

"Judging"

The Lord Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged." Well what does that mean and is all judging wrong? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're doing to explore what the Bible says about judging. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We can't do anything nobler than searching for God's truth. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Raymond Kelcy, one of my Bible professors, used to quip that the two best known verses of the Bible were 1 Timothy 5:23 and Matthew 7 and verse 1. He said the worst reprobate in society, a person who never went to church, would know these verses: "Drink a little wine for your stomach's sake" and "Judge ye not, that ye be not judged." Of course, people who use these verses to justify their questionable lifestyles frequently haven't taken time to find out what else the Bible says. Our world especially likes to quote "Judge ye not" and then make an absolute rule against all judging. So opposed are they to judging they themselves will condemn anyone who judges. They think it's okay to condemn people who judge, not realizing that they've just become judges themselves.

Sin, however, is a problem; it's evil and destructive. And failure to speak against sin allows sin to grow and destroy lives, families, churches, and even whole societies. People who practice evil never want anyone to condemn them; they want complete tolerance. Some use this rule against judging to protect themselves from being detected. John 3 verses 19 to 20 says, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." Well how do we deal with this dilemma? Do we remain silent about evil or do we speak out against it? What did Jesus mean when He told us not to judge?

Well you might want to study more about this, and we offer this study about judging free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7 verses 1 to 5, and we'll see what God says about judging.

Today we're reading from the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7, verses 1 through 5. "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at 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,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." That's from Jesus' own words in the Sermon on the Mount. Let's pray to God. Father we're so grateful that by Your love and by Your kindness and wisdom You have given us Your will in the word of God. And Father we pray that You'll bless us and help us to do Your will on earth, even as it's done in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

When we study a passage, let's consider the cultural problems that the Lord Jesus faced. When Jesus spoke these words, judging others had become common, even over man-made traditions. People were condemning others not only because they failed to keep the Law but also because they failed

to keep the oral traditions of the Pharisees. They were assuming the place of God by making their own laws and then condemning others for not keeping them.

The Pharisees and the scribes were famous for hanging a mountain by a thread—that is, building a large set of rules out of a simple passage. Many of these laws had nothing to do with the context of the passage. For instance, Exodus 23 and verse 19 says, that "You're not to boil a kid in the milk of its mothers." Well the Jews developed an entire system of what was and was not "kosher" from this passage and determined never to mix any meat with dairy products. The original law came because idolatrous Canaanites were boiling goat kids in their mothers' milk. The Israelites of Moses' day knew what it meant, but later generations out of misguided zeal took it to an extreme. They went beyond the original intent of the law and "hung a mountain on a thread."

The Pharisees who held to these oral traditions began to judge people not on the basis of the original law but on their man-made applications of that law. They developed a system of self-righteousness and self-justification. And in their zeal the Pharisees became judgmental of anyone who didn't live up to their high standards. They bullied the common people with their self-righteous attitudes and condemned anyone who didn't keep their traditions. Jesus wasn't arguing against making any judgments at all but against making abusive judgments on the basis of human traditions. They wanted to remove the speck out of others' eyes and didn't realize the log that was in their own eye.

The Pharisees showed little compassion or mercy on anyone who wasn't one of them. And when it came to loving your neighbor as yourself, the Pharisees thought only of other Pharisees, only they were their neighbors. James 2 and verse 12 and verse 13 says, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." Again, James 4 verses 11 to 12 says, "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge. There's only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

Now in judging others, we may not know all the facts. Just because we think some act is all right doesn't mean God approves of it, and just because we think some act is wrong doesn't mean that God disapproves of it. You see God sees and knows the heart, something we may not see. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 verses 4 to 5, "For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. And then each one will receive his commendation from God." Many things are best left in God's hands. "The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether" (Psalm 19 verse 9).

The apostle Paul dealt with a similar type of abusive judging in Romans 14. Some weaker brothers, whose consciences were tender but untaught, were judging others who felt the freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols. And those who were eating that meat felt contempt for those who wouldn't eat. Well Paul instructs both groups to stop judging the other. "Who are you (he says) to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14 and verse 4). Now Christians must be careful, in such matters of opinion, not to judge. He said in verse thirteen, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way."

Some think that making any moral judgment is arrogant and intolerant. And many people today want to eliminate moral judgments altogether and permit people to do whatever they please. Many are asking, "Well who's to say what is right or wrong?" Well when they say this, they show that they're ignoring both God and the harm that evil does in this world. So we ask, "Is it ever right to judge?"

Well the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 and verse 1, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." Well some quote this passage, thinking this is all that Jesus said on the matter. They don't want anyone to judge anyone for any reason. But there's more to learn. For instance, consider Matthew 7 and verse 6: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." Who are the dogs and the swine? You see we must use our discretion to determine who the dogs and the swine are. Jesus teaches us to watch out for temptation and to know evil when we see it. He also said, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7 verses 15 and 16). We have to judge who is a wolf. Life demands making some judgments; and frankly, we cannot escape them.

Now even those who say "don't judge," they're not consistent. The decision to be non-judgmental, the condemnation of judging, is itself a moral judgment. One can hardly keep from judging if one becomes a victim. People tend to downplay the sins that they commit, but you know what, they have a very different perspective when they have been sinned against. "My" harmless talk about you is no big deal, but "your" cruel gossip about me is unforgiveable. People think that way. Drugs are a victimless crime until one of "my" loved one overdoses. I may support the sexual revolution until someone else sleeps with "my" wife. You see people's attitudes change greatly when they become the offended rather than making excuses as an offender. Reality wakes us up.

