

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

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“Learning to Judge Righteously”

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Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV) - “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged...”

This scripture from Matthew is one of the most commonly used scriptures in the Bible. It is also one of the most misinterpreted scriptures in the Bible. Unfortunately, when a scripture has been incorrectly understood, it will also be incorrectly implemented. The way we incorrectly implement this scripture is to play off the phrase “don’t judge” as an excuse not to take responsibility for the sin in our own life. We also play off of this phrase “don’t judge” as justification for why we are neglecting to help our brother take responsibility for the sin in his life. This cop-out shows up in familiar language, which demonstrates this truth. For the person who defiantly wants to hang on to their sin, “don’t judge” becomes a convenient excuse to avoid the possibility of being judged by anyone. When confronted with their sinful behavior this person will quickly retort, “Well, the Bible says don’t judge, so you have no right to judge me!”

On the other hand, the person who wants to live a righteous life, but sees their brother’s life being destroyed by sin, will piously use this same scripture as an excuse not to confront that brother with his sin, “Well, the Bible says don’t judge, so it would be wrong for me to say anything.”

People in society think they have found the perfect win-win situation, because the sinful person is free to pursue their lifestyle, and the other person is not put on the spot to say anything about it. In truth, these people have a lose-lose situation, because the wages of sin is still death (Romans 6:23).

This is the world we live in, a world that has become so desensitized [numb] to sin, that even within the church and among religious circles, sin has become so whitewashed that it is no longer recognized as an abomination to God. The attitude of “people should be free to do their own thing” (because it is nobody’s business but my

own) is rooted in a lie of the devil to keep blind eyes from seeing the truth. Blind eyes do not lead people to God, but away from God.

Luke 6:39-42 (NIV) - He [Jesus] also told them this parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Jesus was talking to the hypocrites, who only pretended on the surface to believe, but who had no real authority to lead anyone to Christ. Hypocrites with logs in their eyes are like blind men trying to lead the blind. They are all headed for a fall. Speaking directly to the hypocrites, Jesus taught the righteous way to judge, “First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

When Jesus says in **Matthew 7:1-2**, “Do not judge”, he is not prohibiting all types of judgment. He is only prohibiting **unrighteous** judgment. In the Book of John Jesus speaks about **righteous** judgment which we are to exercise with careful discernment.

John 7:24 (KJV) - Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

John 7:24 (NIV) - Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.

Right judgments are made when we understand the difference between good and evil behavior. Those who can clearly see evil behavior will no longer become entrapped by the sin of evil doers. Instead, they will have a golden opportunity to rescue the evil doer from their sin.

1 John 3:7-8 (NIV) - *Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Praise God! Jesus came to destroy sin, not to destroy the sinner! The devil's work (sin) is destroyed through exposure. Sin must be recognized and judged wherever it is to be found. Looking at the word "judge" in The American Heritage Dictionary, we find the following definition, "To form an opinion or estimation of after careful consideration." If you will notice, this definition closely fits the righteous judgment Jesus spoke about in scripture.

To help us determine if we are judging righteously or unrighteously, we must ask ourselves the following questions; What is my motive [purpose] for judging? Am I trying to hurt or help my brother? Am I trying to condemn or set my brother free?

As followers of Jesus Christ we will never be salt and light to the world if we cannot or will not, see the evil of this sin infested world. We will not be capable of converting the sinner from the error of his ways, if we close our eyes to sin and let our brother perish in darkness.

James 5:19-20 (NIV) - *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.*

As Christians we are being summoned by Jesus Christ to get the logs out of our eyes, so we may see clearly how to lead blind eyes, bringing them to Jesus for salvation. For this reason it is impossible to go through life without making judgments. Every person is worthy to be saved. Whether that person is the wealthiest or most powerful in the land, or someone we see every day, it is critical to our spiritual growth to make righteous judgments of sinful actions. We must make right judgments, because the sinner must be saved before his sin destroys not only himself, but those who are blindly following him.

1 John 3:9-10 (NIV) - *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*



Questions for personal or group study:

1. Why is it important to our spiritual growth to know the difference between good and evil behavior? (See: Hebrews 5:12-14 and 3 John 11) As a prison inmate, how could the application of this knowledge have kept you out of prison? How could sharing this knowledge have kept someone you know out of prison?
2. What measurement can we use to determine if someone's motives are righteous or unrighteous when they judge our actions? (See: John 7:16-18)
3. In Luke 6:39, the question is asked, "Can the blind lead the blind?" The obvious answer is, no! A person hooked on drugs cannot lead another person to freedom from addiction. However, a former drug addict, someone who has overcome their addiction and turned their life around, may be a good person to lead another drug addict to freedom from addiction. What advice did Jesus give to Peter about helping his brothers? (See: Luke 22:31-32)
4. Whose wisdom do you call upon when you have decisions to make in your own life? (See: James 3:13-17)