



## Opening Prayer

### Introductory Activity

**Precursor:** Our world promotes the idea of tolerance. In fact, the only “sin” is to say that someone else is wrong! “Tolerance” is the concept that truth is determined by each person, not by the moral absolutes of God. The reason this lie is so appealing is that people want to have freedom to do anything they want. They don’t want you or their conscience getting in the way. In this lesson we will explore what God’s Word says about judging.

**Devil’s Advocate:** Read the following passages as a group and note what they say about “judging.” Imagine you have someone who takes the devil’s advocate side and says, “*You are just like the Pharisees – always judging! Who are you to tell me that my church isn’t right or that what I’m doing is wrong? Don’t you know that Jesus said, ‘Don’t judge!’*” How would you answer them using the passages below?

#### **Matthew 7:2, 15,16**

<sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ... <sup>15</sup> “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?”

#### **John 7:24**

<sup>24</sup> [Jesus said,] “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.”

#### **Romans 2:1**

<sup>1</sup> You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

#### **Galatians 6:1**

<sup>1</sup> Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

#### **Ephesians 4:15**

<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

#### **2 Timothy 2:25; 3:16**

<sup>25</sup> Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth ...

<sup>3:16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

## Judge for Yourself

### 1. God does judge.

Write down a key truth about God judging in each of the following passages.

*"He rules the world in righteousness and judges the peoples with equity." (Psalm 9:8)*

*"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day." (John 12:47,48)*

*"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)*

Think about it! What false ideas do people hold who think God does not judge?

### 2. God tells us to make judgements out of love.

*"My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins." (James 5:19,20)*

What is at stake if one does not "judge?"

<sup>15</sup> *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

<sup>18</sup> *"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

<sup>19</sup> *"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."*

<sup>21</sup> *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (Matthew 18:15-22)*

How does this portion of Scripture demonstrate that God's delight is not "catching" people in their sins, but forgiving them?

Jesus tells us to progressively warn someone of their sin. Why? If Jesus expects that the admonishment of the entire church might have the greatest impact, why not just start with that?

How did Jesus treat "pagans and tax collectors?" How does that shape the way you treat someone who has not repented of a sin?

3. But what about Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1, "*Do not judge, or you too will be judged*"?

Read Matthew 7:1-5. Take 30 seconds on your own to explain what Jesus is actually saying about judgment from these verses and write that down. Then share your thoughts with your table.

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

*<sup>3</sup> "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? <sup>4</sup> 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? <sup>5</sup> 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." (Matthew 7:1-5)*

## Group Discussion

4. Respond to the following people:
  - "That church kicked me out!"
  - "Haven't you ever heard 'Love your neighbor as yourself?'"
  - "This is my life! I don't poke my nose into your life and judge you!"
  - "Who are you to judge two men who love each other? We are all sinners anyway."
5. List some instances when "judging" is inappropriate.

6. Of the many things to keep in mind when witnessing to someone who says, "Don't judge," what in your opinion is the most important? Explain.
  
7. People who hold to this lie envision a utopia in the church and unity in diversity of "opinion" in society. How would (does?) this concept of "no judging" practically play out in the church and in our world?

## Closing Activity

**Making Metaphors and Synthesizing Similes.** Come up with an original metaphor or simile for the concept of failing to make judgments. "Failure to judge is (like) ..."

## Closing Prayer

Lord, when your glory I shall see  
And taste your kingdom's pleasure,  
Your blood my royal robe shall be,  
My joy beyond all measure!  
When I appear before your throne,  
Your righteousness shall be my crown;  
With these I need not hide me.  
And there, in garments richly wrought,  
As your own bride I shall be brought,  
To stand in joy beside you.

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All Bible passages are from [The New International Version](#). (2011). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.