there are times* when we *must judge* and *times when we are not to judge*. Today we will learn the difference.

T - Let's first focus on...

1. Jesus and judging others

• **What he said:** Matt 7:1,2 **Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.** That seems clear and concise, but *what else* did he say? In verse 6 he said, **Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.** What an irony, immediately after telling us not to judge, he taught on judgments we *must* make. He says we're to be discerning, to distinguish between good and bad. What's up here?

• **What he meant:** He certainly didn't mean that we are not to judge between what is right and wrong because he repeatedly calls his followers to do just that. We *are* to make moral judgments. Later in the chapter we read that Jesus expects his followers to differentiate between true and false teaching. And in **Luke 7:43** Jesus responded to Peter by saying, **You have judged correctly.** So there is a kind of judgment that is right. In **Luke 12:57** Jesus asked

people to observe the evidence and said **judge for yourselves what is right.** In **John 7:24** he said, **Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.** So there are *two* kinds of judgment and only one is out of bounds.

What we see here in **Matt. 7** is a warning against the wrong type of judging. It is not any critical thinking that is condemned, but careless, inaccurate judgment, after all, we will be judged by the same standard we use - so it better be by the standard of righteousness, not that of prejudice.

T - That's what he taught, let see what he practiced...

• **What he modeled:**

Jesus wasn't afraid to judge between right and wrong. In fact, at times he sounded pretty judgmental! **Matt 23:27** **Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness!** The whole chapter sounds like this! **33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?**

Jesus wasn't always so tough, but he did always speak the truth. **John 8:3-11 - Has no one condemned you?... Then neither do I condemn you, Go now and leave your life of sin.** He didn't condemn her but neither did he condone her sin. He judged her actions as wrong, but challenged her to make a change. His model is our method. We recognize sin for what it is, but offer correction with compassion not condescension.

There are many examples of Jesus judging between right and wrong. And he will preside over the final judgment as well. So, *would we call Jesus tolerant?* Maybe not according to the word's new definition. It used to be that everyone had a right to his or her beliefs and to be tolerant

meant you granted someone the right to be wrong. But now it means you can't evaluate and disapprove of someone's convictions or lifestyle. To even use the word *wrong* is to be intolerant. It is in style to be tolerant of everything but intolerance. And we wouldn't *want to be caught dead* being *intolerant*. Well, *Jesus was caught dead*. He wasn't concerned with his popularity or being politically correct. Jesus judged between right and wrong and he expects that we will do the same.

2. An important distinction

• *We should judge those who claim to be Christians according to Christian standards.* [1 Cor 5:1-3](#) There is a standard in the fellowship and judgment is needed. Some things should not be ignored in the name of tolerance. Why tolerate Christians acting like non-Christians? Look where that has gotten the Christian church - scandals and shame abound. We are to hold one another accountable and this means we will have to live, and expect each other to live, by God's Word. Its principles can be applied according to each specific circumstance. [1 Thes. 5:14](#) - *warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak...* There is more than one way to use this tool. [2 Tim 4:1,2](#) *correct, rebuke and encourage...* Judge what fits the need.

Search *judge* and you'll find that Paul time and time again appeals to people to judge what is true. He uses the word to mean: *think about it, be discerning*. In this way, we are to judge. But he also writes about how we are not to judge in a condescending way: [Rom 14:10](#) *You, then, why do you judge your brother? ...why do you look down on your brother?* While we don't *look down* on others, we also don't ignore it when they *fall down* and need help.

• *We should not judge those who don't claim to be Christians according to Christian standards.*

[1 Cor 5:9-13](#). Don't expect non-Christians to act Christian. We aren't to judge them. That's not our role. Our role is to influence them for Christ. I think the world is sick of us telling them they are blowing it.

Here is the important distinction: *Don't expect those who aren't signed up for the game to play by the rules*. What should we be able to expect?

Sum: *Expect behavior to match belief*. In other words, worldview and lifestyle are to line up. We can't expect people who don't view the Bible as their source of authority to follow what it says. Those of us who do believe it is the Word of God should demonstrate that with submission and obedience.

