

Christians and Judging

Many Christians say that we should not judge but in this article I would like to show that God commands us to judge for two very good reasons.

- 1) To help our brothers and sisters remain on the Narrow Road of salvation.
- 2) To keep the church pure, separated from both sin and false teaching.

Many Christians misinterpret what the Bible says about judging and say that we should never judge. In Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus did say not to judge but a close look at these verses will show that He is referring to hypocritical, unloving and unjust judging. It is very wrong for us to make judgments about a person's motives or thoughts because we simply don't know their mind. However, in John 7:24, Jesus said, "*Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment*". In this verse Jesus is talking about making righteous judgments in regard to God's laws. We must make biblically based judgments in matters of doctrine and righteous living because the Bible is our foundation and if we don't do what it says then it will become just another book. Then we will have no standard and everyone will be doing whatever they think is right, just like the Israelites in the time of the Judges - "*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25 ESV).

If we want to keep God's commands then we must first judge what is right and what is wrong. For example, God says that we must expel from the church someone who says he is a brother but is a drunk or immoral etc (1 Cor. 5:11-13). How can we expel someone if we don't first judge that they actually are a drunk or immoral etc? The Bible also says that we should hate what is evil and cling to what is good (Rom. 12:9). How can we do that if we don't first judge what is good and what is evil? So, we can see that we must make judgments about what is right and what is wrong so that we can obey God's commands.

Disputable matters -

Romans 14 talks about matters which we are not to judge because they are disputable. Disputable matters are things which God has left to our choice, such as as what we eat, what day we worship, what we wear to church etc. These are matters of personal choice and are not essential for salvation. We must always dress modestly but other than that we should be free to dress how we like. However, in Rom. 14:21, God tells us, "*It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall*", so we must be careful not to do anything that could cause a person to fall because another person's salvation is far more important than pleasing ourselves.

Now lets look at personal things that are not disputable -

To decide if a personal activity is disputable or not ask yourself, "Can this affect someone's salvation?" If the answer is yes, then you can be sure that the Bible condemns the activity. God commands us to judge and discipline fellow believers concerning their personal conduct. For example, the Corinthians were told to "*...expel the wicked man from among you ... so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 5:13, 5). This man was expelled from the church, after being judged as wicked, in the hope that he would repent and be "*saved on the day of the Lord*". Another reason for removing unrepentant sinners from the church is so that their wickedness will not influence other believers because "*a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough*" (1 Cor. 5:6).

A second example of warning our brothers and sisters is in James 5:19-20 which say, "*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*" Again we are told to turn a brother or sister from their error and save them from hell. As hard as it may be to do, it is an act of love to confront a sinning brother or sister and unloving not to.

There is a lot of peer pressure telling us not to judge. People will say, "We must not judge" or "Let's keep the unity, let's keep the peace". However, the Apostles did not feel the same way as the following examples show:

- a) Paul openly spoke against certain men in 2 Tim. 2:16-18, 2 Tim. 4:14-15 and 1 Tim. 1:19-20.
- b) In 3 John 1:9-11, John named a man who was in error.
- c) Paul openly corrected Peter, a fellow Apostle, in Galatians 2:11-14.
- d) 1 Tim. 5:20 says that leaders caught in false teaching or immorality are to be rebuked publicly.

e) Matt. 18:15-17 say that Christians who persist in sin must be spoken to and removed from the church, if they fail to repent.

These examples make it clear that we must publicly expose sin and error and the reason is love. 1 Tim. 1:3-5 say, “... *command certain men not to teach false doctrines ... the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*”.

All throughout the world there are churches, televangelists and teachers with all sorts of false teachings, fake healing ministries and the false prosperity gospel. These people are described and condemned in 2 Pet. 2. The Bible urges us to separate from these errors and, in Gal. 1:6-9, God condemns those who preach false gospels. We must warn others about false teachings otherwise they may be badly misled and leave the path of holiness. So, it is most important that we make righteous judgments according to the Word of God so that we can separate ourselves from false teachings.

Once again, God commands us to judge both sin and doctrine for two reasons:

- 1) So that backsliding believers can be snatched from the fire and saved out of the devil's hand.
- 2) So that the church itself is free from evil influences, giving believers a holy place to worship in as 1 Cor. 15:33 tells us that “*bad company corrupts good character*”. Therefore, in the same way that an ex-alcoholic must keep away from alcohol, the church must separate itself from sin and error otherwise the sin will work its way through the church and corrupt other members and it won't be long before that church is little more than a social club.

To finish off, I would like to ask you this question, “If you were in error, and in danger of hell, would you want someone to warn you?” Yes, of course you would! So, in love, warn a brother or sister when it is necessary. Failing to judge righteously is most unloving because it will leave a sinner on the Broad Road to destruction so let us all follow God's commands and make righteous, biblically based judgments.

I have a slightly more detailed article at
<http://www.christianissues.biz/judging.html>

This article was downloaded from <http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/blogarticles/judging.pdf>
The article is online at <http://www.christianissues.biz/blog/wordpress/?p=227>

Mick Alexander
leeandmick@gmail.com
www.ChristianIssues.biz