

1. Introduction: In 2:1-16, we considered 12 principles concerning “God as Judge.”

God as Judge: (1.) Everyone sins and is subject to judgment. (2.) God’s judgment is accurate and true. (3.) God’s judgment is inescapable. He is omniscient. (4.) God delays judgment with forbearance and patience to provide time and impetus for repentance. (5.) There will be a day of final judgment. Forbearance and patience will end. Don’t store up wrath. Seek forgiveness now! You can seek God and find Him, but you can’t run away and evade Him. (6.) God’s judgment is always righteous. (7.) God’s judgment is accurate, true, and just. People will be judged according to their words and deeds. (8.) For those who seek God and His righteousness, there will be eternal life. For those who are self-seeking, follow unrighteousness, and ignore the truth, there will be wrath and fury. (9.) God shows no partiality in His judgment. (10.) God will judge obedience to the moral knowledge received not what is not known. (11.) Jesus will be the final judge. (12.) Not one thing can be hidden from the omniscient, righteous Judge.

2. People Judging People: The Bible has much to say about people judging people. What most people are likely to think of first is Jesus’ comment to “judge not.”

3. Matthew 7:1: Judge not, that you be not judged.

- This statement is easily and often misunderstood. Jesus is not commanding believers to refrain from judging. As seen in His further comments, “judge not” is the beginning of His comments on “how to judge.”

4. Matt 7:1-5: Judge not, that you be not judged. ² *For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

- What Jesus forbids is being judgmental, not forbid righteous moral discernment.
- He means, don’t present hypocritical, condemning statements as though true.
- Judging carried out the right way for right reasons is OK. Whether “to “judge or not to judge” is not the issue, when, why (for what cause), and how to judge.
- As seen in the comment about the “spec” and the “log,” the way to learn “how to judge” is to honestly “judge yourself.” You have all the details. Acknowledge temptations and sins in your own life for what they are. Having judged yourself, you are better prepared to accurately diagnose sin in another’s life.
- Judging others when you fail to judge yourself is hypocritical.
- The sin you commit tends to seem much worse when you see someone else commit the same sin. Judge others by the same “measure” you use to judge yourself.

5. Matthew 7:6: “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

- This also is a warning. In Jewish culture, dogs and swine were considered unclean animals. How does this command apply to believers?
- Holy things like baptism and the Lord's Supper should be only for those committed to Christ. People openly opposed to and seeking to destroy the church should not be permitted to participate in leading or governing the church.
- Consider a house-church in a country where Christianity is forbidden. Before bringing someone new into the church, judge carefully their character and why they are interested in coming into the fellowship.
- Their intent may be a straight-forward desire to know God, or it might be they want to learn who is in the church to condemn attendees to authorities for punishment.

6. **How Then Are We To Judge Others:** A good example is the advice God gave to Samuel when He sent him to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next King of Israel.

- One-by-one Jesse presented each of his sons to Samuel except the youngest who was keeping sheep. Samuel was impressed by all the sons he saw, especially the eldest son, Eliab. He was physically impressive, obviously "king material."

7.1 **Samuel 16:7:** ***"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."***

- God sees and judges the contents of the spiritual heart (character). He sees the good and the bad - motives, prejudices, present and future strengths, and weaknesses.
- Eliab was not the one God chose. Neither were the others presented to Samuel.
- Last of all, David, the youngest was brought in from tending sheep. Compared to his brothers, David was not very impressive, but God said, he is the one. We must be careful in judging to judge the right things, in this case, character not strength.

8. **A Related Statement in John:** During controversy, that occurred as He taught in the Temple, Jesus made the following statement.

