

LESSON 39 - DO NOT JUDGE

Did Jesus Tell His Followers Not To Judge Others?

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Ever tell someone that they were doing something sinful and they responded, “Jesus said not to judge”? *Did* Jesus tell His followers not to judge others? Technically yes, but He didn’t mean to infer that Christians should ignore sinful behavior. In another lesson we’ll cover why and how to judge believers rightly. In this lesson we’ll discuss: 1) Why Christians *need* to judge, 2) What Jesus actually said and what He meant, and 3) Five principles for better Christian judgment.

1. Why Christians Need To Judge. Some people distort Jesus’ words and tell you Jesus said not to judge others, inferring that Jesus wouldn’t judge them and so neither should we. However, in John 5:22 Jesus says, “*the Father... has entrusted all judgment to the Son.*” John 3:18-21 says, “*Light [i.e. Jesus] has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light.*” When those with sinful beliefs and lifestyles are opposed by Christians in the light, they feel negatively judged. They want Christians to deny biblical truths to approve of their sinfulness, agree that they’re doing nothing wrong, and be more tolerant of their feelings and choices. But Jesus’ followers need to be godly and holy. We *need* to judge in order to determine if something is sinful and unholy, to renounce it. The more we trust and submit to God’s Word, the more we’ll stop believing the unbiblical, ungodly lies in the world. The more we die to our old sinful ways to live for Jesus, the more our hearts and lifestyles align with God’s character and will. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.*” The world is *still dark* in its sinful rebellion to God, but as Jesus’s followers we are to shine like *lights*. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus said, “*You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*” We need to judge to determine what deeds are good and glorify our Heavenly Father, and what deeds are evil that don’t.

2. What Jesus Actually Said And What He Meant. In Matthew 7:1-2 Jesus said, “*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.*” Jesus’s teaching is expanded in Luke 6:37-38, “*Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you... For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*” He tells us the standard and manner by which we judge others will be the same one God uses on us. Jesus is not saying not to distinguish truth from error or good from evil. He’s warning us, His followers who have received God’s mercy, forgiveness, and grace, to mirror this to others. It’s both a caution and

an instruction, to be empathetic, gentle, kind, understanding, generous, not quarrelsome, slow to accuse others of wrong and quick to forgive. Then in Matthew 7:3-5 Jesus said, *“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.”* Jesus says to first examine yourself and don’t be a hypocrite. Then help your *brothers* (meaning other believers) to remove their speck. Jesus *does* want us to judge (*determine*) what is good, clean up our sinful beliefs and behaviors, and then help fellow believers remove theirs. Jesus isn’t saying to not judge unbelievers. He’s saying to not judge other believers *wrongly*. What about judging unbelievers? Those in the dark, living in sin far from God? In Matthew 7:6 Jesus then says, *“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”* Do not expect unbelievers to *desire* the moral standards and same motivations as Holy Spirit-led believers. They don’t yet treasure the sacred: Jesus, the glorious Gospel, and relationship with the Living God. We can’t “force” unbelievers to observe aspects of our Christianity using religious guilt or government power. Without their own faith in Jesus, spiritual conversion, and a life in the Holy Spirit, “force” only causes them to be more hateful and hostile.

3. Five Principles For Better Christian Judgment. First, humble yourself - you’re no one’s judge! James 4:11-12 says, *“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it... There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”* Second, use God’s Word, not your wisdom or preferences, to determine good from evil, helpful from harmful. Third, focus on yourself first and don’t be a hypocrite. Romans 2:1 warns, *“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”* Get the plank out of your eye first, then examine not only your behavior, but also your thoughts, beliefs, desires, and motivations. 1 Corinthians 11:31 warns, *“If we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.”* Fourth, after yourself then focus on believers. 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 says, *“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked person from among you.’”* Expel an evildoer that they may repent, but also admonish sin gently and in love, encouraging them to do what is good in brotherly affection. Don’t exercise your Christian liberty in ways that would lead someone else into sin. Romans 14:12-13 says, *“So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”* Fifth, be a WITNESS—not a judge—to unbelievers. Let yourself, your marriage, family, and church, be a light shining bright in the darkness for them. Those who love the dark may hate and reject you, but those who are attracted to the light will be drawn to Jesus living in you.

Let’s pray. Lord Jesus, You’re our perfect judge. Make me humble, non-hypocritical, godly, holy, kind, gentle, empathetic, understanding, slow to accuse, quick to forgive. Make me a bright light. Amen.