It's naïve to think right and wrong don't matter. Children can't always distinguish right from wrong. And the Hebrew writer worried about Christians who weren't maturing in their faith as they should, people who didn't know God's word. And he said in Hebrews 5 verses 12 to 14 "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you've come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." You see they were in danger because they didn't know good from evil.

Now any parent struggling to rear his children knows the daily judgments he must make for the sake of the children. He knows too that his task is to train the children to make right decisions. Making judgments is a large part of growing up. Fools resist ever making moral judgments. The wise realize that moral judgments keep them safe from evil and harm. Proverbs 22 and verse 3 says that "The prudent sees the evil and he hides himself, But the naive go on, and are punished for it." My friend right and wrong matter, because they lead in different directions. Doing good will bless, while doing evil ruins lives. Everyone should know that.

If we listen to the world instead of listening to God, we'll find that our morals today seemed to be turned upside down. We'll live in moral chaos and confusion. Isaiah 5 verses 20 to 21 says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight!" Our culture has forgotten God and His morality, and they have rewritten the moral laws to suit themselves. It's made good into evil and evil into good. And all this confusion has destroyed our society's moral strength and moral courage, and it will destroy the fabric of our society

and lead future generations into misery and loneliness. My friend, God grieves over those who are unwilling to make judgments about good and bad, because they promote a permissiveness that infects the young and the weak with diseased values and morals.

Jesus described how we are to judge in John 7 and verse 24, He says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Jesus knew appearances could deceive, and so he cautioned people to make righteous judgments based upon the Scriptures and based upon the facts. The Scriptures are the basis for what is right and wrong, and facts tell us whether or not God's laws are transgressed. Now some people say Jesus never judged anyone; but Jesus passed judgment on Judas, calling him the son of perdition (John 17 verse 12) and stating that it would have been better for him not to have been born (Mark 14 verse 21). Jesus took a whip, poured out the coins, and overturned the tables, and drove the money changers out of the temple in John 2 verse 14 to 16. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced eight woes, eight woes, upon the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites. Jesus also condemned Jezebel of Thyatira and her followers in Revelation 2 verses 20 to 23 and he rebuked the others in that church for tolerating her. In 2 Timothy 4 and verse 8, there it calls Jesus the "righteous judge."

Now Jesus didn't judge with a mean spirit, for in spite of it all he loved Judas and even washed his feet with the other apostles. Jesus judged him on the basis of the facts. Judas was a thief (John 12 verse 6), and for thirty pieces of silver he gave a betrayal kiss to his Master. And unfortunately, some people unlike Jesus, jump too quickly to mistaken judgments. And they judge unfairly or unrighteously before the Scriptures are examined or the facts are known. Nevertheless, when the Scriptures are clear and the facts are known, we must make judgments.

Paul led the way in judging the man who was living with his father's wife. He even rebuked the church at Corinth for failing to deal with the wicked man. He said, "you've become arrogant, and you've not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst" (1 Corinthians 5 and verse 2). He made it clear, "I . . . have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. When the church was assembled, Paul commanded them "to deliver such a one to Satan." He knew that if he allowed this man's sin to go on that a "little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (1 Corinthians 5 and verse 6). And so his counsel was "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (verse 13). My friend, judging is necessary when the sin threatens the purity of the church.

Now the judgments of God are not my judgments or yours; they're God's judgments. God is God, and we aren't. And if we desire to serve Him, we ought to honor His commandments and judgments. Jesus said, "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6 and verse 46). The Lord Jesus will judge us righteously and fairly, but we must also commit ourselves to Him strongly enough to accept that what He teaches is right. God is more holy, more wise, and more understanding than we are. And His judgments are true and righteous altogether. Let's trust His teaching and follow Him. And when we follow Jesus, we know we're going in the right direction. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to do Your will, and to teach others to do Your will. And to follow Your teachings. In Jesus Name, Amen!

Many people, even some preachers, have chosen non-judgmentalism as their path and they've remained silent about sin and remained silent about our need for salvation. Now when Christians remain silent, they can be sure the devil will speak out. When Christians remain silent, evil does as it pleases. When we ignore evil and immorality, we provide little protection to the weak, the naïve, and the young. We need bold watchmen who will guard the walls from the encroaching enemy and who

will sound the alarm. We can't afford silence about sin. Is it ever right to judge? Yes, it's right; and sometimes it's mandatory.

Now the world loves for Christianity to teach nothing and to forbid nothing. The world welcomes a gospel that's emptied of theological content and morality. But a gospel without teaching and morality isn't really good news. The gospel found in the New Testament emphasizes sin, judgment, repentance and the cross. If God doesn't condemn sin, then we wouldn't need a Savior; but the ugliness and the horror of sin calls out for our Savior. We'll never see the beauty of grace until we see the ugliness of sin, and we'll never see the enormity of God's love until we see sin as our enemy.

Come to the Lord Jesus to find the truth, to find what is moral and holy, and to find the love that saves us from the perils of sin. Hell is real; and if we don't turn to God's grace for freedom from sin and from the perils of this life, then we'll bear the everlasting penalty for that sin in the life to come. Place your trust in the Lord. Out of love turn from everything evil. Yes, repentance demands that we leave the wrong and turn to what is right. Then be baptized into Christ upon the confession of your faith. You see, baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. And it unites us with Christ and causes us to be born again free from our sin. Oh my friend, why not come to the Lord today and be baptized?

We hope that today's study about judging and about morals has stirred you to consider your salvation. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter at www.searchtv.org. Also on our website there's a schedule of programs and a map of location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And if you want one and you write to us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So get involved with a church of Christ near you. Well as always we say, keep searching God's Word and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.