

Who Are We to Judge?

The Bible states God is the judge of all. It is God who has the authority to judge and He is righteous in His judgment. God sees past the outward appearance and judges the thoughts, intents and motives of the heart.

But what does the Bible say about us in this regard? Are we instructed or allowed to judge? Do we have any authority or place to judge the actions or motives of others?

On the surface, many people say this issue is unclear and controversial. Others say the Bible is perfectly clear in this regard. With a little investigation we'll gain the understanding needed to navigate this topic in a sound, biblical manner. Let's start with John 7:24 which says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." John states there is a righteous judgment. He is indicating that believers are instructed to judge accordingly among fellow believers.

First Corinthians 5:1-5, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you...but I...have already judged him who has done this deed...when you are gathered together...deliver such a one unto Satan..."

We see here that Paul has judged this man's actions and that they (believers) should also.

First Corinthians 5:11, "But now have I written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral...not even to eat with such a person."

For us to observe what the above verse states would require discernment of that person's lifestyle. We would not be judging the person, but their actions.

Ephesians 5:11, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds

of darkness, but rather expose them.”

Here, we are told to discern a person’s character, have nothing to do with them, and even expose them. If we associate with such a person, it would reflect a false picture of what it means to be a Christian. That’s pretty harsh, but it’s what the Bible tells us to do.

First Corinthians 6:1-4, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law ...”

This verse instructs us to bring a dispute to the Christian, and next the Church if need be, before we go to the law.

Matthew 18:15-17, “Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults between you and him alone...” Jesus goes on to say, that if the person won’t hear us we must bring a witness, and if he won’t hear again, tell it to the Church. If he won’t hear the Church, then let him be unto thee as a heathen. This involves judging a matter.

First Corinthians 10:15, “I speak to wise men, judge what I say.”

We are to judge what other Christians say or teach. We are not judging the person, but what they say.

First Corinthians 6:3, “Know ye not that we are to judge angels? How much things that pertain to this life?”

He said we should be able to judge matters, not people.

Acts 8:23, “For I perceive that thou art in the gulf of bitterness.’

Paul was speaking about Simon who wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul perceived the matter and told him to quickly repent. This took discernment. He didn’t judge and condemn the person, but discerned that what he said was evil.

Jesus also told us in Matthew 7:15 to be aware of false prophets. He said we would know them by their fruits.

We are to observe the results of their ministry. If there is no fruit, then they are wolves in sheep's clothing. This is again discerning the character of the person and their results.

✘ There seems to be controversy or confusion in regard to this topic, but there is no contradiction in the Bible. We are instructed to judge fellow believers with discernment to correct. We exercise righteous judgment, and apply sound doctrine if we recognize immorality or perceive wrong motives. We use wisdom in judging and settling a matter. We don't cast judgment for the final evaluation of anyone's character. That is in the hands of Jesus. We do not judge unbelievers.

If the matter is personal, we confront the person as Jesus instructed (Matt. 18:15-17). If it is a public matter, those in authority are appointed to judge. We should always judge ourselves first, focusing on our own heart condition and motives before we focus on others. Jesus said in Luke 6:41-42 to get the beam out of our own eye before we try and remove the splinter in someone else's.

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