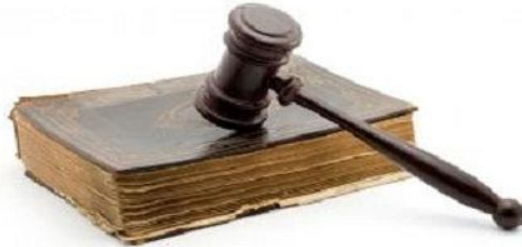


JUDGE NOT - THE TRUE CONTEXT



Introduction

How many times have we heard a person say that we should not judge? Hearing an expression such as “Thou shalt not judge” is one of my pet peeves. This expression upsets me because it is often used out of context and distorts the true meaning of Scripture. In this lesson we will learn why people are so quick to tell others not to judge, and why judging is often used in the improper context. We will study the subject of judging and base our opinion on what the Bible actually says about judging others.

Definition of “to judge”

In order to better understand the subject of judging and put it in its proper context, we need to know that judging has several meanings. Unfortunately, many people do not give a second thought to the different meanings of the verb “judge.” Here are the meanings we see in Scripture:

1. To reach a legal decision as in a court case
2. To make a determination of a winner as in a contest
3. To make a general decision or conclusion
4. To rebuke, criticize, or censure a person
5. To think, guess, assume, or suppose
6. To judge as a hypocrite

Who wants to be judged?

Not everyone objects to being judged. Some people love to be judged. Competitors love to be judged. People go to court so they can be judged and be proven right. Most athletes compete so that they can be judged as winners. Can you imagine a player going to his coach and saying, “I am just here for the fun of it? I really don’t care if we win or lose.” Many people do not mind being judged (criticized) to their faces because it gives them an opportunity to present the facts and clear their names. Additionally, those who live righteous lives look forward to the final judgment and a chance to meet Jesus Christ.

Winning is not condemned in the Bible. Paul uses the analogy of winning a race when he speaks about overcoming adversity. Paul also speaks about winning souls and winning respect of others. Finally, we should not forget that the disciples prayed and then cast lots to see who would win the position to replace Judas as the twelfth disciple.

Who is against judging?

Why do so many people object to judging others? Let’s face it—judging others has a negative connotation.

1. Many people seem to hate judging because they feel someone will be a loser. Some people simply feel that everyone should be a winner. I can understand why people feel that way, but when it comes to keeping God’s Word, the Bible teaches that Christians have an obligation to judge the behavior of others.
2. Some people do not want to be judged and are politely telling you to shut up because they know they are wrong and do not want to change their ways.
3. Other people do not want to judge anyone else because they do not want to be judged themselves. These people are afraid their own sins will be pointed out by others in retaliation.
4. Another reason for people not wanting to judge is that many people do not know their Bible. These people believe Scripture tells

us not to judge others. They believe we are all God's children and that only God should criticize His children. Not only does Jesus tell us that we are not all God's children, but he also tells us how to determine who is and is not a child of God.

a. Jesus said in John 8:44, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire."

b. Jesus also stated the same message in 1 John 3:10....."This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

5. In addition, other people are reluctant to judge other people because they are ashamed of the gospel. More precisely, these people are afraid to evangelize. Not everyone is called to evangelize, but these people should not tell others to be quiet and accept improper behavior.

6. A final reason for not judging other people is that judging seems like an unloving and anti-Christian thing to do. Additionally, judging may not make you very popular. A perfect example of this reason is Pope Francis's statement that he should not judge the gay lifestyle. Pope Francis is apparently trying to be popular rather than explain Scripture and stand up for a biblical teaching.

I truly believe that most Christians actually believe the Bible tells us not to evaluate and criticize the behavior of fellow Christians. This lesson will prove that Scripture tells us to do the opposite of being quiet and allowing sin to flourish.

Why do people say, "Thou shall not judge?"

This exact quote appears nowhere in the Bible. Actually, it is a paraphrase of Matthew 7:1, which says, "Do not judge" or "Judge not," depending on which popular Bible version you read. People probably like to use the paraphrase because it sounds like God speaking. Using the paraphrase seems more authoritative and intimidating. Some people may actually think this phrase is one of

the Ten Commandments.

Nevertheless, Matthew 7:1 does say, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. This statement seems pretty straightforward.

