

Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged

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[0 : 00] Have you ever been accused by somebody of being judgmental? Or have you ever had anyone say to you, stop judging me.

! Who are you to judge me? Probably most of us have heard this at least once from someone. And sometimes the person saying it may even quote Jesus' famous words, Judge not, lest ye be judged. Or as a more modern translation puts it, Do not judge, and you will not be judged. These are familiar words of Jesus, but they're often misapplied and perhaps not well understood.

I'll be honest, I have always wrestled with these words a little bit. I found them difficult. The first reason is because I know that I've been guilty of judging others.

And so I find these words convicting. A second reason, I've had people accuse me of being judgmental when I was not intending to judge them, but just to offer a helpful word of correction or advice.

[1 : 21] And third, what does it even mean not to judge people? Not to judge someone.

What does Jesus mean by that? Let's maybe start there with that question. What does it mean to judge someone? As Jesus is talking about it here in his sermon in Luke chapter 6.

We use that word judge in a variety of ways. To think, to consider, to evaluate, and to decide.

Judge for yourself, whether the glass is half full or half empty. We also use it to mean to measure or to estimate.

Judging by how much rain we had last year, maybe we should do this this year. And then, of course, there's also the legal meaning, the obvious meaning, the courtroom, to give the verdict of whether someone is guilty or innocent, liable or not liable, and then the penalty that should be given.

[2 : 38] But then finally, to judge someone can mean, we use this language, it's kind of using the same word to define it, but I think we just feel what it means. To judge someone can mean to pass judgment on someone.

And in this case, it's always an unfavorable judgment. Meaning to frown upon or to criticize or to condemn someone based on how they're living.

And this is probably what Jesus means by this imperative. This has to do with passing judgment on others for how they live. It has to do with being a fault finder.

A person who's very critical of others. Always measuring people to see if they match up. Do they have the right beliefs?

Do they have the right standard of conduct? Do they have the right way of doing things? But of course, behind this measuring of people is pride and not a restorative attitude of love.

[3 : 45] There's a tone of condemnation that's embedded in this passing of judgment on others. Like, if you don't measure up to my standard, then you're out. You're off the team.

You're living unfaithfully. You're compromising. You're on the naughty list. Or even sometimes we hear it go so far as you're not even saved.

You're not even a Christian. How could you be a Christian and do that? Notice the parallelism in this passage which helps us see that a tone of condemnation is indeed present.

Jesus says, do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Those words are synonyms here. So there is that tone of condemnation implied.

But this is where it gets kind of tricky. If Jesus is saying, do not pass judgment on others for how they're living, what does he actually mean by that?

[4 : 48] Is Jesus essentially saying, don't worry at all about other people and how they live or what they're doing. Just let them do whatever they want to do. especially in their personal lives or their private lives.

Don't even look at their lives. Don't even evaluate what they're doing whether it's right or wrong. Just let them do as they please. Is that what Jesus means here? Do not judge and you will not be judged.

Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. I think we all know deep down inside that Jesus can't mean that.

Jesus can't mean that we should simply just let others do as they please or that we should refrain from ever making any kind of moral evaluation of others. And here's why.

We are commanded as followers of Jesus to morally evaluate others in numerous places in the Bible. Let's just look at some of them. In the parallel passage to this one from Matthew's Gospel Matthew chapter 7 Jesus says the same thing do not judge.

[6 : 01] But then just a little bit down from where he says that in Matthew 7 verse 6 he 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. I think we know this is a metaphor obviously this is not about actual pigs and dogs.

How can we know who are the dogs and who are the pigs except by making some sort of judgment about the character and life of a person. Or we could look back to the Proverbs of Solomon.

Proverbs 26 verse 4 says do not answer a fool according to his folly or you yourself will be just like him. how can we know when to apply this without making some sort of evaluation or judgment about whether the person we're talking to is indeed a fool or not.

Back to the words of Jesus this is probably the clearest statement here in Matthew 18 verse 15 Jesus says this he says if your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault just between the two of you if they listen to you you have won them over.

