

## The Truth about Judging

"Don't judge me!" How often have you heard people say this before? It is often the case that when people say this, they are referring to the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-2. But what exactly does Jesus mean when He says this? What exactly does the Lord mean when He says that we are not to judge? Is He condemning all kinds of judging? Does He mean we can't say certain things are wrong?

Consider two important things we need to understand here:

- First, in the context of Matthew 7:1-2, Jesus is NOT condemning all kinds of judging. Instead, He is condemning a particular type of judgment. He is condemning hypocritical judging. This is made crystal clear in the next four verses (Matthew 7:3-6).
  - A hypocrite is a pretender or actor. Many of the religious leaders in Jesus' day fit this description. They taught people to be holy and devoted to God, but they were corrupt! Jesus condemned them for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23:13-15, 23-28).
  - It is this kind of behavior that Jesus is dealing with when He says, "Do not judge..." in Matthew 7:1. Here the Lord is condemning the judging where we are looking to find fault in others without first examining our own hearts and lives.
  - In order to avoid this kind of judging one needs to "*first take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye*" (Matthew 7:5a). In other words, before we start trying to help others with their problems, we first need to correct the spiritual problems we have.
  - Jesus says once we take the log out of our own eyes, then we will see clearly to take the speck out of someone else's eye (Matthew 7:5).
  - When Jesus' words are kept in their context, it is clear that He is not condemning all forms of judging. Instead, He is condemning judging that is full of hypocrisy. He is condemning trying to find fault in others when we are currently doing the same or even worse.
- It is interesting that in the same context, after telling us not to judge, He then tells us to understand that there are times when we must judge others.

*"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."* (Matthew 7:6)

Here Jesus is talking about people who reject the holy word of God. He is saying that when people are not interested in learning and obeying God's word, don't force it on them. These folks are no different than pigs who don't see the value in pearls.

How are we going to be able to recognize these kinds of people? We are going to have to do some judging. In contrast to condemning hypocritical judging, in this verse, Jesus is commending and encouraging righteous judgment. Righteous judgment is when we call

good things good and bad things bad. It is when we measure things by the standard God has given, which is His word. Jesus commands us to do this judging (John 7:24).

- This kind of judgment is necessary to expose and refute false teachers (1 John 4:1; Acts 20:29).
- This kind of judgment is necessary to know men by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20).
- This kind of judgment is necessary to restore brethren who have fallen away (Galatians 6:1).
- This kind of judgment is necessary to point out the sin someone may be promoting (Galatians 2:11-14). If this kind of judging was wrong, then Jesus sinned when He pointed out the error of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23.

The point is, there is a judgment reserved for the people of God. That is judging righteous judgment (John 7:24). God expects us to call righteous things righteous and sinful things sinful! People who say, "Don't judge me" usually only say this because they don't want their sinful behavior called out and challenged with God's word.

Let's make sure we keep God's word in its proper context. Let's refrain from being hypocrites and always strive to do God's will. Only then can we truly do His will when it comes to judging and helping others.