Unfortunately, many people who repeat this expression have never even read it in the Bible. Many of those who actually take the time to read Matthew 7:5 still do not take the time to understand what is really being said. Few people go beyond this verse to understand the whole context.

Matthew 7:1-5....."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. 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, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

As we study the above Scripture, we notice that the first verse appears to say that we should never judge anyone. This popular observation cannot be farther from the truth since the following four verses actually tell how we should make a proper judgment.

Since the context of verse 1 is the improper way to judge, verse 2 then tells us how to judge properly. You see, in verse 1, Jesus is talking about those who judge unfairly. In verse 2, Jesus tells us that everyone must play by the same rules. Jesus implies that if we judge strictly, we will be judged strictly. If we judge with understanding, we will be judged with understanding. If we judge with mercy, we will also be judged with mercy.

In verses 3 through 5, Jesus adds that we should not judge as

hypocrites. We read in these verses that the person doing the judging has a plank in his eye, and he is guilty of sin far worse than the person he is judging who only has a speck in his eye. Jesus goes on to say that if we remove the plank (receive forgiveness), we can then judge properly.

To further analyze the above Scripture, we should note that in verses 2 through 5, Jesus is condoning the first three definitions of judging listed in this lesson. If you think about it, this Scripture does not say any of the following things that people often assume:

1. A Christian should not be a judge or a juror.
2. We should not criticize or censure fellow Christians.
3. Only sinless people have the authority to judge others.

How not to judge

In following up on Jesus's message on how not to judge, we can see additional examples in the New Testament. We should not judge as hypocrites. We should not judge based on slander, assumptions, or disputable matters. We should not judge unfairly. We should not judge without mercy. Finally, we should not play God by judging a person's salvation.

1. Hypocrisy - In Matthew 18:23-30, Jesus tells a parable about a man who was forgiven his debt, yet this same man goes to court and has his debtor put into prison.
 - a. Jesus taught that judging should not be done without mercy.
 - b. Jesus also points out that the man was also a hypocrite because he did not pay his own bills but was given mercy.
2. Hypocrisy - Read Romans 2:1-3. This Scripture is not teaching Christians to abstain from judging others. Instead, it is plainly telling us that hypocrites are not fit to be judging others. Jesus repeatedly confronted the Pharisees about their hypocrisy. Additional examples of Pharisee hypocrisy are given in the following Scriptures:
 - a. Luke 12:1
 - b. Matthew 23:13-16

3. Slander - James 4:11....."Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it."

a. This Scripture is about slander and this definition of judging means to make an assumption or inaccurate fact.

b. James says these people are judging the law because slanderers are not fit to make a righteous judgment. (One should note that in the previous verses, these same people are called double-minded sinners.)

4. Assumptions - John 7:24....."Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment."

a. First of all, this Scripture tells us not to judge unfairly.

b. Secondly, this Scripture tells us we are empowered to make a righteous judgment.

5. Disputable matters – Read Romans, chapter 14.

a. Many times, these verses are pulled out of context to support the fact that we are not to judge others.

b. When we read the whole chapter, we clearly see that the message is that we should not judge others on disputable matters. God is the judge on these grey areas.

c. The context of this Scripture is slander and is set in verse 11.

d. The fact that James mentions there is only one Judge seems to indicate these people were also judging people's salvation.

Christians are not to judge anyone's salvation. Eternal judgment is to be done only by God the Father. To judge someone's salvation is to take God's grace out of the equation. In the Old Testament, even Rahab, the lying prostitute, was considered righteous. We are reminded of this story in James 2:25.

6. Salvation - 1 Corinthians 4:3-4....." I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me."

7. Salvation - John 12:47-48....."As for the person who hears my

words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”

- a. Even Christ did not judge a person’s salvation.
- b. Jesus is only the messenger. He came to warn us of impending judgment. We are taught this in John 3:17.
- c. God the Father tells Jesus who will be saved and who will be condemned.

How to judge

We have just studied how NOT to judge, so let’s see how we ARE supposed to judge. We are, first of all, to judge with authority. We are also to judge with love and kindness. We are required to have proof provided by witnesses. We are also taught how to judge civil matters. In addition, we are encouraged to forgive others if they repent. Finally, we are instructed to exercise sound doctrine and expel unrepentant sinners from the body of believers.