[7 : 23] So according to Jesus we may see a brother or sister sin and he doesn't say don't worry about it just let them do as they please. No he says go and point out their fault so there is a time to go and point out the fault that we see in others.

It's when they sin. It's when they stray. And it requires that we make some sort of judgment as to whether what they did was right or wrong.

Sin or not a sin. And it even requires that we confront them about it. This kind of restorative correction is not what Jesus had in mind though when he said do not judge.

Do not condemn. Let's hear a few more. Paul tells Timothy in his second letter 2 Timothy 3.16 he says all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching rebuking correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So we see that God's word is useful for correcting for bringing a word of correction to others even a rebuke a stronger word and Timothy at times you need to do this Paul says it very clearly just a few verses down the page in chapter 4 verse 2 Paul says to Timothy preach the word be prepared in season and out of season correct rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

[9 : 06] So correction and even the stronger rebuke are at times commanded and required of us and this requires that we make a judgment of sorts about how a brother or sister is living whether they've strayed from Christ whether they're living in sin whether they're ignoring the commands of Jesus whether they're holding fast to sound doctrine to the truth of the gospel a judgment is required and even a conversation with a person who is straying where we tell them the fault that we see the error they have made and offer correction to restore them.

Listen to how Paul instructs Timothy just a little bit earlier in the same letter in chapter 2 verse 25 about how to deal with his opponents he says to Timothy opponents must be gently instructed in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will.

So notice the aim of this correction it's restoration it's that they would repent that they would turn away from what's wrong and turn back to what's good and what's right this kind of gracious restorative action is good this is needed this is not what Jesus is talking about when he says do not judge do not condemn at times we must consider and evaluate one another and we must even confront the sins that we see in another this is not judging a person but to the person who's receiving that correction or rebuke it may feel like I'm being judged you're judging me who are you to tell me how I should be living it may feel like the person confronting us is being judgmental one more passage quickly which

I think will just drive this home for us Hebrews chapter 3 verse 12 and 13 one of my favorite scriptures it says see to it brothers and sisters that none of you has a sinful unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God but encourage one another daily as long as it's called today so that none of you may be hardened by sins deceitfulness do you hear the sense of obligation that we all have to one another in these words we're to care for one another we're to watch over one another we're to see if someone has a sinful unbelieving heart and if they do we're to encourage that person we're to talk to them to say to them hey I see you drifting away what's going on come back to the Lord when we continually give ourselves to sin it has a way of hardening us it has a way of deceiving us so that we don't see straight or think clearly anymore it impairs our judgment and so what do we need most in those moments we need a clear seeing brother or sister to speak into our lives and to remind us of what's true and what's right and to encourage us to turn back to the Lord so back to Luke 6 37 what then does Jesus mean when he says do not judge and you will not be judged do not condemn and you will not be condemned well he clearly doesn't mean that we should just let others live however they please and think nothing or say nothing about that maybe we can gain some insight from the context here are there examples of this what does

Jesus have in mind specifically when he tells us do not judge do not condemn well let's look back just a little bit in Luke's gospel to chapter 5 do you remember what happened when Jesus attended the banquet that Levi put on in Jesus honor with all the tax collectors in attendance back in Luke chapter 5 verse 29 and 30 the Pharisees certainly passed judgment on that occasion it says they complained to Jesus disciples saying why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners you can hear that tone of condemnation they were judging Jesus and his disciples they were condemning him with their words as an immoral man as a drunkard as a glutton you're partying with wicked men and so you too must be wicked this is I think a pretty clear example of what it looks like to judge someone or to condemn someone notice how they assume

