



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Matthew 7:1-5 Judge Not?

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HOW IRONIC IS IT THAT CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN RECEIVED AS JUDGMENTAL AND HYPOCRITICAL, EVEN THOUGH CHRIST HIMSELF CONTINUALLY WARNED AGAINST SUCH ATTITUDES? IS IT EVER OK TO JUDGE?

Matthew 7:1-2 "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."

How often have you heard someone caution a person who was criticizing another with a finger-wagging, "Do not judge, lest ye be judged" (which is in itself a judgmental statement, is it not?). But was Jesus really forbidding the recognition of sinful behavior?

The original word "judge" (Greek = krino) can be translated with over 15 different connotations, so we must look beyond this one word and consider the broader biblical context in order to understand this verse.

WHEN IT IS OK TO JUDGE

Even a quick review of scripture shows that Jesus is not at all forbidding public recognition of right and wrong. Throughout his ministry, and even here in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ often rebuked the religious leaders of his day for their hypocritical, prideful, attitudes. Later, in this very same chapter, Jesus taught his disciples how to identify true from false prophets. The Bible writers all distinguished right from wrong and truth from error. Paul the apostle went so far as to say he had "judged" (same word) a man for his gross sin even without meeting him, based on the mere description of his conduct (1 Corinthians 5:3). We see, then, that we are instructed throughout scripture to judge situations and behavior.

WHY NOT JUDGE?

What did Jesus mean then? **I believe he was warning that we should be very careful about judging others over-critically, especially regarding their motives.**

Jesus is the ultimate judge, and we will all one day be judged by Him. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). In Matthew 7:2 he says that, on that day, we will be held to the same standard we have held others to, so we should take His words seriously.

We humans have many weaknesses that can hinder our ability to judge rightly:

a. We are naturally self-centered.

We tend to evaluate people and situations by our standards, not God's, but He alone is the righteous judge.

Romans 14:4, 10-13 "who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ...but you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God. So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God, therefore let us not judge one another anymore..."

b. We have limited understanding.

Here's a little test to demonstrate this. Imagine you are called upon to vote for one of three candidates for high office. Here is what you know about them. Candidate A: Associates with crooked politicians and consults with astrologers. He's had two mistresses. He also chain smokes and drinks 8 to 10 martinis a day. Candidate B: He was kicked out of office twice, sleeps until noon, used opium in college and drinks a quart of whisky every evening. Candidate C: He is a decorated war hero. He's a

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Judge Not?

vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drinks an occasional beer and hasn't had any extramarital affairs. Which of these candidates would you choose? Many would, of course, choose Candidate C and reject the others as unqualified. However, Candidate A is Franklin D. Roosevelt, Candidate B is Winston Churchill, and Candidate C is Adolph Hitler.*

The point is this: when we judge others, we might make a wrong judgment due to our limited knowledge. Only God can see the secret motives of a man's heart. *Romans 2:16* "God will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ."

c. We are impatient.

We often want to judge someone immediately, but as someone has said, "God Himself does not propose to judge a man until he is dead. So why should you?" 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."*

d. We are often blind to our own faults.

*"I dreamed death came the other night,
And heaven's gates swung wide.
With kindly grace, an angel came
And ushered me inside.
And there to my astonishment,
Stood folks I'd known on earth.
Some I had judged as quite unfit
Or but of little worth.
Indignant words sprang to my lips,
But never were set free.
For every face showed stunned surprise.
No-one expected me!"*

HOW TO JUDGE GOD'S WAY

Matthew 7:3-5 "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 will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

I think Jesus must have been smiling when he told this humorous story of a man who is so focused on picking a speck ("splinter," "twig") out of someone else's eye that he doesn't notice the six-foot two-by-four ("plank") sticking out of his own. Notice the implications:

- 1. Only after I have dealt with my own sinfulness, ...**
"first take the log out of your own eye,"
- 2. ... can I then see others' needs clearly, ...**
"then you will see clearly ..."
- 3. ... and proceed to help them in a humble way.**
"... to take the speck out of your brother's eye"

This is similar to the approach the Apostle Paul commands in Galatians 6:1. "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." We who are strong ("spiritual") are to gently help those who are sinning, all the while being honest about our own potential to fall in some way also.

But, isn't there a time to openly rebuke and correct someone?" Yes. Refer again to 1 Corinthians 5:3. There the Paul casts judgment on a believer who is committing sin that is so egregious that he orders the church to expel him (5:5). But, as we read further, we see that his aim is to protect the church and ultimately help the sinner by bringing him to repentance and salvation (5:5). This is a markedly different approach than the hypercritical self-righteousness of the Pharisees of Jesus' day ... or of so many of us today.

* Source unknown.