

Judging

This quick study has review questions at the end of the lesson – they are in order, and verbatim from the text. They are not designed to be difficult, but helpful in reviewing the lesson.

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Callao Christian Church

“Don’t judge me! The Bible says not to judge me!”

Your preacher thinks that the above phrase might be the #1 piece of Bible “knowledge” that the public still possesses. It’s quoted so often, an entire culture has this one part of one verse memorized perfectly. It’s almost always in reaction to a Christian attempting to state (however graciously or not) that something another person doing is “wrong”, “sin”, or “against God’s will.”

This is a very sensitive subject, so your preacher thinks this orphaned phrase needs to be quoted fully. Let’s look at Jesus’ complete quote:

“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.” – Matthew 7:1+2 (see verses 3-5 and a repeat in Luke 6:37-42 for further context)

Now the temptation to “opine” (form many opinions) is great for all of us, let’s look at a few more verses in the New Testament about judging, so to be sure we are rightly dividing God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15):

Jesus says in John 7:24, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Paul says in Romans 2:3, “So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think that you will escape God’s judgment?”

Solomon says in Proverbs 31:9, “Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:3, “Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”

God speaks to the people of Israel in Leviticus 19:15b, “...but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

Paul speaks again in 1 Corinthians 5:12b, “Are you not to judge those inside the church?”

Jesus begins speaking about resolving sin in the church by saying in Matthew 18:15, “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.”

There are many other verses, and many more thoughts to share. We can say simply that Jesus commands us to judge and do so rightly (John 7:24), we should not be accusing others if we ourselves struggle with the same thing (hypocritical action – Romans 2:3), our judgments may be needed to defend the helpless (Proverbs 31:9), we are instructed to judge both in the life to come and this life (1 Corinthians 6:3), we will judge those inside the church (1 Corinthians 5:12b), and there is a proper method for doing so (Matthew 18:15).

None of those things sound anything like the blanket statement, “Don’t judge me!” Instead, the opposite is true (we do judge), but there is a specifically-prescribed Biblical attitude, method, and purpose in doing so. God knew that people always have been and always will be very sensitive to being “called out” for

any wrongdoing, so that is why He has established these guidelines. We ignore, reduce, or change them to our own condemnation (James 4:17).

When the guidelines of God's Word are followed, restoration of a sinning person is possible without retribution and with peace to both them and yourself (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15b). When His Word's guidelines are not followed, even the well-intending, sincere Christian will see backlash that is severe and damaging to the soul of another (Romans 14:19) and themselves! The mature Christian should realize that many people have left the church due to "hypocrites" (Matthew 7:3-5), and "judgmental people" (Romans 14:4). We do not want to be guilty of their blood (Jude 23). The *only* way to avoid these dire consequences is to approach judging another sin's with the Bible's method, purpose, and attitude. Anything short of that will be catastrophic and to our blame (Matthew 7:5).

Instead, a Christian should and if mature, will judge. However, that same Christian must take into account the method (Matthew 18:15ff, Galatians 1:ff), the attitude (Romans 2:3, Proverbs 31:9), and purpose in judgment (Matthew 18:15b) God has prescribed in His Word. Failing to do so will result in a worse situation than before, and we are accountable for everything we do and every empty word we say (Matthew 12:36).

Our purpose in judgment is *never* to validate ourselves (we either are, or are not, faithful according to God's judgment of us – never in comparison to another), but to restore a brother or sister

gently to Christ (Galatians 6:1). If done rightly and successfully, *no one else will even know it happened* in many cases. And in those cases, it's not for discussion afterwards – love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Needless to say there is no place for proxy-judging; Jesus' command is clear: judging another's sin is to be direct (i.e. in person), individual, and private (Matthew 18:15). Patience and gentleness are expected (Galatians 3:12; Ephesians 4:2). If a Christian is not willing to approach the sinner themselves, He is sinning Himself (James 4:17). No reporting of sin to another, no matter how sincere it may seem, is permitted; God demands direct, personal, and private contact for the purpose of restoration (Matthew 18:1, Galatians 6:1). All along we should guard our hearts unto temptation, as Satan uses these opportunities vastly (Galatians 6:1b; 1 Peter 5:8).