[14:27] Jesus motives for being at the banquet like why were you there well you must have been there because you're immoral like they are not only that but do you hear how they had almost arrived at the verdict of guilty before they even knew what was going on before they even had the conversation with Jesus we see the same thing just a few verses later in chapter 5 verse 33 it's actually just a continuation of the conversation but they say to Jesus John's disciples often fast and pray and so do the disciples of the Pharisees but yours go on eating and drinking so they judge Jesus and his disciples you guys aren't doing the religious fasts that you're supposed to be doing what's wrong with you guys are you gluttons are you drunkards you can almost hear it Jesus you don't measure up to that standard of righteousness that we live by can you hear that tone of condemnation this is not the kind of restorative or loving rebuke of a brother who's seeing a brother sinning this is a self-righteous passing of judgment on those who don't measure up to my standard we see it again from the Pharisees a few verses later in Luke chapter 6 verse 2 you probably remember the story the disciples were gleaned some wheat out of the fields and eating it on the

Sabbath day and the Pharisees see this and they say to Jesus why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath they accuse him of being a lawbreaker and of failing to keep the Sabbath notice how there's no discussion with Jesus about what it means to honor God on the Sabbath they just go straight to the guilty verdict you're doing what's unlawful what's your explanation we see it again from them just a few verses later in chapter 6 verse 7 the Pharisees and the teachers of the law are standing by watching to see if Jesus will heal a man on the Sabbath they were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus so they've already condemned Jesus they've already come to the verdict of guilty but now we need like a specific charge against him it's kind of backwards isn't it we've got to secure that verdict with some concrete thing in fact think back through all the encounters that Jesus had with the Pharisees and there are so many examples of them judging

Jesus condemning Jesus Jesus Jesus even at times calls them out on it Luke chapter 7 I think it is verse 33 hold on a second John the baptizer he came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and you say he has a demon the son of man came eating and drinking and you say here's a glutton and a drunkard a friend of tax collectors and sinners like it doesn't even matter what we do guilty demon you have a demon possessed think of the time that they accused Jesus of healing driving out a demon by the power of Beelzebul the prince of demons they couldn't deny that the miracles really were happening that the man was possessed and the demon came out and so they condemned Jesus well you must have done it because you're in league with the prince of the demons we got to find some wrong thing here with you finally think about the sham trial that they put Jesus through

after they arrested him in the garden of Gethsemane they have falsely accused him of all sorts of things they made stuff up they took his words out of context they were looking for a reason to put him to death because they'd already passed judgment on him they'd already condemned him and now it's just a matter of figuring out what's the charges to write what's the thing to tell to Pilate to get this done they're the prime example of this passing of judgment on others the Pharisees the Sanhedrin the teachers of the law there was a time when Jesus even said to them John chapter 7 verse 24 stop judging by mere appearances but instead judge correctly so this passing of judgment on others the kind that Jesus forbids is often focused on externals and appearances it's focused on the external the appearance of how

Jesus attended that banquet with those tax collectors and sinners it's focused on the external the appearance of that immoral woman washing the feet of Jesus if he knew what kind of woman she was he wouldn't allow that it's focused on the externals of how Jesus disciples didn't do the ceremonial washing of hands before the meal this got me thinking back to when I was a courier for FedEx I had to make deliveries of letters and parcels to some strange places including bars and night clubs and if it wasn't for my uniform in the FedEx truck parked out front I sometimes wondered what conclusions a Christian friend might come to if they saw me walking out of a place like that but I think what Jesus is telling us here is that a follower of Jesus shouldn't come to any conclusions based on mere appearances that's the kind of judging Jesus is telling us not to do here do not judge do not condemn this passing of judgment on others that

[20 : 39] Jesus forbids often assumes the motives of others he must be okay with the sinful choices of those sinners and tax collectors I mean he's at the party with them but hold on a second this wasn't just any old party the usual party of the tax collectors this was a banquet that Levi had planned to honor Jesus right after being called by Jesus to follow him which implies that he had repented he had come to see Jesus as his Lord and his Savior this was to honor Jesus this was to celebrate Jesus and no doubt his tax collector friends were invited in order to introduce them to this one that he has now come to follow look at the motives of Levi in that are they not honorable and beautiful unfortunately we're sometimes all too quick to jump to conclusions or to assume motives and in doing so we pass judgment on others we condemn others without even knowing the reasons they're doing what they're doing another common element to this passing of judgment which

Jesus forbids has to do with the standard that we judge people by righteous judgment all throughout the Bible looks at a person's life in relation to what God has said is right and wrong is that person doing what God has commanded!