1. Authority - Titus 2:15.....”These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”

- a. We are specifically taught to teach the authority of judging to others.
- b. This Scripture is direct to the point that we have the authority to judge and rebuke others.
- c. We also are taught not to despise anyone who judges (in a righteous manner).

2. Love - 1 Timothy 5:1-2.....”Do not rebuke an older man harshly but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.”

- a. We learn here that we are to rebuke (judge) in a loving manner.
- b. We can make sure we are acting in love by pretending we are talking to a loved relative.

3. Kindness - 2 Timothy 2:24....."And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful."

4. Gentleness - Galatians 6:1....."Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

5. Proof - 1 Timothy 5:19-21....."Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism."

a. Having more than one witness goes back to Deuteronomy 19:15. The idea of having only one witness creates a "he said, she said" situation.

b. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly! Wow, that's pretty harsh. The only thing that makes sense here is that Paul is talking specifically about an elder of the church. We can safely assume that this person was already given a chance to repent, but refused to stop sinning; otherwise, witnesses would not be needed.

c. Finally, we see that judging should be impartial.

Who to judge?

We are not called to judge everyone. We are told to only judge fellow Christians, and only those who are willing to listen to sound judgment. The following Scriptures will shed some light on who we should judge:

1. Only fellow Christians - 1 Corinthians 5:9-13....."I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually

immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you."

a. We learn in this Scripture that we must associate with the secular world, but we are not to embrace anyone who could give Christians a bad reputation.

b. Paul is saying that we should not associate with people who call themselves Christians, but do not live as Christians. Paul says that we should not even eat with these disobedient Christians.

c. Moreover, we are to only judge fellow Christians.

2. Only those willing to accept - Matthew 10:14-15....."If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town."

a. Many times, good-meaning Christians just keep pounding away at those who do not want to hear about leaving a life of sin. In this Scripture we are reminded of the old cliché, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

b. We must sometimes turn things over to God.

Why judge others?

Why should we put our nose in other people's business? Why should we bother to judge other people's behavior?

1. Purification - In Galatians 5:7-12, Paul mentions that some people among them are still preaching circumcision. Paul again uses the yeast metaphor that he used with the Corinthians: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." Paul points out that these people are agitators who keep them from obeying the truth and throwing them into confusion. Paul was very adamant about removing these people. He actually said, "As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!" If

a pastor would say that today, he would probably lose his job.

2. Bad Influence - 1 Corinthians 15:33....."Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character." Paul teaches us again about the need to keep the body of believers pure. We teach our children not to keep bad company, but what do we do as adults?

3. Guilt by association - 2 John 1:8-11....."Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work."

4. Unity of the church - Romans 16:17..... (unity of the church). "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."

5. An act of love - Revelation 3:19-20....."Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

6. Forgiveness - Luke 17:3-4....."So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

a. Forgiveness is part of the judging process.

b. God makes it very clear that we are to rebuke (judge) our Christian brothers if they sin.

c. God also makes it just as clear that we are always to accept any sincere apology. Sinning against you seven times in just one day is a lot!

Civil matters

There are three Scriptures that we should read regarding civil

matters. We are called to try and settle such matters within the church if at all possible.

1. Luke 12:57-58 shows us that Jesus is telling people that the Christian thing to do is to settle out of court if at all possible. Jesus, nevertheless, acknowledges the authority of secular justice.
2. Matthew 18:15 affirms that judging should always be done in a proper way. The Scriptural context describes the process of judging disputes in a judicial sense. It is also important to notice that this Scripture speaks specifically about a dispute between two people. The Scripture specifically mentions how to handle a person who sins against the church. My belief is that there is nothing wrong with using this process to bring a sinner before the church, but we may also take complaints about public immoral behavior directly to the pastor. In a way, improper public behavior is actually with the church since the church has allowed this sinful situation to exist. Furthermore, the church will suffer the consequences of the sin. For example, if a person speaks to you with foul language, that would be a personal issue. If a person uses foul language in a Sunday school class or in public that would be a sin against the church.
 - a. Jesus made it very clear that there is a judging process within the body of believers. He also pointed out that those who reject Christian principles should be cast out as unbelievers because they have had their day in court.
 - b. This Scripture should not be taken to mean that we are not to love sinners. Scripture is simply showing that unrepentant sinners do not belong in the body of believers.
 - c. Of course, in reference to verse 17, I have heard some people claim that we should not remove sinners from the church since Jesus ate with pagans and tax collectors. These people put a ridiculous spin on what Jesus said. First of all, Jesus said to treat these obstinate people the way others treat tax collectors, not the way he treated them. The people of Jesus's time considered tax collectors as thieves and scoundrels. People did not even want to

be seen with a tax collector. Secondly, Jesus always gave people a chance (as he did the tax collector Matthew), but he always left behind those who chose to reject him.

