

What Did Christ Mean, “JUDGE NOT”?

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Up until the last few decades, the most well-known (and perhaps the most often-quoted) Biblical passage was John 3:16. *Now*, however, it seems that the most often-quoted statement from the Bible is as follows: “**Judge not**, that you be not judged” (Matt. 7:1, *NKJV*).

Yes, in recent years, we hear that admonition *constantly* echoed... **Judge NOT!**

However... as shocking as it may be... in the *vast majority of cases*, those individuals who echo Christ’s warning about “judging,” are actually distorting what Christ *meant!*

What exactly **did** Jesus Christ mean, by His admonition to “judge not”? Did He mean that we aren’t to make judgments about *anything*? Did He mean that we’re not to judge the *actions of others*? Did He mean that we are to be so **tolerant** of other people’s actions, as to virtually *condone* sin?!

Let’s look at this issue, and get a better understanding of what Christ actually *meant* when He said, “Judge not.”

What Christ Meant

First of all, let’s notice *another* admonition by Jesus Christ. In John 7:24, Christ tells us to, “**Judge** with righteous judgment.” And the very *same* Greek word is translated as “judge” in *this* scripture, as in the scripture where Christ said, “judge **not**.”

So... from this scripture in John 7, we see that Christ **wants** us to make judgments! Yet, it is the “**type** of judgments” that is in question. There is a *type* of judgment that Christ *wants* us to make, and there’s *another* type of judgment that Christ wants us to *avoid*.

Let’s *first* consider the type of judgment that we **should** employ. Simply put, Christ wants us to employ the type of judgment that is *discernment*. He wants us to increasingly learn to discern (or judge) *right from wrong ... good from evil*. God wants us to learn to *recognize* sin... the sinful thoughts that we *ourselves* are tempted to entertain; and, yes, even the sinful **actions** of *others*!

In Matthew chapter 7, **Christ repeatedly said that you will know people BY their fruits... BY their actions**. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly

they are ravenous wolves. **You will know them by their fruits... Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit”** (verses 15-17).

Now, in order to **know** whether a person’s fruits are good or bad, you must **JUDGE** (or **DISCERN**) whether their *actions* are good or bad.

Jesus Christ *also* said this: “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment...” (Matt. 5: 22). Yet, how can you know whether you *have* a valid cause to be angry with him, unless you *judge* (or discern) your brother’s actions?

Notice what James said: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him **back**, let him know that **he who turns a sinner** [i.e., turns a brother *among you* who is sinning] **from the error of his way** will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). Obviously, such a situation would require the onlooker to **judge** (or discern) the person’s actions *as* sinful.

In a *similar* scripture, Paul says this: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Yet, again, *doing that*, requires that you *judge* (or discern) the person’s act *as sinful*.

Furthermore, notice where the Apostle Paul *condemned* the Corinthian Church for **NOT** discerning an evil... and for *not* taking appropriate action: “It is actually reported *that there is* sexual **immorality** among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have **not** rather mourned, that he who has **done** this deed might be **taken away** from among you” (I Cor. 5: 1-2).

Then, in verse 9, Paul continues: “I wrote to you in my epistle **not to keep company with sexually immoral people**. Yet *I* certainly *did not mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world... (verses 9-10). *Rather*, he meant that we should not keep company with sexually immoral *brethren*.

Elsewhere, in the book of Romans, Paul was speaking against various sinful acts, and he then *concluded*, by showing that God is against **not ONLY** those who *commit* such sins, but **also** those who **approve of others** committing sins! (Rom. 1: 29-32).

No, it is **not** wrong to *judge* or discern people’s *actions*. **However**... we always need to be mindful that it is quite possible to form *wrong* conclusions, *by not having all the facts*... and, by hearing only *one side* of the story.

Moreover... and this is **EXTREMELY important**: We must be careful to **NOT** set ourself up as a “spiritual F.B.I.”—having our **main** focus on examining *others*—trying to *uncover* everyone else’s sins. Rather, our **main** focus should always be on examining **ourself**—recognizing, and repenting of, our **own** sins!!

Normally, in those cases where you *do* try to help a fellow Christian, regarding their sinful behavior, the issue should always be between you and the person **ALONE**!

Scripture warns *against* “gossips” and against “busybodies” (I Tim. 5: 13).

Our heavenly Father wants us to walk in **HUMILITY**... and to **not** have a “holier than thou” attitude.

Without God’s *forgiveness*, we will all be in the Lake of Fire! Yet, God’s Word says that He *will* forgive us... but **only if** we forgive others! (Matt. 6: 14-15).