The only exception the Bible “might” give in contrast to direct, personal, and private judging of another sin's is reporting to the elders of the local body directly and privately (Hebrews 13:17). However, this is only applicable to a sinning party who has placed themselves under the auspices of that local church's eldership and the witness who has done the same. A “homeless” Christian (if there can be such a thing Biblically), who has not placed their fellowship with a specific body - under the leadership of a local plurality of elders - is not qualified to report anything to them; there is no way to hold that witness accountable as a truth-telling witness under their authority.

This equally means every mature Christian must be in a New Testament church by which they have committed to such fellowship. A Christian, who has not placed their fellowship with a local New Testament church under the leadership of a local plurality of elders, equally has no right to make such a request of those elders (Hebrews 13:7). Instead, then, the Biblical responsibility is solely on the witness. Such homeless judges are usually people who are not interested in following God's prescribed method, attitude, and purpose in judging in each case (or is at least missing one or more components), but rather is simply concerned with perfectionism (1 John 1:8), which is neither achievable nor a Biblical purpose in judging.

Perfectionism is a simply a symptom of insecurity. It is a personal problem not resolved by personal examination (1 Corinthians 11:28), prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and repentance (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), but manifest in expecting perfection in others (Ecclesiastes 7:20). When someone feels inadequate, they are naturally interesting in pointing out the fault in others (Matthew 7:3). When someone has a fault, no matter how minor or major, it will be a major deal in the mind of the perfectionist judger. Jesus has a cure for this: we must remove the plank in our own eye so we can successfully remove the speck in our brother's eye (Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:39-42).

Perfectionism can only be cured by realizing we all have sinned (Romans 3:23), either are or will sin again (1 John 1:8), and are all saved only by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:9), not an ounce of our own merit. Our faithfulness to God is a part of our salvation

(Philippians 2:12), but not the reason we received it in the first place – that alone lies with Jesus Christ! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Homeless judges will manifest as consistently joyless people (Proverbs 15:18), focusing on the negative habitually (Titus 3:10), and are never content (Philippians 4:12+13) with the status of the local church they typically hover around, but never have committed to. These people may appear sincere and concerned for others, but here is how to watch out for those who only have the appearance of these things and those who actually are sincere and concerned: they follow the Biblical method all the way through before reporting it to the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:17).

The elders of the local body or other witnesses who also called on the sinning party will be able to verify this (Matthew 18:16); it will also be public-church knowledge at this point, as the person will already have been presented and cast out (Matthew 18:17). Only then does such conversation not involve gossip and malice (1 Peter 2:1), but rather a confirmation that all that could be done was done according to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20), and now we pray the sinner's restoration will occur (Galatians 6:1ff, Matthew 18:15ff) by the hand of God alone at this point (James 4:12).

A homeless or insecure judge may excuse their differentiating behavior by stating they are “praying about what God wants them to do about” the sinning party. This is a cowardly (or at least Scripturally-ignorant) response, not being willing (typically afraid, i.e. insecure) to confront the sinning party themselves. However, do

not be deceived: God's Word and Will are clear! Matthew 18:15ff and Galatians 6:1ff are not passages able to be "prayed away". If we sincerely believe a brother or sister is in error, we have an obligation to approach them individually, privately, and in person (again, as this was the only way it could have happened in the New Testament times). Not doing so is a violation of God's Word and thus a sin upon the accuser (James 4:17)!

How can a homeless judger correct their approach? 1) Either they must be willing to follow Jesus' instructions from beginning to end from this point on each time or 2) stop, and seek further growth as a Christian first. #2 cannot be a permanent state, but it may be a necessary, temporary state to grow in the Word (2 Timothy 3:16), learn contentment (Philippians 4:12+13), develop joy (Galatians 5:22), have a genuine sense of hope (1 Corinthians 13:13), and commit to a local New Testament body and its eldership (Hebrews 13:7+17). It is the personal belief of this preacher that a homeless judger turned righteous will do more than follow steps, but be a transformed person, a true light unto the world (Matthew 5:14-16; Romans 12:1+2).

