

## Should Christians Judge?

- **Culture of Tolerance**
  - Our culture hates absolutes. We hear:
    - "I don't see it that way"
    - "That's your opinion"
    - "You have your truth, and I have my truth"
    - "Don't judge me"
    - "You obviously are not a Christian because Jesus told us not to judge."
    - "There are exceptions to everything"
      - "There are times when lying, stealing, cheating are necessary"
    - "Christians are so judgmental."
  - We live in a world where everyone is doing what "is right in their own eyes"
  - Our culture says it is wrong for you to judge them (for immorality) but not wrong for them to judge someone for:
    - political issues
    - environmental issues
    - healthcare issues
  - Most people don't want their **morality** to be judged
- **Hypocrisy in judging – examples:**
  - **politicians** often call out in others something they later are found guilty of:
    - President Biden talking about President Trump having classified documents: "How could anyone be that irresponsible?"
    - recently reported – President Biden has apparently inappropriately maintained classified documents in an insecure setting for several years
  - **telling others how to live but not following their own advice:**
    - **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1762) wrote a book on how to educate children
      - he said have "an ever-approachable father always present to answer their questions about the nature of the world"
      - reality: Rousseau had at least 5 children that were promptly taken to the local orphanage
      - Rousseau was denounced for leaving all his children at the door of an orphanage, he denied this, insisting that he had taken them all inside the orphanage
    - **Henry David Thoreau** – famous for writing about respecting nature
      - considered by some as the "father of environmentalism"
      - locals nicknamed him "woods burner" because he started a campfire that burned 300 acres of woods
        - he bragged that he felt no remorse for this
        - called it a "glorious spectacle"

- **What About Matthew 7:1?** – "Judge not, that ye be not judged."
  - The world says:
    - "live and let live"
    - "don't judge"
    - "just love everyone"
    - "be tolerant of others"
  - is that what "judge not" means?
  - **Two Opinions:**
    - "Christians should not pass judgment on others. That's not our responsibility."
    - "Christians should call out sin wherever they find it."
  - **Are either of these Biblical?**
    - Should Christians judge or not? If so, how?
    - As Christians, we take our directions from Scripture, not culture.
      - however, we must be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - Sadly today, people no longer see their need for a Savior because our "don't judge" culture has removed any sense of **guilt** and **shame** for immoral behavior.
    - The purpose of the Gospel – make sinners **aware** of their need of a Savior
- **"Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" – What Does the Bible Say?**
  - rightly dividing means "cutting a straight line; rightly handling"
  - define the word "judge": "to distinguish, to determine, to separate"
  - consider: the Bible has an entire book entitled "Judges"; if God does not want us to judge anyone or anything, it seems contradictory that He continually raised up judges to do that very thing (Judges 2:18)
- **The Context of Matthew 7:1**
  - Jesus was speaking against something done frequently in Israel:
    - evaluating the spirituality of others by their outward observance of the Mosaic law and religious works
    - this text is speaking against hypocritical and self-righteous judging
  - Jesus was laying out the steps for making a **proper judgment**
  - "then thou shalt see clearly" (Matthew 7:5)
    - we cannot make a proper judgment until we have (with God's help) examined our own lives & removed anything God points out to us
- **Matthew 7:6**
  - strange to say "don't judge" & then say **beware** of dogs and pigs
  - a metaphorical dog or pig = those who were sinners, ones who **hate** righteousness
  - how can you know a "dog" or a "pig"?
    - by judging (discerning) people's actions, words
    - if one **hates** righteousness – it will eventually come out in their words & actions
- **Matthew 7:15-16**
  - how to know someone is a "false prophet" without using judgment?
  - "ye shall know them by their fruits"
    - "fruits" = what their lives produce (just as a tree produces fruit)
  - to discern dogs, pigs, and false prophets requires judging

