

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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# **BIBLE STUDY**

## **Topical Bible Study To Judge or NOT to Judge**

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# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Judging Others Biblical Discernment vs. Condemnation

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Introduction**

**Understanding the Tension**

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**The Bible appears to give two instructions:**

“Do not judge”

“Judge rightly”

The key issue is not if we judge, but how and why.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## **The Command Against Hypocritical Judgment**

**Primary Text: Matthew 7:1–5**

**“Judge not, that you be not judged...”**

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**“Judge not lest you be judged”** is a snippet from Christ’s great Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3—7:27). In Matthew 7, Jesus turns to the topic of judging others. Sadly, the passage is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied teachings in Scripture by believers and non-believers alike. In his commentary on Matthew, Stuart Weber gives this excellent summary of the correct meaning of Matthew 7:1: “Do not judge others until you are prepared to be judged by the same standard. And then, when you exercise judgment toward others, do it with humility” (Holman New Testament Commentary, Vol. 1, p. 96).

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

When Jesus said, “Judge not lest you be judged,” He wasn’t issuing a blanket rule that people are never to judge others. A closer look at the rest of the passage illuminates the real issue Christ wanted to address:

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others.”

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Christ's teaching was primarily directed to believers, but the principle can be applied to anyone. Jesus does expect us to “**deal with the speck**” in our friend's eye, particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ.

He wants us to discern sin in others so we can help them get rid of it.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Spiritual or Christian discernment** is the biblically-grounded ability to distinguish truth from error, good from evil, and to align one's will with God's will. It involves using Scripture to test spirits and situations, relying on the Holy Spirit for wisdom rather than just human reason. It is a vital, trainable skill for maturity that brings protection, freedom, and, according to some, a specialized grace gift.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

We are commanded to “hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9). But, unless we have **true discernment**, how can we determine what is “evil” and what is “good”? In order to maintain the purity of the gospel, the church must distinguish truth from heresy. Wisdom also demands that we properly discriminate between what is “best” and what is merely “good.”

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

When it comes to the gift of discerning spirits, every born-again believer has a certain amount of discernment, which increases as the believer matures in the Spirit. In Hebrews 5:13-14 we read that a believer who has matured beyond using the milk of the Word as a babe in Christ is able to discern both good and evil. The maturing believer is empowered by the Spirit of God through the Scriptures to tell the difference between good and evil, and, beyond that, he can also distinguish between what is good and what is better. In other words, any born-again believer who chooses to focus on the Word of God is spiritually discerning.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Primary Text

John 7:24

“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Believers are called to **discern truth from error.**

**Judging actions (not condemning souls) is necessary for**

Moral clarity and Spiritual health

**Righteous judgment is**

Based on God's Word

Guided by truth, not emotion

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Discernment is a spiritual responsibility, not an option.**

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

The purpose of judging someone else's weakness is to help him or her walk in **freedom** (1 Corinthians 5:12). But how can we help someone else if we are **not free**? We must first be willing to look honestly at our own lives and exercise the same judgment toward ourselves. When we do this, we judge from a position of humility.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Jesus's statement to "judge not lest you be judged" zeroed in on the problems of **spiritual hypocrisy** and **self-centered pride**. He compared these offenses to giant logs that blind us to our own faults while we laser in on shortcomings in others.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Humility** is a mega theme throughout Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is impossible to carry out these kingdom teachings without maintaining authentic humbleness in our attitude toward others. In Matthew 5:7–11, Jesus encouraged His followers to show mercy, cultivate peace, and bless those who persecute them. To enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said that our righteousness had to exceed that of the teachers of the religious law and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

When Christ taught, “Judge not lest you be judged,” He countered the human tendency to take spiritual truth and twist it into hypocritical superiority as the Pharisees had done. Our pride makes us criticize and judge others so that we feel better about ourselves.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

James warned believers, “Don’t speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God’s law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:11–12, NLT)

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

The apostle Paul cautioned, “You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God’s judgment when you do the same things?” (Romans 2:1–3, NLT, see also Romans 14:4, 10–13).