3. The underlying issues

• **The philosophical root to our reluctance to make judgments:** *We reject absolute standards and slip into moral relativism*. Maybe we are disinclined to judge because we've come to view, not just our values as old-fashioned, but the whole concept of having standards as antiquated. If there are no universal truths, then we have no right to ever judge anything or anyone.

Relativists say that no one has a right to define right and wrong or question anyone's choices. The problem with relativism is that *everything is not relative*. Morality may be much more like math than we might wish. You don't talk back to the teacher in math class and say *That's your truth; I've got mine. This answer works for me*. Sorry, there is a right answer and all alternatives are wrong.

The book of Judges covers the history of Israel at a time when they did not want to be a theocracy but were not yet a monarchy. The book's theme is that **everyone did what was right in his own eyes**. That sounds like today. When there is no standard, anarchy is the result.

In contrast to what relativists say, Christians say that God has a right to determine right and wrong. Why? What gives him this right? He owns us! We are his! We exist, not for ourselves, but for him. **Col 1:16: all things have been created by him and for him.** We are under obligation to follow because he made us! And doubly so because he redeemed us! **1 Cor 6:19,20 You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.** We are his. We owe him allegiance.

So, while the cultural climate suggests we really can't ever say if anyone is out of bounds, the game of life really does have rules and God has the right to set them.

• **The psychological root to our reluctance to make judgments: We are afraid of appearing hypocritical so we refuse to help others.** When you label something as wrong, someone is going to say, *Don't judge!* They may point out the inconsistency in your life. Speak out against something and this will be thrown in your face. One option, the common one, is to shy away from saying anything for fear of the conflict.

The fear of hypocrisy is a well-founded concern. **Matt 7:3-6 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.** This teaches that when we don't deal with our own weaknesses, no one will take us seriously when we address their issues. Out of fear that we aren't any better off than the other guy, we won't take the risk. Who wants to be labeled as a hypocrite? So we do nothing.

The only problem with this is that the guy with the splinter in his eye is hurting. He needs help. It seems to me that we have a two-step responsibility: 1. eliminate the contradictions in our lives and then 2. help others. As Jesus said, **take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**

• **The sociological root to our reluctance to make judgments: We find it easier to retreat into isolation than to live in community.**

Here's another reason why we are so unlikely to speak up about what is right and wrong. That would necessitate being involved in one another's lives. Which is incredibly biblical, but not so popular. **Rom 12:4,5 - ...in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.** We are connected in Christ. The body can't work if the parts function in isolation and neither can the church.

Let's not *play pretend*, feigning self-sufficiency. We need relationships. Do you realize that Jesus led a small group? Together they experienced Christian community. Jesus and his disciples hung out together. They studied the Scriptures, discussed application. They celebrated festivals together, shared finances and meals. They fished together, ministered together, even sang together. At the end, Jesus wanted them to be with him. Their presence meant something. *Friends!*

Don't live at such a safe distance that you are not involved in one another's lives. You can't experience real Christianity privately. Get close enough to know each other's problems and provide tangible help.

Sum: Since right and wrong are not antiquated ideas but have been defined by God, let's live right and take the risk to call other Christians to do the same.

More Meat (Unused extra ideas):

We're taught to offer correction with an attitude of humility. Gal 6:1. Rom 12:3 - Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.

Should we judge everyone who is doing wrong? No. You don't swing at every pitch. Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:13 mention bearing with each other.

1 John 4:1-3 - we are to judge between spirits.

2 Tim 4:3,4 There are alternative teachings out there and we have to be discerning.

We do need to hold other believers accountable, but we are not to be hypocritical in how we deal with them.

Concerning hypocrisy:

Unfortunately, it is common to see this pattern in the home. Parents nit-pick their kids about things but lack the consistency in their own lives to set a reliable pattern to follow. This makes me think of what Jesus said, Mark 7:6 - Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." It is up to us to follow Christ so closely that our kids don't echo those words about us.

They will receive it if we have credibility. When we don't, our judgment doesn't exactly work, does it? Rom 2:1 - You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other,

you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

2 Thes 3:14,15 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

James 4:12 - ...who are you to judge your neighbor? 5:9 - Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!