

Do Not Judge

Why are Christians So Judgmental?

Introduction

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged." This command was given by Jesus Christ as He was preaching to the crowds on the Mount of Olives. This and similar verses are often cited as proof that Christians should not go around condemning others about their behavior. Is this what Jesus meant when He gave this command? Why does it seem that Christians are always judging others?

What is being judgmental?

To begin the discussion, it would be good to know what the word "judgmental" really means. Here is the definition from the *The American Heritage Dictionary*:

judg-men-tal (jʔj-mʔn'tl)

adjective

1. Of, relating to, or dependent on judgment
2. Inclined to make judgments, especially moral or personal ones

So, the word "judgmental" refers to making a judgment, especially about somebody's moral or personal behavior. People tend to get upset about others who impugn their own personal behavior. Did Jesus tell us not to do that? What about making general (non-personal) statements about what is right or wrong?

What did Jesus say about judging others?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus actually had a lot more to say about judging others than just one sentence. Here is the verse in context of the other things Jesus said about judging others:

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your

brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (*Matthew 7:1-5*)

What is clear from the context is that Jesus was talking about people making *personal* judgments against others, when their own behavior was much more seriously compromised than the persons they were judging. Even when taken in context, the object of Jesus' statements is not readily evident in this sermon. However, in other preaching, Jesus made it clear that He especially had a problem with the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders of His time. In other confrontations with them, Jesus made some pretty strong statements against those leaders:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness..." (*Matthew 23:25-28*)

There are many other verses that indicate that Jesus was more unhappy about the behavior of hypocrites than just about anything else He encountered.³ So, His warning against judging others was primarily aimed at those who *thought* they were superior to others. In other words, get your own house in order before you criticize others.

Let him [without sin] first cast a stone

One of the most often cited verses in which Jesus supposedly tells people not to judge each other is the one in which a woman was caught in adultery. Since it is good to read the story in context, it is reproduced in its entirety here:

Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and

having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." (*John 8:1-11*)

The first thing you should notice is that it was the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman to Jesus. Obviously, from Jesus' description of their lifestyle (above), it would seem likely that they were up to no good. There are some major problems with their story. Although they supposedly cite the law of Moses, they didn't get it quite right. In fact, the law says that both the man and the woman are to be executed.⁴ So, it would seem that they "forgot" to bring the man. Since she was caught "in the very act," it seems likely that the man was probably one of them. Jesus handled the situation by writing in the dirt. Although the text does not say what He wrote, it is likely that He was writing down the sins of those who wanted to stone the woman. The ones who had lived the longest (and accumulated the most sins) left first. Did Jesus excuse the woman's sin? No! In fact, He told her not to do it again. Instead of being an example of the "non-judgmental" Jesus, it is yet another story of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. In addition, since Jesus had told her not to sin again, He would be accused of being "judgmental" by many people of our time.

Jesus was "judgmental"

If Jesus wanted people to not be "judgmental" or judge other people's sin, He certainly did not take His own advice. In fact, Jesus often told people how to behave and specifically told them *not* to sin.⁵ If Jesus really did not want people to be judgmental, why was He that way Himself?

To judge or not to judge: that is the question

So, what did Jesus mean when He said not to judge others, if He Himself was telling people how to conduct their lives? There are other sayings of Jesus that clarify what Jesus objected to when people judged each other:

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (*John 7:24*)

So, it would seem that Jesus' major concern is that people do not make snap judgments from what they guess might have happened. Many people (both Christians and non-Christians) tend to fall into this kind of judgment problem, if they are not careful to check the facts carefully. For example, one should not judge a person based upon the group to which he belongs. Not all Muslims are terrorists. Not all Christians are hypocrites. Not all atheists practice rampant immorality. Notice that the verse does not tell us not to judge at all, but to judge according to righteousness. If we cannot verify the truth about an accusation, we should keep our mouths shut. For this reason, you will not find any personal judgments about others on this website. This does not mean that we will not dispute the facts or opinions expressed by certain individuals. However, such critiques are not personal attacks, but are usually related to a defense of the Christian faith.

Judging right and wrong

I have received a few complaints that godandscience.org is judgmental. As stated previously, the site judges no other person's particular morals. So, people who make the claim that Christians are judgmental are really referring to Christians' judgment between right and wrong. However, every person (with the possible exception of those who are judged to be criminally insane) on earth makes judgments between right and wrong, in order to make decisions about how to live one's life. Of course, the reasons why people say that Christians are judgmental is because they disagree with the moral judgments we make. They, however, are not making any kind of judgment in claiming we are!

