

## Are Christians Allowed to Judge Sin? (Or Must We be "Politically Correct"?)

There is a mistaken idea among some Christians that we are NEVER allowed to "judge" one another, and the scripture verse they use is Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, lest you be judged." However, most people stop reading at that verse, instead of reading it in context. If you read **all of what Jesus was saying**, you see that He is only talking about the kind of "judging" that involves going around **trying to "fix" everybody else's life**, when your own life is still messed up! (see Matt. 7:4-5) Notice, Jesus says FIRST remove the plank or log from your own eye, and **THEN you will see clearly** to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Obviously, that means there IS a time and place for one to "see clearly" and judge someone else's life. Also, Galatians 6:1-4 says that only those who are "spiritually mature" should try to restore a brother who has fallen into sin, and that it should be done in a spirit of humility and not in pride. How would we ever be able to restore a brother or sister if we were never allowed to JUDGE the sin in their life? However, when it comes to **judging another Christian**, God is more **concerned about the ATTITUDE of the person judging** - are you seeking to HELP that person, and RESTORE them to a holy walk with the Lord? I Corinthians 14:26b says "Let all things be done for edification." Edification means BUILDING UP, so ALL things, including JUDGING SIN, must be done for the building up of the church, or of individuals, not for tearing down. Ephesians 4:15-16 says we are to "speak the truth in LOVE" so that we may GROW UP to be like Christ, and this "growth of the body will be for the EDIFYING of itself (the church) in LOVE."

•**Matthew 7:1-5** "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye,' and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will **see clearly to remove the speck** out of your brother's eye."

•**Galatians 6:1-4** "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, **you who are spiritual restore** such a one **in a spirit of gentleness (humility)**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone **thinks himself to be something (PRIDE)**, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another (not in comparing yourself to others)."

But what about judging sin in general? Jesus goes on to say, in Matthew 7:6, not to give what is holy to dogs, or to cast our pearls before swine. How are we to obey this commandment if we cannot ever **judge sin to see WHO is a dog or a swine**? Jesus did not tiptoe around, walking on eggshells, being afraid to call some people dogs or swine; He was not worried about being "politically correct"! Read the Scriptures below, and you will see that **Jesus, who NEVER SINNED**, was angry at sin and hypocrisy, and was not afraid to say so!

•**Matthew 12:34** "**Brood of vipers!** How can **you, being EVIL**, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

•**Read Matthew 23:13-33** "**But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, HYPOCRITES!** For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a **SON of HELL as yourselves**. Woe to you, **blind guides.....Fools and blind!** .....Fools and blind!.....full of extortion and self-indulgence.....you are like **whitewashed TOMBS** which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and **ALL UNCLEANNESS.....full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.....Serpents! Brood of vipers!** How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

•**John 2:13-16** "Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When **He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned

the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

Jesus also said, and He was quoting from the Old Testament law, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established" (Matt. 18:16). Do we have any other witnesses other than Jesus Himself in regards to this issue? I give you two witnesses: John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle.

•**Matthew 3:7** "But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Sadducees and Pharisees coming to his baptism, he said to them, '**Brood of vipers!** Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.'"

We see that John the Baptist not only judged the Sadducees and Pharisees as **not being truly repentant** (he judged by their works - they were **not bearing fruits** that showed true repentance), but he even called them "brood of vipers" or "bunch of snakes"! John the Baptist was not worried about being "politically correct."

•**Acts 13:9-10** "Then Saul, who is also called Paul, **FILLED with the HOLY SPIRIT**, looked intently at him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, **you SON of the DEVIL**, you **ENEMY of RIGHTEOUSNESS**, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?'"

Paul was NOT operating in the flesh and "losing his temper" when he judged Elymas as being "full of deceit and all fraud" and "perverting the straight ways of the Lord." The word of God says Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit! **He not only JUDGEDElymas of SIN**, but he called him names, if you will. That means there IS a kind of judging that is done with the DISCERNMENT of the Holy Spirit, and there IS a time for us **to BOLDLY call sin for what it is - SIN!**

What about judging by physical appearance, what a person looks like on the outside? No, we are not to judge by outward appearance, but **we MAY judge by their works or "fruit"** - we are allowed to be "fruit inspectors." James 2:14-26 tells us that if a person CLAIMS to have faith in Christ, and yet **shows no EVIDENCE of Christ working in his life**, he probably is not saved.