Yes, we all need to continually walk in *humility*... and have an acute awareness of our own on-going *need* for forgiveness of sin!

God Wants Us to Learn to Think LIKE He Thinks!

Our heavenly Father commands us to, “**Be ye holy, for I am holy**” (I Peter 1:16, *KJV*). As the Christian spiritually matures, he increasingly has God’s spiritual law *written in his mind and heart*. Indeed, that is the very *purpose and goal* of the New Covenant! (Heb. 10:16).

The Apostle Paul instructs us to, “Let this **mind** be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philip. 2:5). He says to “**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died** [cf. Rom. 6: 3-6], and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When **Christ who is our life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3: 2-4).

Yes, we are to take on the very *mind* of Christ... to increasingly think *like* God. And that **includes** learning to **recognize** sin, and to **hate** sin!

Do You Sincerely HATE Sin?

There are those who teach that when Christ said, Judge not,” that He was admonishing us “to not condemn.” Yet, in *one* sense, there is a *problem* with that explanation! If we use the dictionary definition of “condemn,” among the first definitions listed for the word “condemn” is “to feel or express strong **disapproval** of.”

And, a Christian **should** have “strong disapproval of” sinful acts! In fact, we should **hate** sin!

“You who love the Lord, **hate evil** !...” (Ps. 97:10).

“The fear of the Lord *is* to **hate evil**...” (Prov. 8:13).

“**Hate evil**, love good...” (Amos 5:15).

“**Abhor** what is **evil**,” admonished the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:9).

There is *much* in this world that is evil! The Apostle Paul spoke of “this present **evil** age” (Gal.1:4).

God wants us to learn to **recognize** sin... and to **hate** sin! Again, Paul instructs us to “**abhor** what is evil” (Rom. 12:9). Clearly then, we should hate and abhor sin!

Consider, now, the following quote from Pastor Roderick C. Meredith:

[It is] **vital**... that we must fully learn to **hate** evil— **not** to hate the *people* who *perpetrate* evil, but rather to hate those evil **actions** themselves... it is important that our hearts and minds be **sensitive** to **WHAT** evil **IS**. ...It is vital that we do not become ‘desensitized’ and begin to conform to the attitudes, words or actions of this modern world, which is becoming more and more **abominable** in the sight of Almighty God.” (Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, “Do You Hate Evil?” *Living Church News*, Nov/Dec 2010)

Yes, we are to hate sin... but love the sinner! After all, that’s the way that *God* looks at you and me! He *hates our sins*... but He *loves us*!

Again, one of God’s most important *requirements* of us is that we walk in **humility**! We should never judge in *arrogance*! However, God does want us to **recognize** sin... and to **hate** sin!

So, what about you? Do you *hate* sin? Do you **recognize** the sinful *thoughts* that enter your *own* mind?

“Well,” some might think, “it’s only *rare* that sinful thoughts enter *my* mind.” Yet, for those who believe that to be the case, then such person is either failing to *recognize* his sinful thoughts ... or, that individual apparently has thoughts which are *more pure* than the Apostle Paul’s!

In Rom. 7: 14-25, Paul vividly describes the continual *spiritual warfare* going on in his mind. “O **wretched** man that I am!” he exclaimed! Yes, Paul had to **fight** against sinful *thoughts* that entered his mind.

In Conclusion

People of the world almost always **improperly apply** Christ’s admonition to “judge not.” Christ did **not** mean that we are to refrain from discerning whether the actions of others are sinful. God wants us to learn to *recognize* sin... and to *hate* sin! We must learn to **recognize** the sinful thoughts that *we ourselves* are tempted to entertain... and, yes, even the sinful *actions* of **others**!

So, when Christ said to “Judge not,” exactly **what** was Christ telling us to **avoid** doing? Basically, we are to avoid two things: (1) We are to refrain from **imputing motives**... refrain from judging another person’s **heart**; (2) We are to refrain from setting ourself up as the judge of someone’s **ultimate** fate.

Finally, what is the real *difference* between “godly” and “ungodly” judgment? The answer is, perhaps best summed up, by saying that we are to **HATE** sin, but **LOVE** the sinner.

The Christian is to learn to learn to **think LIKE** God. We are to have His agape **love**... *and* His **hatred** of sin!

Footnote:

See the following two articles:

“Have You Come ‘Out’ of This World?” [article within this website]

[Do You Hate Evil?](#) by Roderick C. Meredith, *Living Church News*, Nov/Dec 2010