

CONDEMN NOT, LEST...

Jesus Christ said many things that we must ponder to understand and apply to our lives. And His commands can only be done by regenerated believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Because by ourselves we can't obey Him. That's why we need a Savior.

In Luke 6:31 Jesus said, "*as you wish others would do to you, do so to them.*" In verse 36 He said "*be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*" Then He says "*judge not and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned, forgive and you will be forgiven.*"

CHRIST'S COMMANDS - We noted previously the word "judge" has several meanings, which become clear in the context of the passage. In Luke 6 the denotation of judge is in relation to condemn. If you're going to be judge and jury against someone as you contentiously criticize and correct them, don't be surprised if they respond in kind. They just might see hypocrisy.

"Judgment that is condemnatory flows out of a spirit of arrogance and self-righteousness that has nothing to do with the Spirit of Christ," notes theologian RC Sproul. The apostle Paul puts it like this in Romans 2:1-11, "*therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. Do you suppose that you will escape the judgment of God?*"

YOUR JUDGING - Sproul says judging others in a condemnatory way can be an exercise in self-condemnation, and is the ultimate hypocrisy. Romans 2 goes on, "*your hard and impenitent heart is storing up wrath for itself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*" Disciples must not rush to condemnatory judgment, because as the apostle says, "*God's mercy and kindness is meant to lead sinners to repentance.*" So don't give up on people.

God's time may yet come for them. Continue to witness and pray and do good to them. "*Do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart*" (1 Cor 4:5).

CONDEMNATION - Indulging in condemnatory judging becomes a problem for you. When you denounce someone else, or talk to others about someone behind their back, or get up your nerve to go straighten them out because you're right and they're wrong, that's a problem for you. Because you can never know what is in someone else's heart. Only God can know this.

No matter how sure you are of your right-ness, God says it's wrong for you to judge another with condemnation. James 5:9 warns, "*Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold, The Judge is standing at the door.*" For your own good, warns Scripture, do not judge others in condemnation, because you'll be judged by the way you judge.

DISCERNMENT - In contrast with the judging of condemnation is the judging of discernment. This involves judging qualitatively between bad or good, better or best, evil or righteousness, etc. Jesus actually expects disciples to do this kind of discerning judgment. In the next verses in Luke 6, He talks about the blind leading the blind, specks and logs, and good fruit versus bad.

"We are called to be alert to the power and reality of evil around us," notes Sproul, "and to discern between righteous and wicked, and actions contrary to the teaching of Christ. We are to recognize evil and call it what it is, evil - but we are to resist a negative judgmental spirit."

EQUANIMITY - A third kind of judgment, "equanimity," draws distinctions to apply to yourself first. This goes back to the Golden Rule, do to others what you want them to do to you. In other words, don't be a hypocrite. You can't condemn, you must discern, and you must be equal.

Romans 14:7-19 talks about the trap in matters of opinion and faith. "*Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, and each of us will give an account to God,*" Paul says, "*So then let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding.*" Don't make anyone stumble because of what you do.

MERCY - Recall Luke 6:36, "*be merciful.*" James 2:13 says, "*There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when He judges you.*" Many people in the past eighteen months have greatly mis-used these passages, as they attempt to coerce others to follow the dictates they choose to follow! ☐