•**Matthew 7:15-17** "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.** Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit."

•**John 7:24** "Do not judge according to APPEARANCE, but **JUDGE with RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.**"

Jesus said to **JUDGE with RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT**, so again we see that there IS a kind of "judging" we are allowed to do — we can judge by looking for the fruit or works. **If we see something that is WRONG and a SIN** according to God's word, **we are CERTAINLY allowed to JUDGE** that thing as being SINFUL and WRONG. If we see a fellow Christian committing a sin, we are to PRAY for them and try to RESTORE that brother or sister to a godly lifestyle (I John 5:16; Galatians 6:1-2; Matthew 18:15; I Corinthians 5:1-13, James 5:19-20).

•**I Samuel 16:7** "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his APPEARANCE or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for GOD sees not as man sees, for MAN looks at the outward APPEARANCE, but **the Lord looks at the HEART.**'"

•**I Corinthians 5:9-12** "I wrote to you in my epistle (letter) not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company (fellowship) with **anyone NAMED a brother (calling themselves a Christian)**, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a DRUNKARD, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with JUDGING those also who are outside (non-believers)? Do you not JUDGE those who are inside (in the church)?"

"Do you not JUDGE those who are inside (in the church)?" means "Aren't you SUPPOSED to JUDGE?" or in other words, **it is our RESPONSIBILITY to JUDGE** those who are in the church! If we could not judge the sin in someone's life, HOW could we carry out the rest of Paul's command here, of "not even to eat with such a person"?

Finally, when are we NOT to judge another Christian, and what is the proper procedure when we see a brother or sister in Christ doing something wrong? In Galatians 2:11-14, **Paul CONFRONTED Peter and CORRECTED him** on something he was doing wrong, because it was a bad example to the church. Peter was treating the Gentile Christians as though they were second-class Christians, and was only fellowshipping and eating with Jewish believers. But when it comes to **something that the Bible does NOT say is a SIN**, and it is just a private conviction of one Christian, that is when another Christian should NOT judge that person, but just leave it up to God. If it does not relate to basic doctrines of the faith, we should NOT become argumentative and divide over side issues such as what foods we eat, what holidays we observe, and other minor things not related to salvation (see Romans, chapter 14).

•**Romans 14:4** "Who are you **to judge another's servant**? To his own Master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."

•**James 4:11-12** "**Do not SPEAK EVIL of one another**, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and **JUDGES his brother**, speaks evil of the law and **JUDGES the law [of God]**..... There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to **JUDGE another**?"

According to James 4:11-12, **another kind of "judging" we are NOT to do** is the kind that involves **"speaking evil" of another person**, which is GOSSIP and BACK-BITING. If you do not have all the facts, or if you are attributing certain MOTIVES to what a person does, you are NOT judging righteously, but are GOSSIPING. Only God can know the motives of a person's heart, and most of the time, we DO NOT have all the facts. Because only God can judge a person's MOTIVES for doing something, we are not allowed to speculate on WHY someone is doing something. For instance, it would be WRONG to say, "Oh! I see so-and-so has not been to church for the last few Sundays - they probably got mad at something the pastor said."

**Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:15 to go DIRECTLY to the ONE who has OFFENDED you**, and try to resolve the issue with that person, especially if it is a "brother" in the church. However, many people **DO NOT OBEY the words of Jesus**, but they immediately go around behind the person's back, and **they gossip and tell everyone else** how that brother or sister has offended them! That is wrong, and it brings DISCORD, strife, division and confusion to the church of Christ! I hate when people jump to conclusions, make judgments without knowing the facts, and then spread rumors based on their unfounded conclusions! According to my Bible, God hates it, too! I know a lot of times I've believed the best about someone, only to find out later that I was wrong. I would much rather make an error on the side of thinking GOOD of someone, than to make the error on the side of EVIL, and grieve God for my judgmental spirit.

•**Proverbs 6:16-19** "These six things **the Lord hates**, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and **one who sows DISCORD among brethren**."