

## **Question: "Doesn't the Bible teach it is wrong to judge people?"**

We human beings have a tendency to "generalize," which means we make vague or indefinite statements. We do this because it is easier to grasp general ideas than it is to examine principles. In this article, it is important that we **do not** "generalize," but that we honestly examine what the Bible says on the subject of judging. To judge: to determine authoritatively after deliberation.

The average person thinks the Bible grants no one but God the right to judge the actions or beliefs of other people. If that idea has any merit then we ought to remove our judicial system. But since we can understand the need to make judgments on human conduct in secular matters, can we not also understand the same need in spiritual matters? Much of the confusion in this area is the result of a misunderstanding of the following Bible verses:

- Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Mt 7:1).

People often quote this verse when they refuse to admit to a certain sin. Rarely, though, is the second verse quoted which says, "for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Mt 7:2). Jesus, here, warns against unjust judgments, which are based merely on opinion. The word of Christ is the standard by which everyone will be judged (Jn 12:48). Therefore, people actually do us a favor when they point out our sins and doctrinal misunderstandings.

- James wrote, "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. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? (Js 4:11-12).

In this passage, the judgment to which James refers is the harsh and unfair judgments associated with speaking evil of someone.

### **God actually requires judgment.**

Jesus also taught, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (Jn 7:24). God's word is the standard of a righteous judgment (Psa 119: 172). It is true, of course, that Christ will pronounce the final sentence on each person (2Co 5:10), but we must make certain judgments in life if we are to please God. Notice:

- "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2Jn 9-11).
- And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light (Ep 5:11-13).

## **Some examples of judgments in the Bible.**

Lydia asked Paul to judge her faithfulness to the Lord (Ac 16: 15). Paul did not condemn God-fearing Gentiles for judging disobedient Jews (Ro 2: 27). Paul judged a brother in Corinth to be a fornicator, and instructed the church to judge him and not to keep company with him as long as he remained in that state (1Co 5: 3, 11-12). Paul directed the same church to judge between brethren in disputes (1Co 6: 1-6). Keep in mind, however, that all judgment is to be a righteous judgment. The facts of each case require application of the correct standard – the word of God (Jn 7: 24; 12: 48).

## **The Bible condemns certain types of judgments.**

For instance, it is wrong to make a judgment on "appearance" alone (Jn. 7: 24). On one occasion, it only "appeared" as if Jesus was violating the Sabbath law (Jn 7: 14-24). In addition, we are not to judge the sins of other people when we practice those same sins (Ro 2: 1-3, 17-24). Jesus instructed His audience to "first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of our brother's eye" (Mt 7:5). Therefore, in one statement, Jesus both condemns and encourages judgment.

In addition, the scriptures teach us to avoid making judgments in areas where God has not specified (Ro 14: 2-6, 10, 13), as well as judgments that give preferential treatment to some people over others (Js 2: 1-4).

In closing, you may on occasion think this author to be unfairly judging. But ask yourself if the comments are supported in Scripture. If God's word supports the judgment, then it is actually God's judgment.

Study your Bible and search the Truth. Write us today for a free Bible correspondence course by mail. Thanks for reading!