

Why ‘You Can’t Judge Me’ Isn’t Actually Biblical

Has anyone ever said to you, “Don’t judge me”?

In Matthew 7:1, Jesus famously says, “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

That begs the question: What exactly does Jesus mean by “judge”? We know that He will be the final judge of all things (Acts 17:31a, Rom. 2:16, 14:10c). But does that exclude other kinds of temporal judgment by those who profess Christ?

Human Judgment Found in Scripture

There are three primary kinds of “judging” referred to in Holy Scripture:

1. **Passing a final, *condemning judgment* over someone as being destined for hell**—a judgment that God alone is capable of rendering. Such a sentence can only be rightfully adjudicated upon the death of a person, based upon evidence that can only be known by an omniscient God—who alone knows the thoughts and intents of a person’s heart, as well as his/her deeds.

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned” (Luke 6:37; see also James 5:9).

2. **Judging what is in the heart of a person**—for example, presuming to know the thoughts, intentions and motivations for someone’s actions without revelation of such things from the person we are judging (John 7:24, Gal. 2:6b). Even then, the person might not know their own heart (Matt. 13:14-15, Eph. 4:17-19, Heb. 4:12), rendering their confession inaccurate or incomplete. Only God knows what is in the heart of a man (1 Cor. 4:5b), so such a judgment on our part is both

presumptuous and impossible (Heb. 4:12-13, 1 Pet. 1:17, James 4:11-12).

- 3. The judging of other believers by designated leaders in the church**—using known and corroborated evidence revealed by the defendant and/or by at least two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:15-18, 1 Cor. 6:1-8). This kind of judging is permitted for designated church leaders for the protection of the flock.

Judging vs. Bearing Witness to God's Word

When in conversation with someone about one kind of sin or another, the other person will often try to end the discussion by saying, "Who are you to judge me?"

At that point, we need to check our hearts to see if there is any judgment on our part. Are we condemning them? Are we presuming to know what is in their heart? Are we criticizing them for doing the very things that we do or have done?

In some cases, however, our words are not judgments, but a witness to judgments that God has already made. We may be genuinely concerned over their eternal fate. Our motivation is love, not judgment.

In such cases, our response should be:

I am not passing judgment on you. I am merely trying to convey to you judgments that God has already made, which have been revealed in His Word.

My concern is not to condemn, but to warn you of the consequence of things that He has already declared judgment upon, and thus, your need for a Savior who will take your judgment upon Himself. It truly matters to me what might happen to you when you are made to stand before Him to give an account for your life!

Often, this will expose the real problem—they don't trust or

believe that the Bible is God's revelation. If so, then the conversation really needs to begin there.

Judging Fellow Believers

Having been forgiven for every sinful thing that we have done or will ever do (no matter how horrendous or evil), believers now have no right to judge anyone.

Since it is God who judges all things (even our hypocritical judgments of others), it is somewhat frightening that we pay so little attention to this matter (1 Pet. 1:17, 2:23; 1 Cor. 4:3-5). I am as guilty of this as anyone else.

We sometimes make the mistake made by the apostle Peter. Upon asking Jesus about the fate of the apostle John, Jesus said to him:

"What is that to you? Follow Me!" (John 21:22).

And so, our mean-spirited judgments of those still trapped in sin (even serious sin) must stop. We must become known for our love of sinner *and* saint—mimicking the same grace that has been displayed in us through Christ Jesus.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we must also love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:11-12).

"For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge: that if one died for all, then all have died" (2 Cor. 5:14).

"Do you despise the riches of His goodness, tolerance, and patience, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to

repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).

(See also 1 John 2:5-6, 3:14, 4:7-13, 4:20).

How Then Shall We Judge?

The Bible is clear that God alone will judge the secrets of men's hearts through Christ Jesus (Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Heb. 10:30, 12:23, 13:4; James 4:12; 1 Pet. 4:5).

In the vast majority of cases, we are to leave all judgment to God Himself, who alone knows how to judge righteously (Rom. 14:13). Again, the only exception found in the Bible is when designated leaders of the church weigh known evidence against a defendant and pass a Bible-based judgment on (or exonerate) the one being charged.

Once again, it is important to note that when someone says to you "Don't judge me!" they are often objecting to having the scriptural judgments of God communicated to them and are mistaking them as your thoughts rather than God's.

But if you are relaying decisions that God has already made against sin in a loving, grace-filled attempt to enable them to see their need for a Savior, then you are only doing what the apostles did, as led by the Holy Spirit.

And so, let Holy Spirit lead you in these matters. He is the only One who can actually bring in the harvest, so allow Him time to do so.

My best advice is to show the love and grace of God. Rather than focusing on their sin, talk about Jesus and His love and forgiveness for those who surrender their lives to Him. {eoa}

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