Why does your preacher speak so exhaustively on this subject? It is this preacher's observation that he has never witnessed anyone (including himself, upon this, his own study), actually has followed through all the way with God's prescribed method, attitude, and purpose in judging another's sin. I am personally convicted on how to handle this delicate issue more Biblically in the future; I hope the reader feels the same.

Undeniably, un-Biblical approaches to judging sin has caused much needless hurt, division, and stunted growth in the Kingdom of God. May we all repent (including myself) of negligence in this matter, and strive to do better in this sorely-lacking aspect of New Testament Christianity!

Judging rightly (John 7:24) is the first step to establishing Biblical church discipline procedure in general. If a church truly wishes to be a New Testament church, every church member as well as leadership has to be taught the Biblical principles regarding judging sin rightly.

It is this preacher's experience most of us are likely learning the above for the first time, if not all of us learning something of it. Let us bow in prayer and ask The Only Righteous Judge for remembrance of His Word, to follow through on His Word, not to excuse ourselves from His Word, and to succeed in restoring backslidden believers!

Let us bow in repentance regularly for our own sins (1 John 1:8); let us examine ourselves weekly before the Lord's table (1 Corinthians 11:28), laying before Him our daily, possibly even for our unknown sins (Job 1:5), and have in our minds the importance of our witness to a lost world, watching how we treat our own true family, the family of God (1 John 3:1ff; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26+27).

May the church be blessed through obedience of God's Word!

NOTE: Pencil is recommended for easy correction.

Review Questions:

- 1) “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the _____ way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” – Matthew 7:1+2
- 2) “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge _____.” – John 7:24
- 3) We can only judge rightly by utilizing the Bible’s _____, method, and attitude.
- 4) Judging another’s sin always has to be done _____, privately, and in person. We are obligated to follow through with _____ the steps in Matthew 18:15ff and Galatians 6:1ff before discussing it besides. A correction done rightly and successfully will mean *no one else will even know*.
- 5) If a Christian cannot approach the sinner themselves, they _____ themselves (James 4:17).
- 6) In order to involve the eldership of a local body in a case of another’s sin, the witness must be committed under the same eldership the accused is. If either is not committed under the same eldership, that eldership has no Biblical authority over that situation, leaving it the Biblical _____ of the witness alone.
- 7) Homeless judges are typically _____ and perfectionists. We can tell the difference between a righteous judge and a homeless, perfectionist, insecure judge by if they have already followed through with _____ of the steps

prescribed in the New Testament teachings of Matthew 18:1ff and Galatians 6:1ff before reporting it to anyone else.

- 8) Your preacher believes no one, including himself, has to his own experience truly followed through with _____ of the steps God has laid out in Scripture for judging sin rightly in the church. Therefore, we need to _____ and do better if we are to truly practice Biblical church discipline.
- 9) Who is the only perfect judge? _____
- 10) What Scripture reference implies we might even have sins unknown to us we need to repent of? _____
- 11) Our fellow church brothers and sisters are the family of God with us. Name two Scripture references saying so:
_____ & _____

BONUS QUESTION:

God has prescribed in Matthew 18:15ff and Galatians 6:1ff His prescribed steps for judging another's sin rightly. Name the steps given in each passage and commit yourself to them:

Matthew 18:15ff

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Galatians 6:1ff

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

ANSWER KEY:

1) Same, 2) rightly (or, correctly), 3) purpose, 4) individually, 5) sin, 6) responsibility, 7) insecure/all, 8) all/repent, 9) God (Jesus/Christ also acceptable), 10) Job 1:5, 11) 1 John 3:1ff, Romans 8:14-17, or Galatians 3:26+27, Bonus Question: for Matthew 18:15ff: 1) approach the sinning party individually, in person, and privately, 2) approach the sinning party with one or two other witnesses, 3) approach the church. Galatians 6:1ff: 1) restore the person gently, 2) carry each other's burdens, 3) each one should test their own actions.

Congratulations on completing this quick study on judging!

I hope it has been as insightful (and convicting) to the reader as it has been for the author. May the church of the Lord be blessed by the reading and studying of His Word!