

To judge or not to judge...

Can a Christian judge another?

People often say, "Don't judge me!" or "Who are you to judge?" Sometimes they will cite a snippet of scripture that usually comes from one of the following two verses:

Matthew 7:1 "Do not judge, **or** you too will be judged. 2 For **in the same way you judge** others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you

Luke 6:37 "**Do not judge, and you will not be judged.** Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

For the most part, they are trying to fend off righteous examination of sin in their lives, and this approach is often effective in intimidating uninformed Christians into silence.

Unfortunately, those presenting this rebuke usually only concern themselves with the first three words, even if they quote more of the verse.

If you read the verses with intent to understand, Jesus is saying, "Don't be a hypocrite."¹ If you follow along with what Jesus says, here and in many other places, you'll see that we *must* judge.

For example, Jesus said,

Matthew 7:6 "**Do not give dogs what is sacred**; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

How do you do this without "judging" by today's connotation? You have to determine who is a dog and who is a pig. Clearly then, something other than our current understanding of judging is meant by Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37.

In the following verses, Jesus tells people to judge with right/righteous judgments.

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

John 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but **judge with righteous judgment.**" (KJV)
(compare w/Matthew 7:1 & 2)

Some might say, "We're all walking around with planks in our eyes" as described in the song, "Jesus, Friend of Sinners" by Casting Crowns.

Matthew 7:3-4 and Luke 6:41

Matthew 7:3-4

[3] "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? [4] How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"

Luke 6:41-42a

[41] "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? [42] 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?"

¹ Additionally, the verses don't even apply to Christians because they're already forgiven. A Christian's forgiveness is not based on behavior, but on faith in Jesus Christ.

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Again, we need to read what follows!

Matthew 7:3-4

[5] ... first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Luke 6:42b

[42] ... first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Jesus told us to take the plank out of our eyes, and then help your brother take the speck out of his eye. If we, as believers are constantly walking around with "planks in our eyes," we've got a problem.

In Romans 2:1, Paul indicates the same sentiment as Jesus in Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37, that is, "don't judge someone if they are doing the same thing you're doing."

Romans 2:1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for **at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself**, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Yet, Christians are not subject to judgment.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no **condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, (The word used here for condemnation can be translated Judgment.)

Christians are to make judgments about all things.

1Cor:2:15 The **spiritual man makes judgments about all things**, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

We are to judge those who sin in the church.

1 Corinthians 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? **Are you not to judge those inside?** 13 God will judge those outside. "**Expel the wicked man from among you.**"

We are to judge matters of this life.

1 Corinthians 6:2 Do you not know that **the saints will judge** the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that **we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!** 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

How can one discern without making judgments?

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to **discern good and evil.**

Jude indicates we're supposed to help others out of sin, but to hate everything about the sin:

Jude 23 Snatch others from the fire and save them; * to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

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On the other hand, we are to be careful when assessing behaviors acceptable to our Lord, but which may seem questionable to us:

Romans 14:1–4 1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 **Who are you to judge someone else's servant?** To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Nevertheless, who are we to judge? We are Christians, and we are commanded and have been given authority by Jesus Christ to judge sin.