d. Generally speaking, Jesus addressed individual concerns, but most concerns of the church were addressed after his death. In fact, Matthew 18:15 is perhaps the only time in the New Testament that Jesus addresses specific behavior in relation to the church.

3. 1 Corinthians 6:1-5 - In this Scripture we are instructed not to go to secular courts. Instead, we are to look to fellow church members to judge. Paul points out that believers will someday even judge angels. I can only assume that this judging would be as witnesses and jurors in determining acts of wrongdoing. As we studied earlier in the lesson, currently, God the Father is the only judge of salvation. We are encouraged to be confident that we (by power of the Holy Spirit) have the power and ability to judge. Notice that we are only called to judge fellow believers of immoral behavior. The God-ordained government has its own judicial system, which we use as a separate remedy for legal matters. It should go without saying that sin is never justified just because it is legal.

As a side note, it is amazing how much of our current civil and criminal law is based on the Bible. For example, do you think it is a coincidence that we have 12 jurors (the same number of the tribes of Israel)? Is it also a coincidence that our debts are wiped from credit reports in seven years (the same number of years debts were forgiven in the Old Testament)? I wish I could remember all the many other similarities between our laws and the laws of the Bible, but I think you get the picture.

Sound doctrine and shunning

Christians must always use sound doctrine in making judgments. Obeying these sound doctrines sometimes requires us to remove a person from the body of believers. Kicking someone out of a church has today become virtually nonexistent, and many pastors run from

this responsibility as if it were a sin. Consequently, the church, in many cases, has become a reflection of those members who corrupt the church and keep true believers from joining the church.

1. Sound Doctrine - 2 Timothy 4:1-4....."In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

a. It is sad but true that today we live in a politically correct world. The easiest way for sinners to not be held accountable is to convince people that they should not be corrected or rebuked.

b. Even Christian pastors leave sound doctrine behind in order to tell people the worldly truth they want to hear.

2. Shunning - 1 Thessalonians 3:14-15....."If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy but warn him as a brother.

a. Shunning will make a person ashamed of their sin.

b. Be loving in your shunning.

3. Shunning - 1 Timothy 3:10-11....."Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

4. Shunning - 2 Timothy 2:25-26....."Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, 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."

- a. Have nothing to do with an unrepentant sinner.
 - b. We must be gentle in our criticism so that people will be open to repentance and restoration.
 - c. Always leave the door open for restoration.
5. Shunning – Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. In this Scripture, we see Paul tell the believers in Corinth that there is a man in their midst who is guilty of sexual immorality.
- a. Paul tells the people to “put that man out of your fellowship.”
 - b. The believers are instructed to “hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed” and he may find his way back to the truth and his soul may be saved.
 - c. Paul further asks, “Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”
6. Shunning – Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Paul teaches that believers should not be grouped together with non-believers.
- a. Paul asks what light and darkness have in common. He also asked what Christ and Satan have in common.
 - b. We are told, “Therefore come out from them and be separate.”
7. The woman caught in adultery - Read John 8:3-11. This story is another Scripture used to make the claim that we should not judge. Instead, this Scripture actually teaches us how to judge.
- a. This Scripture teaches us to judge by the facts. Jesus did not make an assumption. Jesus never questioned the innocence of the woman caught in adultery because Scripture tells us she was caught in the very act of adultery. Also, the woman apparently did not deny her guilt. Jesus therefore had a right to judge her.
 - b. This Scripture teaches us to judge fairly. Jesus could clearly see that the woman was not being treated fairly. Leviticus 20:10 says that both the adulterer and the adulteress should be stoned, but they brought him only the woman.
 - c. The story states that judges should be above reproach. Exodus 18:21 states that a judge should be an honest and God-fearing man. Accordingly, Jesus did not want hypocrites judging this woman. Jesus knew that some of the people who brought the

woman to him were guilty of sins just as bad as adultery. The very fact that these people tried to trap Jesus was a sin worse than adultery.

