

Random Comments About Judging

1. There are many verses that restrict judging. These are not to be ignored. The following comments have a greater focus on the Bible's requirements to judge, but should not be interpreted as a denial of the Bible's restrictions about judging. They are both found in the Bible.
2. There are many other concepts emphasized in the Bible, such as the expression of love and mercy, which complement the concept of judging. These are not to be ignored. The following emphasis on judging should not be interpreted as a denial of any of these other concepts. If one wants to be faithful to the Scriptures, he must emphasize all of them.
3. There are many verses which provide criteria for judging. Some of them use the word "judge," but many don't.
4. Everything good has a counterfeit - and we are commanded to strive for what is genuine. There are many types of false judgment and sinful judging - but that does not dismiss our obligation to judge in a way that is right.
5. We must deal with our own sins first. If we judge someone else, while ignoring our own sins, we are sinning. However, we are no better off, if we choose to ignore both our sins and theirs.
6. If we must speak a word of judgment, two things will influence the way it is received. The first is our attitude. (Is it being given in love?) The second is their attitude. (Is it being received in love?)
7. When Scripture tells us how to distinguish between a disciple and a non-disciple, it involves judging, or evaluating the presence or absence of specific characteristics given in the context. Scripture gives us such criteria so that we can accurately evaluate the situation, for (as Scripture also says) many false disciples will creep in and attempt to lead others astray. God does not give us such criteria so that we can excuse ourselves from obeying him (and from recognizing those who are false). Indeed, some of the churches mentioned in Revelation 2 - 3 were condemned because they were unwilling to do these things. [Some people may claim that such commands are harsh. But God gives them as an expression of love. He doesn't want anyone to be led astray.]
8. God requires us to make an accurate judgment. This underscores the need for us to submit our judgments (and all our thoughts) to the teachings of the Word of God.
9. The book of Proverbs has many things to say about judgment, and various aspects of judging. Often other words will be used, which are related to the idea of judging. (Example: rebuke.) The Proverbs also explain why some people pay attention to rebuke (judgment), while others don't.

10. Judgment must be done with a spirit of love and humility, or it becomes a distortion of judgment. The Bible does not consider these concepts to be opposites, but complements that must coexist.
11. When we read a verse which says, "Do not judge," we need to examine the context, to see what type of judging is being condemned. Such verses are never intended as universal condemnations of all judging; instead, they always refer to specific types of judging. If you look elsewhere in the Bible, you will find other passages that encourage - or even demand - judging. As with the prohibitions, the nature of these commands must also be defined by the context.
12. It all depends on whether the Word of God is objective truth, which can be understood by those who are willing to listen, or if it is subjective opinion, which can be interpreted by the whims of the reader. If the Bible is objective truth, then its judgments stand against us, whether we accept them, or not.
13. Judgment is not always "negative." It can come in the form of condemnation (and it often must, because of our sins), but it can also come in the form of praise. In either case, it must be given accurately and in accordance with the Bible. False praise (which many excuse, by calling it "being positive") can be as dangerous (and evil) as false condemnation.
14. If we proclaim the Word of God faithfully, without adding to it or subtracting from it, the verses that express judgment will have to be a part of our proclamation. Those who don't like it may accuse us of being "judgmental," or of trying to "impose our opinions" on them, but in reality, we will be merely making them aware of God's Word - and warning them about what God has already said against them.
15. If we refuse to warn people about God's judgments, God will hold us accountable for their blood, if they perish in their sins. We must speak truthfully and honestly, even though they may condemn us for doing so.
16. It seems that societies tend to sway back and forth on this issue. Currently, we are in a phase in which people want to get away with anything they please. Moral and ethical relativism hold the sway, in most people's hearts, and many people are offended by anything that suggests that there are objective standards by which their conduct (and ours) is to be measured. Often, they will claim something like, "It's 'right' for me, whether or not it's 'right' for you."
17. Scripture requires us to be willing to judge ourselves first. Some passages, such as Matthew 7:1-5, mention both judging ourselves, as well as judging others. Others, such as 2 Corinthians 13:5, focus mainly on judging (testing or evaluating) ourselves.
18. Many criteria are given for making accurate judgments. This includes both descriptive statements about how to judge, as well as examples of people who are doing some type of judging. Some examples include 1 Corinthians 5 - 6; Jesus' interactions with the religious leaders of his day, in the gospel of John; the epistle of 1 John; the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 - 7); etc.

19. Our job is to express or reflect God's judgments (such as warning people about sin and its consequences). These are judgments which God has already given to us in the Scriptures; they are objectively truthful, and not an expression of our own opinions. We are not to invent our own judgments, the way the religious leaders of Jesus' day did. (Some of Jesus' sternest judgments were pronounced against these leaders. Example: Matthew 23.)
20. It is not our duty to pronounce judgments against people's hidden motives - though we all need to remember that hidden motives will be judged by God. (Example: 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 - the prohibition against judging is in reference to hidden motives.) In contrast, it is our duty to judge (in the manner described in Scripture, beginning with ourselves) that which is visible. In doing so, we are merely reaffirming God's judgment.
21. Judging involves not only stating that certain types of conduct are evil, but it also involves stating that certain other types of conduct are righteous. When some people think of judging, they only look at the "condemnation" aspect of it, but it also includes a "praise" aspect. Judgment that honors God will look at both.
22. Some things are "neutral," and their rightness or wrongness will be defined by other factors. In the New Testament context, the eating of meat offered to idols is an example. In some situations, such as when a host offered meat as part of a meal, it was definitely right to eat it. In some instances, such as when it would tempt someone else to sin, it was definitely wrong to eat it.
23. A willingness to judge is a reflection of God's character, as much as a willingness to show mercy is. Today, many people distort the concept of "mercy," so that it becomes little more than a toleration of sin. (They also distort the concept of judgment, so that it becomes little more than an attempt to impose one's opinions and personal preferences on others.)
24. Any restraint of sin is a form of judgment; to refuse to restrain sin (first in oneself, then in others) is to encourage sin.
25. The message of salvation is itself an expression of judgment, for we are telling people that they are sinners, and that Jesus is their only hope.
26. Scripture contains many commands about judging objectively visible conduct and actions. But it never tells us to make judgments about that which is subjective or opinionated, or on matters in which there is legitimate freedom of choice. Scripture also tells us that objective criteria can be recognized. A refusal to recognize these criteria is a refusal to acknowledge what God has said. A refusal to warn those who are guilty of sin makes us guilty of their blood, if they fail to repent. (Compare to Ezekiel 33:8-9).
27. How are we to respond if we are falsely judged by someone? The same way Jesus did - 1 Peter 2:22-23. (Confronting the accuser may be an option, depending on the circumstances - Matthew 18:15-17.) On the other hand, if we are guilty of doing the false judging, it is our duty to confess our sin and to repent of it, etc.