Are they going against what God has commanded but passing judgment often looks at a person's life in relation to a standard outside of the Bible are they keeping our traditions are they doing whatever they're doing in the right way or in the best way according to my experience according to my opinion often times we pass judgment on others about things where God's word gives us freedom of conscience or freedom to choose the classic passage here and the most helpful is Romans chapter 14 and it's a little bit longer but I'll read it all because it all just speaks right to this Paul writes to the church there and he says Except the one whose faith is weak!

One person's faith allows them to eat anything but another whose faith is weak eats only vegetables the one who eats everything must not treat with contempt there it is the judging the one who does not and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does for God has accepted them who are you to judge someone else's servant to their own master servants stand or fall and they will stand for the Lord is able to make them stand one person considers one day more sacred than another another considers every day alike each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind whoever regards one day is special does so to the Lord whoever eats meat does so to the Lord for they give thanks to God and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God so whether we live or die we belong to the Lord you then why do you judge your brother or sister or why do you treat them with contempt for we will all stand before God's judgment seat it is written as surely as I live says the Lord every knee will bow before me every tongue will acknowledge God 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 these are important words on this subject of judging notice the judging that's forbidden is passing judgment on others regarding disputable matters like what kind of foods we can eat or if you look down to verse 21 whether we can drink wine or alcohol disputable matters as he talked about include whether we

consider one day as holy to the

[25 : 30] Lord or consider every day alike these are disputable matters we may come to different opinions or convictions on these things and even be spiritually motivated to live a certain way in these areas but Paul says let us stop passing judgment on one another with regard to these things God is going to be the judge in what are some other disputable matters things pertaining to clothing and what should be worn to church do I dress up for Jesus or do I come as I am have your own opinion have your own conviction honor the Lord but don't look down on others if they come to a different conclusion or what about the possessions of others how easy is it to look at someone who just got a brand new fill in the blank and to judge them what a waste of money oh they're full of greed buying that thing that money could have better been spent on but do you know the heart of that person do you even know if they bought that thing or if it was given to them as a gift or how much they paid for it if they bought it maybe that luxury brand named item was found for a few bucks at a thrift store other disputable matters include things like the keeping of traditions how we should or shouldn't celebrate

Christmas Thanksgiving Good Friday Easter or what kind of entertainment music or games are best or are permitted for Christians to participate in what kind of instruments should we use for worship and what style of worship whether to homeschool private school public school disputable matter which Bible translation to use disputable matter whether to use birth control and if so what methods are allowed disputable matter!

What's the best method of evangelism door to door street preaching or relational disputable matter military service or conscientious objection well I have my conviction but it's a disputable matter whether and how guns should be regulated in Canada or in the US disputable matter must we boycott certain brands or stores when they express support of something questionable and if so for how long disputable matter and the list can go on there's freedom in Christ in all these things to have opinions and convictions and even to live a certain way to honor the Lord but the problem is when we say my way is the only right way and if you don't do as I do you're immature you're unenlightened you're less of a

Christian you're compromising or you may not even be a Christian how many times have we heard that please don't misunderstand me we're talking about disputable matters there's many clear doctrines of scripture where if a brother a sister strays from them we're to gently correct and even rebuke them and point out the error we're not talking about those things Paul didn't hesitate to call out the church in Galatia when they departed from the gospel listen to his words in Galatians chapter 1 he said I'm astonished that you're so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you let them be under God's curse this wasn't Paul pridefully judging the Galatians in the way

Jesus told us not to do this was Paul rebuking them in love trying to call them back to the lifeline that is salvation the gospel it's a clear teaching of God's word and it's the thing of greatest importance but the passing of judgment on others that Jesus forbids often takes the disputable matters and the things that are not talked about clearly in the Bible clearly prohibited clearly commanded and it puts them on the same level as the gospel if you don't believe as I do with this or do as I do with this then you're compromising you're unfaithful you're not even a Christian so these are some of the common elements I think in this passing of judgment that Jesus forbids we judge by mere appearances without knowing all the facts when we assume the motives of others without actually knowing the heart when we make disputable matters a measure of righteousness just based on our own convictions and opinions and traditions and one common thing in all of this I think is we kind of take the place of God and we give the final verdict about others about their behavior about their conduct to all of that hear these words of