d. Jesus carried out his duty by judging the woman's sin. He deemed her guilty by telling her to sin no more.

e. Jesus did not condemn her to stoning because he wished to teach us about judging with mercy. Jesus was not so concerned about her past as much he was concerned about her future. In a similar manner we see that with King David, although he was severely punished, God did not have him stoned for his adultery and murder because he repented of his sin.

Summary

It is our Christian duty to judge our fellow Christians. We are not to embrace those who blatantly disregard God's commandments, or they will corrupt the whole church.

We are called to point out people's sins in order to save them from eternal punishment. I am not talking about falling short of perfection, but about serious sins. Who would not correct a son or daughter if one of them were engaging in a mortal sin? Perhaps we do not correct others because we do not love them enough.

We studied the false teaching of not judging others. We learned the definitions of the word "judge." We learned how to use the proper meaning of this word in reading Scripture so that we do not take anything out of context.

1. The Bible teaches us we should not judge with hypocrisy, slander, lack of knowledge, or evil intent.
2. On the other hand, the Bible teaches us to judge with love, kindness, gentleness, truth, mercy, sound doctrine, and authority.
3. We can judge a person's actions, but not their salvation. We can certainly point out that a sin is mentioned in the Bible. We can also

mention God's warnings regarding this sin. However, we should never tell anyone they are definitely going to hell. Even Jesus judged people's sin but did not judge their salvation without being told first by the Father. Jesus is only the messenger, but God the Father is the Judge.

4. The Bible teaches us who to judge and who not to judge. We are called only to judge fellow Christians regarding moral issues. We are given a procedure for dealing with disputes within the church. We are not to judge unbelievers. God will judge the unbelievers

5. Unrepentant Christian sinners should not be allowed in the church.

a. Unrepentant Christian sinners give a bad name to both the body of believers and to Christ himself. These sinners not only keep faithful Christians from attending church, but they also keep unbelievers from accepting Christ.

b. Blatant unrepentant sinners influence those around them. These people are like patients in a hospital with an infectious disease. They must be isolated for the sake of other people until they are cured. Jesus is the cure. He can forgive and restore the sinner. Remember also that we are required to forgive a person even seven times a day.

Review

Below are several situations. You may need to go back and review the Scriptures in the lesson in order to give the best possible answer.

1. A man confronts his pastor about a fellow church member whom he saw come out of a liquor store with a bottle of wine and some lottery tickets. The man asks his pastor to confront the fellow church member and tell him that he is not behaving in a Christian manner. What should the pastor do?

2. A Christian woman confides in you that she is having an affair with a married man. You tell the friend about the woman. The friend then tells you not to judge the woman and not to tell anyone about

the woman or your friendship is over. What should you do?

3. An atheist co-worker keeps taking the Lord's name in vain. What should you do?

4. A member of your church is an active homosexual. She comes out to your Sunday school class and says that she is sure God does not want her to live a lie. She says that your denomination is behind the times and needs to be less judgmental. She intends to enlighten everyone. What do you do?

5. A man is guilty of adultery. His sin is well known since he left his wife and lives with his lover. His wife has not forgiven him and is still getting a divorce. The man comes before the church and admits his sin. He asks for forgiveness and says he plans on marrying his lover. He wants the pastor to marry them. What should the pastor do?

6. The same man in the above example was asked to leave the church. He comes back a week later and repents again. This time he says he will leave his lover because Christ is his first love and that he wants to start a new life. The wife, however, says she will leave the church if her husband is allowed to stay. What should the pastor do?

7. A fellow Christian has not paid you for rental of your apartment in over three months. You have asked him to pay several times. What should you do?

8. You have the same rental problem as above, only this time the renter is a member of your church. What should you do? What should your pastor do?

9. A woman in your church did not want any more children and had an abortion. She has now become an activist and promotes Planned Parenthood. You saw her at a Planned Parenthood rally. What should you do?

10. A woman had an abortion a few years ago. She now wants to join your church. What should you do?