9. **John 7:24^{AMP}:** ***Do not judge by appearance*** [that is, don't judge superficially and arrogantly based on appearance], ***but judge fairly and righteously.***

- God sees into the spiritual heart and knows and judges our every thought, all motives, all condemning thoughts. People can only see external words and actions.
- A speck of sin in another person looms large, but a log of our own sin seems tiny.
- As we have seen, like Samuel we cannot see into spiritual hearts and cannot know thoughts, motives, likes, and dislikes of others. God spoke directly to Samuel giving him the answer about which of Jesse's sons was to be king. What are we to do when we must judge someone?
- There are several places in Scripture that give us the answer. Here is one.

10. **Matthew 7:15-16:** ***Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*** ¹⁶ ***You will recognize them by their fruits.***

- This is another warning, this one about people who pretend to be what they are not.

- Verse 16 answers the “how” question about judging. We cannot see into a person’s heart, cannot know their motives, but we can examine “their fruits” as the basis for judgment.
 - What is a person’s fruit? A “person’s fruit” refers to their externally observable words and actions.
 - Judging a person’s “fruit,” that is, their words and actions is the only way believers are permitted to judge others. What is and has been said and done is the evidence we are permitted to us as a basis for judgment.
 - The only exception in judgment limited to examining words and actions is in judging ourselves. There, we know enough to judge “motives.” In judging our own behavior, we use all available information including motives or intent, thoughts, words, and actions.
 - Only God is capable of “final judgement.” That task is exclusively His.
 - People are neither capable, nor are they authorized, to give final judgment on anyone.
 - When we speak of people judging other people, it should mean determining whether or not their past and current observable behavior meets God’s standards.
 - Judging may be pejorative. For example, condemning or “making fun of people.” Examples: “Your friend looks like he lost a brutal fight.” “That dress was out of fashion 20 years ago.” “You talk like an idiot.” Such things are intended to condemn not inform.
 - Non-judicial, off-the-cuff, judging of people usually means expressing an opinion about anything and everything about a person without knowing whether there is a sound basis.
 - Jesus gave good advice that applies to judging people and especially to not spreading personal judgement about someone to others (gossip).
11. **Matthew 7:12**: *“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*
- People judge other people’s appearance, the music they like or dislike and other things.
 - It is common to judge other people’s friends and associates, the things they believe to be true or false, how they spend their time, their politics, their religious inclinations, etc.
 - People tend to have an opinion about most everything and willingly share it.
 - Since judging “whatever is encountered” is a natural response, the standard people use as a basis for judging is very important. The standard used to judge the behavior of a friend’s dog’s behavior should be different from that for judging the friend’s behavior.
12. **James 4:11-12**: *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?*
13. **Luke 6:37**: *Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.*
14. **John 7:24**^{NASB}: *Do not judge by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*

- Judging others becomes sinful behavior when we judge with pride, comparison, or to deliberately belittle another. Judgment like this can harden our hearts, produce arrogance, and can bring hurt to those whom we judge.
- To judge means also carries the idea of using discernment. The passage where Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1) goes on to show us how to have discernment.
- Discernment is the ability to choose between what is true and right and what is false and wrong. To discern something is to recognize its true worth or validity. In other words, the ability to discern is synonymous with the ability to think biblically.
- Discernment, as discussed in the Bible, is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, and to make wise and spiritually sound decisions.
- Discernment provides the key to knowing what, when, and how to make judgements.

15. Some Quotes About Wisdom and Discernment

- Samuel Johnson said, “*The supreme end of education is expert discernment in all things – the power to tell the good from the bad, the genuine from the counterfeit, and to prefer the good and the genuine to the bad and the counterfeit.*”
- “*The first point of wisdom is to discern that which is false; the second, to know that which is true.*” – Lactantius
- “*Seeing reality for what it is, is what we call discernment. The work of discernment is very hard.*” – Lewis B. Smedes
- “*God never gives us discernment in order that we may criticize, but that we may intercede.*” – Oswald Chambers
- “*To resist the dangers of the world, you have to recognize (discern) the distortions and seductions of the world.*” – Os Guinness
- “*True discernment means not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, and the permanent from the transient. And, yes, it means distinguishing between the good and the better, and even between the better and the best.*” – Sinclair Ferguson