[31 : 16] Jesus do not judge do not condemn I'd love to take time to talk about the reciprocal promise that we see there when we treat others with mercy and refrain from passing judgment when we forgive when we're generous as the list goes on in the context there it has an effect on those around us they are more inclined to treat us in the same way to refrain from passing judgment on us to forgive us to be generous towards us mercy begets mercy generosity begets generosity there's lots to think about with that people may not deserve these things from us we may feel but do we deserve the kindnesses and mercies of God which he has shown to us but I want to get down to

verse 41 and 42 because it's so deeply related to this discussion of judging this is the last piece we'll bring in here

Jesus gives this wonderful analogy 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 brother let me take the speck out of your eye when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye you hypocrite first take the plank out of your eye then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye Jesus has a good sense of humor here and yet at the same time he's dead serious with these words with this crazy analogy the person who often passes judgment on others is both hypocritical and hypercritical they're predisposed to finding even the tiniest faults in others lives the speck and ironically at the same time they pay no attention to the plank to the log literally in their own eye they can see the speck in someone else's eye this virtually inconsequential thing and yet fail to see that plank in their own eye the massive glaring problem that they have and have not dealt with

Jesus calls this kind of judgment this judgmental attitude what it is hypocritical you hypocrite he says you're busy peering out at the little faults in others but totally ignorant of the massive fault that you've not dealt with in your own life this is a much needed word first take the plank out of your eye and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye powerful words you can't help a brother or sister with the sin or fault that you see in their life till you're first honest before God and have dealt with the sin in your life think about any relationship where you have conflict right now and our tendency is usually to blame everything on the other person to minimize or even miss the fault that we have in the conflict and there are some conflicts where that's the reality where it is kind of one sided and it really is more the other person's fault but more often than not there is fault on both sides and what's the best way toward reconciliation and healing of that relationship

I think these words of Jesus are gold first take the plank take the plank out of your own eye what have done wrong in what did I say that wasn't right or maybe the tone that I said it in wasn't right did I shout angrily did I insult them did I say something not true is there any truth to the accusations that they're making of me have I been honest I think often it's not until both people can say this is what I did wrong and I'm sorry that relationships can heal and come back together when they're broken so when it comes to judging it's not that we're never to notice or help others out with the things we see in their lives then goal is yeah to take that speck from the brother's eye but to see clearly to be able to do that we must always judge ourselves first pass judgment on ourselves first before we can even hope to make that

I might be angry that a person acted selfishly but did I act selfishly toward them I'm reminded of those words of Jesus about the woman caught in adultery he said let him who is without sin be the first to throw a stone I was also reminded of these words of Jesus in John chapter 3 for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him think about that if Jesus our Lord who was perfect and without sin didn't come into this world to judge and to condemn how much less should we who are sinners saved by his grace be passing judgment on others and condemning others in the ways that we have talked about let's pray let's ask the [37 : 22] Lord for help as we respond to his word father in heaven as we hear these words we're convicted and reminded of the things that we have done towards others where we have been judges over them and should not have please forgive!

us thank you for your blood Jesus which cleanses and atones for all of our sins and if there's anyone that we need to go to and apologize for condemning or judging them wrongly I pray that you would bring those people to mind and that you would give us courage and humility to go to that person and admit our fault to them and ask for their forgiveness and as we think of all the relationships that we have and our interactions with one another and people in our community friends neighbors co-workers Lord we want to honor you with this we want to be people of mercy just as you have been merciful with us so help us and give us wisdom and understanding about how to look at other people in our lives how to talk to them how to between us and others help us with that

Lord work in us we pray we want to honor you we want to be not a judgmental church Lord but we want to honor you and be a blessing and a help to others as we speak your truth and love we ask this in Jesus name Amen