

What Does Jesus Really Mean When He Says "Do not judge"

Matt 5:21-22 NIV - Jesus on contempt (mental and verbal murder)

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matt 7:1-5 NIV

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.

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? 5 You hypocrite, 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 6:36-38 NIV

36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 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.

Rom 2:1-4 NIV

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. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Rom 14:4 NIV

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.

Rom 14:9-12 NIV

9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written:

*"As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will confess to God.'"*

12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

1 Cor 5:12-13 NIV

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."

Gal 6:1 NIV

1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

James 4:10-12 NIV

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

- **The word "judge" in Greek** NT:2919 (from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)
krino (kree'-no); properly, (to distinguish, i.e. decide mentally or judicially);
or
(to try, condemn, punish)

➤ **Webster's Definitions**

judge - 1) to form an authoritative opinion about 2) to sit in judgment on 3) to consider or pronounce to be after inquiry and deliberation 4) govern 5) to form an estimate
6) think; to form an opinion

evaluate - 1) to determine or fix the values of 2) to examine and judge

➤ **Commentaries on Matthew 7:1**

(from Barnes' Notes)

[Judge not ...] This command refers to rash, censorious, and unjust judgment. See Rom 2:1. (Luke 6:37) explains it in the sense of "condemning." Christ does not condemn judging as a magistrate, for that, when according to justice, is lawful and necessary. Nor does he condemn our "forming an opinion" of the conduct of others, for it is impossible "not" to form an opinion of conduct that we know to be evil. But what he refers to is a habit of forming a judgment hastily, harshly, and without an allowance for every palliating circumstance, and a habit of "expressing" such an opinion harshly and unnecessarily when formed. It rather refers to private judgment than "judicial," and perhaps primarily to the customs of the scribes and Pharisees.

(from Adam Clarke's Commentary)

[Judge not, that ye be not judged.] These exhortations are pointed against rash, harsh, and uncharitable judgments, the thinking evil, where no evil seems, and speaking of it accordingly. This is one of the most important exhortations in the whole of this excellent sermon. By a secret and criminal disposition of nature, man endeavors to elevate himself above others, and to do it more effectually, depresses them. His jealous and envious heart wishes that there may be no good quality found but in himself, that he alone may be esteemed. Such is the state of every unconverted man.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

Our Savior is here directing us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the faults of others; and his expressions seem intended as a reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, who were very rigid and severe, very magisterial and supercilious, in condemning all about them, as those commonly are, that are proud and conceited in justifying themselves. We must judge ourselves, and judge our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, not magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us: since our rule is, to be subject to one another. Be not many masters, James 3:1. We must not sit in the judgment-seat, to make our word a law to everybody. We must not judge our brother, that is, we must not speak evil of him, so it is explained, James 4:11. We must not despise him, nor set him at nought, Rom 14:10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them hypocrites, reprobates, and castaways; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

(From Dallas Willard in The Divine Conspiracy)

If we would really help those close to us and dear, and if we would learn to live together with our family and "neighbors" in the power of the kingdom, we must abandon the deeply rooted human practice of condemning and blaming. This is what Jesus means when he says, "judge not." He is telling us that we should, and that we can, become the kind of person who does not condemn or blame others. As we do so, the power of God's kingdom will be more freely available to bless and guide those around us into his ways. But, what is it, exactly, that we do when we condemn someone? When we condemn another we really communicate that he or she is, in some deep and just possibly irredeemable way, bad--bad as a whole, and to be rejected. In our eyes the condemned is among the discards of human life. He or she is not acceptable. We sentence that person to exclusion.(The Aramaic term "raca" was current in Jesus' day to express contempt for someone and to mark out him or her as contemptible. "Fool," in the biblical sense, is an expression of malice as well as contempt. It is the ancient equivalent of our "f----- jerk.")

*In summary, "judging" in the sinful sense occurs when a person makes a quick and harsh assessment of another human being. This assessment will often be rooted in pride, assume the other's motivations, and ultimately be done for the purpose of excluding them.

As followers of Christ, we may *evaluate* our own behavior and that of other believers, but we do so only to bring about restoration. We are strictly forbidden by our Lord to "write off" another human being for whom He shed His precious blood.

"Until I understand my own depravity, I will never truly develop gratitude for Christ's atonement, and I will always be surprised by the sin of others and often be overwhelmed by it." FMN