Why do Christians make moral judgments? The Bible commands people of faith (both Christians and Jews) to make moral judgments. The Old Testament tells us to warn those who practice wicked things to turn from their evil ways.⁶ Jesus asked people why they would not judge what was the right thing to do.⁷ Paul reprimanded the Church at Corinth for *not* judging sin within their assembly.⁸ In fact, the Church is directed to condemn and remove sin from among its ranks first and foremost.⁹

The news media loves to point out sin committed by famous pastors and other hypocritical Christians. We are admonished that we need not judge individuals outside the church, since they be judged by God.10

Our nation judges the morality of behaviors

Although many people say that they don't think that others should make moral judgments, they soon change their mind when somebody does something immoral against them. Our nation's constitution (United States of America) is based upon three branches of government, one of which is assigned to judge the morality of behaviors. The judicial branch of the United States government decides the morality of the actions of its citizens and punishes those who break those moral laws. Murder, assault, rape, fraud, theft, and numerous other behaviors are judged as being immoral. The idea that "you cannot legislate morality" is plain false, since our legislative branches of government can and do make laws against a host of behaviors that have been declared as unacceptable.

Conclusion

Christians are often accused of being judgmental. However, what most people consider to be judgmental is merely telling others what the Bible says are unacceptable behaviors. Christians tell others what the Bible says about behavior because we are commanded to do so, so that others may lead morally acceptable lives. However, we are specifically commanded not to judge the behavior of individuals for whom we do not have absolute certainty of the truth regarding their actions. The Christian Church is to remove sin from within its own ranks first and foremost before condemning the actions of outsiders.

References

1. "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." (*Matthew 7:1*)
2. [Dictionary.com](#) website.
3. "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in

full. (*Matthew 6:2*)

"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (*Matthew 6:5*)

"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (*Matthew 6:16*)

"You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (*Matthew 7:5*)

"You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: (*Matthew 15:7*)

But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? (*Matthew 22:18*)

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (*Matthew 23:13*)

["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.] (*Matthew 23:14*)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. (*Matthew 23:15*)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (*Matthew 23:23*)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. (*Matthew 23:25*)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (*Matthew 23:27*)

"So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (*Matthew 23:28*)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the

tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, (*Matthew 23:29*)

and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (*Matthew 24:51*)

And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.' (*Mark 7:6*)

"Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." (*Mark 12:15*)

"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. (*Luke 6:42*)

Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (*Luke 12:1*)

"You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time? (*Luke 12:56*)

But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? (*Luke 13:15*)

4. 'If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (*Leviticus 20:10*)

5. "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." (*Matthew 5:20*)

"But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil." (*Matthew 5:37*)

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words." (*Matthew 6:7*)

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (*Matthew 7:23*)

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? (*Matthew 9:4*)

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." (*Matthew 12:34*)

"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil." (*Matthew 12:35*)

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;" (*Matthew 12:39*)

"Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation." (*Matthew 12:45*)

"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness," (*Matthew 13:41*)

"For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.'" (*Matthew 15:4*)

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." (*Matthew 15:19*)

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away." (*Matthew 16:4*)

"So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (*Matthew 23:28*)

"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." (*Matthew 24:12*)

"For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH';" (*Mark 7:10*)

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries," (*Mark 7:21*)

"All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." (*Mark 7:23*)

"You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" (*Mark 10:19*)

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (*Luke 6:45*)

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (*Luke 6:46*)

"You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" (*Luke 18:20*)

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." (*John 3:19*)

"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (*John 3:20*)

Afterward Jesus *found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." (*John 5:14*)

and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (*John 5:29*)

Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves." (*John 6:43*)

"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." (*John 7:7*)

She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." (*John 8:11*)

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." (*John 8:34*)

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." (*John 9:41*)

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." (*John 15:22*)

"If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well." (*John 15:24*)

Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." (*John 19:11*)

6. "When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he

may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. "Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. (*Ezekiel 3:18-19*)

"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. "But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life. (*Ezekiel 33:8-9*)

7. "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?" (*Luke 12:57*)

8. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? (*1 Corinthians 5:12*)

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? (*1 Corinthians 6:2-3*)

Reject a factious man [within the congregation] after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. (*Titus 3:10-11*)

9. Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (*Romans 2:1-4*)

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? (*James 4:12*)

10. I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. (*Ecclesiastes 3:17*)

"I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming and I will act. I will not relent, and I will not pity and I will not be sorry; according to your ways and according to your deeds I will judge you," declares the Lord GOD." (

Ezekiel 24:14)

on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (*Romans 2:16*)

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (*Romans 14:10*)

For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY."

And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." (*Hebrews 10:30*)

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (*Hebrews 13:4*)