- **John 7:24** – "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
  - AMP – "Do not judge by appearance [superficially and arrogantly], but judge fairly and righteously."
  - "use proper standards"
  - Jesus was saying, "Don't judge like **THAT** — judge like **THIS**."
  - Biblically, there is a **RIGHT** way and a **WRONG** way to judge.
- **Judging in the Wrong Way**
  - **Hypocritical – a Double Standard**
    - Matthew 7:2 "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
    - do not judge someone for something you are guilty of committing
      - Romans 2:1 AMP "Therefore you have no excuse or justification, everyone of you who [hypocritically] judges and condemns others; for in passing judgment on another person, you condemn yourself, because you who judge [from a position of arrogance or self-righteousness] are habitually practicing the very same things [which you denounce]."
  - **Judging Motives Only**
    - 1 Kings 8:39 God "only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men"
  - **Superficial Judging**
    - Proverbs 18:13 "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."
    - John 7:24 "Judge not according to the appearance."
    - Luke 7:36-50 Simon the Pharisee passed judgment on a woman based on her appearance and reputation.
  - **Having the Wrong Attitude and Motivation**
    - Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
      - "ye which are spiritual" – that is who is to do the restoring
        - AMP "keeping a watchful eye on yourself"
    - What is our motivation for judging?
      - the Pharisees: "They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4 NIV).
      - Are we speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)?
  - **Judging Matters of Conscience – Romans, Chapter 14**
    - Romans 14:1 talks about "doubtful disputations" (differences of opinions, scruples)
      - do not judge or criticize a weak brother's scruples
        - "scruples" = ethics, morality, matters of conscience, personal convictions
    - (discuss Jewish converts still keeping the Law, harsh arguing & judging only made them more firmly entrenched in their beliefs)
    - Romans 14:2 – one eats only **vegetables**
      - might believe the meat was offered to a pagan god or not kosher (unclean)
      - because some Christians saw nothing wrong in this meat and others saw much

wrong in it, this was a burning issue among believers in Paul's day.

- Today, there are plenty of issues where some believers believe one way and others believe differently.
- Romans 14:3 – some eat **meat**; others do not – do not despise or judge
  - "We usurp the place of God, when we take upon us thus to judge the thoughts and intentions of others, which are out of our view" (Matthew Henry).
- Romans 14:5 – some esteem **a day** highly; others do not
  - Old Testament Sabbath
  - some thought the new moons and Jewish festivals were holier than other days, and ought still to be observed.
    - others hold that the difference of days appointed by Moses had now ceased.
- Romans 14:6 – "he that regardeth" and he that "doth not regard it"
  - both are acting from a principle of conscience
  - both honor and give thanks to God
- **Being Judgmental**
  - define "judgmental": quick, harsh, excessive, critical judgment
- **Principles of Discernment (Spiritual Judging)**
  - define "discernment": to distinguish truth from error
    - Greek: to examine or judge closely; to separate out
  - discernment is not optional
    - sadly, many leave the responsibility of discernment almost completely up to others
  - we must **grow** in discernment
    - Hebrews 5:12-14 – "their senses trained to discern good and evil" (NASB)
      - this is why Galatians 6:1 tells us who are to "restore" ones who have sinned
        - "ye which are spiritual"
  - discernment requires BOTH the **Word** and the **Spirit**
    - things are spiritually discerned ("have the mind of Christ; 1 Corinthians 2:16)
    - the Bible is the standard against which everything must be tested (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
    - if Christians were to rely only on their ability to listen to the Holy Spirit, they have **no standard** to test their interpretation (the Word)
    - if Christians were to rely only on the Word, there would be no room for the **Spirit's guidance and revelation**
    - the Word (without the Spirit) can be used to "kill" (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- **How to Answer Concerning Sinful Behaviors**
  - Consider – how does this conversation start?
    - did they ask you?
    - or did you initiate the conversation?
    - could this make a difference in whether they hear you or not?
  - Should we give them a list of Scriptures to prove our point?
    - again – "the letter [without the Spirit] killeth" (2 Corinthians 3:6)
    - "The Bible says ..."
      - many people today do not accept the Bible as a starting point (compass)
      - to refer to the Bible as the standard might fall on deaf ears