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Judging Within the Body of Christ

### Primary Text

Galatians 6:1

“Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...”

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Correction is meant for **restoration, not destruction**

**Must be done with**

Humility

Gentleness

Self-awareness

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Process of Accountability

**Matthew 18:15–17**

Private correction

Small group confirmation

Church involvement if necessary

**Biblical judgment within the church is redemptive, not punitive.**

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Church discipline** is the process of correcting sinful behavior among members of a local church body for the purpose of protecting the church, restoring the sinner to a right walk with God, and renewing fellowship among the church members. In some cases, church discipline can proceed all the way to excommunication, which is the formal removal of an individual from church membership and the informal separation from that individual.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

**Matthew 18:15–20** gives the procedure and authority for a church to practice church discipline. Jesus instructs us that one individual (usually the offended party) is to go to the offending individual **privately**. If the offender refuses to acknowledge his sin and repent, then **two or three others** go to confirm the details of the situation. If there is still no repentance—the offender remains firmly attached to his sin, despite two chances to repent—the matter is taken before **the church**. The offender then has a third chance to repent and forsake his sinful behavior.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

If at any point in the process of church discipline, the sinner heeds the call to repent, then **“you have gained your brother”** (verse 15, ESV).

However, if the discipline continues all the way through the third step without a positive response from the offender, then, Jesus said, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (verse 17, ESV).

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

The Bible's instructions concerning church discipline imply the necessity of church membership. The church and its pastor are responsible for the spiritual well-being of a certain group of people (members of the local church), not of everyone in the city. In the context of church discipline, Paul asks, "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?" (1 Corinthians 5:12). The candidate for church discipline has to be "inside" the church and accountable to the church. He professes faith in Christ yet continues in undeniable sin.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

A simple checklist can help individuals know when it may be necessary to rebuke a sinning Christian. We should never be hasty or rash in a rebuke. We should evaluate each situation carefully and prayerfully and ask ourselves these questions:

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

1. Is my life free from similar sin? (Romans 2:1)
2. Do I have a relationship with this person that allows me to speak into his life? (Galatians 6:2)
3. Is my motive that of **restoration** rather than **condemnation**? (Galatians 6:1)
4. Would I be willing to have someone rebuke me in the same way? (Matthew 7:12)
5. Do I understand Scripture well enough to know how and why this person is violating it? (2 Timothy 2:15)

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

6. Am I prepared to go to my pastor or elders on this person's behalf if he refuses to listen to me?
7. Am I willing to commit to praying for this person's healing and restoration before and after I confront him? (Matthew 26:41)
8. Is this offense truly a sin or simply an act of immaturity or preference? (Ephesians 4:2)
9. Am I acting in love? (1 Corinthians 13:1)

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Galatians 6:1 tells us, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” When we are called to confront or rebuke a fellow believer, we must always do so in an attitude of humility, knowing that we too are prone to sin. We can follow Jesus’ golden words in this and every other situation: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Judgment becomes sinful when

It is harsh and condemning

It ignores one's own sin

It elevates self over others

**WE ARE NOT THE ULTIMATE JUDGE—GOD IS.**

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

Jesus requires true followers to apply His teachings first to themselves and then to others. When God reveals His truth to us, whether in Scripture or in some other way, our immediate response must be to say, “How does this apply to me? How do I appropriate this truth in my own life?” In following Jesus’ command to “judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1, NKJV), we avoid drawing conclusions that are superficial, proud, hypocritical, or self-righteous.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## Summary Statement:

The Bible does not forbid all judgment—it forbids **hypocritical, harsh, and self-righteous judgment**, while commanding **righteous, humble, and restorative discernment**.

# TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE

## References:

The Bible, King James Version

<https://www.gotquestions.org/>

# Questions?