- **A Possible Approach:**
  - "As a Christian, my beliefs and moral foundation are built on the Bible. If the Bible is not your foundation, I can see why you disagree with me."
  - "We usually can all agree that murder and theft is wrong. The Christian's values for this is based on the Bible. What are your values (judgment of right and wrong) based on?"
- **Keys to Biblical Judging**
  - we make judgments everyday on many subjects
    - when dealing with spiritual issues, the **key** is "**righteous** judgment"
  - we must never lose sight of our **goal** = point people to the Gospel
    - The Great Commission
  - our **lives** must reflect what we believe
  - judging must **include** the Word and the Spirit
    - otherwise, human judgment will start judging everything it sees
  - judging must be done by "ye which are **spiritual**"
    - new converts, young in the faith – often zealous but lack in discernment
    - the things of God are "spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- **How to Judge – a Bible Example (John, Chapter 8)**
  - woman caught in adultery – called out publicly by scribes & Pharisees
    - Compare: how did Jesus judge her? How did He judge her accusers?
    - Compare how Jesus called out sin in the hypocrites versus the sinners.
  - **John 8:7** "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."
    - self-examination (mote and beam – speck and 2x4)
  - **John 8:6** "This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him"
    - Jesus knew their motives
  - **John 8:9** – convicted by their own consciences, they left
    - "and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst"
    - the woman could have left too, but she didn't – giving Jesus an opportunity
      - we need a **door** before speaking truth (judgment)
      - "When a friend or loved one asks you about an issue, they probably know you are a Christian and they are seeking out your opinion as a Christian. How different is this than confronting someone, who is caught up in sin, around the dinner table at Christmas?"
    - then Jesus spoke to the woman (**privately** – not in front of a crowd)
    - Challenge: "We draw strength from having others around us who believe the same thing."
  - Often we fail to **listen BEFORE** making a judgment call
    - Jesus had a conversation with the woman **first**: "Where are your accusers?"
    - John 8:11 "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."
      - what she had done was sin – Jesus did not overlook that
      - compare Jesus & the Pharisees – which action caused the woman to want to "sin no more"?

- **Correctly Judging (Righteous Judgment)**
  - **#1 – What is my motive?**
    - to find what is wrong & point it out?
    - to feel superior?
      - hypocritical judging is thinking you are doing it better than someone else
    - to make myself look good (pride)?
      - James 4:6 "God resisteth the proud"
    - to have something to talk about?
    - do I have compassion? am I humble?
    - do I have respect of persons?
      - "she knows better"
      - but – "he doesn't know any better"
    - is my focus on helping someone get to Jesus or just improve their behavior?
      - Romans 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."
    - am I striving for unity?
      - Ephesians 4:3 "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
  - **#2 – Is it my place to put out judgment?**
    - **discerning** and **addressing** are 2 different things
      - is it ever wise to tell a visitor or new person their standard is lacking?
      - be careful about assuming – he or she might be living to all they know
    - am I in a position of authority?
      - parent, pastor, youth leader, etc.
    - am I "spiritual"?
    - was I asked?
    - "children correcting children" – rarely goes well
  - **#3 – Have I examined myself first?**
    - am I fully measured up in what God has shown me?
    - what is my attitude – judgmental (harsh, critical, quick) or humble?
    - am I open to correction by a spiritual brother/sister? Consider how it might feel.
  - **#4 – Have I given the matter time and prayer?**
    - could I have misjudged or misunderstood the situation?
      - Romans 10:2 "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."
      - John 7:24 "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
        - appearances can be deceiving
      - Don't jump to conclusions – Proverbs 18:13 "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."
    - does he/she need time to let God work with them first?
  - **#5 – Is God's Spirit leading me?**
    - Often Jesus' answer was silence (writing in the dirt)
    - Ecclesiastes 3:7 – there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence
    - "He that is without sin cast the first stone" – Jesus (by the Law) could've stoned her

- lawful but not expedient – "all things edify not" (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- **"lawful"** = morally legitimate (correct)
- **"expedient"** = helpful, profitable, beneficial
- **"edify"** = builds up, encourages growth
- there is a danger of "Being Right in the Wrong Way"
- 2 Corinthians 3:2 we are to be **"living epistles"**
  - a holy life puts judgment on others
    - I have had people see my long hair and say, "I used to have long hair; I wish I hadn't cut it."
    - after cursing around you, have you had someone say, "sorry about that"?
    - After someone saw me praying over a meal, she said, "I should do that."
    - words were not necessary
  - Actions do speak **LOUDER** than words
  - Your life's the only Bible that some people read
    - we are not to beat them over the head
    - we are not to choke or drown them
    - more things are **caught** (lived by example) than **taught** (told - words)
- Holy Spirit guidance is **VITAL!**
- Godly counsel can help you not misstep – talk to a spiritual leader first
- **#6 – What is my approach?**
  - finger pointing: "you are wrong!"
  - am I gentle: "have you ever considered ... ?"
    - Titus 3:2 "gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men"
  - remembering our own faults, past mistakes, and sins
    - Titus 3:3 "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."
  - being mindful that we might need correction in the future
    - Matthew 7:2 "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
- keep in mind, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19)