

# **“Judge not...” Are we NEVER ever to judge?**

## **Matthew 7:1-2**



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*All scriptures are NKJV unless noted otherwise.*

**Key words:** judge, condemn, condemnation, judged, judges.

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**Summary:** *What did Jesus mean when He said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” in Matthew 7:1? Does the Bible really say – when ALL the scriptures are put together on the topic – that we are never ever to judge situations and persons? Can believers serve on a jury? Using the context plus more scriptures on judging, we’ll clearly see what Jesus meant. Aren’t we being called to BE judges? Some of you will find this sermon to be eye-opening compared to what you may have always previously thought.*

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**Of all the statements Jesus uttered, one of the most commonly known -- certainly in the top seven statements for most – is the one where He says, “Judge NOT, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1).**

NON-believers especially are good at using this verse. Anyone who states a disagreement with something they’re doing – like getting drunk, having an abortion, or whatever – will likely hear them say, “Your Bible says, ‘Judge NOT’ -- so why are you judging me”?

Is Jesus really saying in Matthew 7:1 that we are never ever to make any judgments? *That’s what we’re covering today and we’ll do our best to put many other scriptures about judging and judges to see the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Plus we’ll study the context too pretty soon.*

### **Matthew 7:1-2 NASB**

**“DO NOT JUDGE so that you will not be judged.**

**2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”**

**What is Jesus really saying? Is Jesus really saying we must never ever make any judgements about anyone or anything?**

When we really study into this, there are some keen revelations we learn.

The word in Greek for “judge” is “**krino**” – which can mean to *judge, discern, condemn, esteem, and more.*

For example in **John 3:17** the same word “**krino**” is translated as “**condemn**” –

“For God sent not his son into the world *to condemn (krino)* the world, but that the world through him may be saved.”

Jesus in Matthew 7:1 could have very well actually have meant, “Do not *condemn* others.” Same Greek word.

Surely we agree we are never to condemn, but never judge?

**JURY?** Some churches even teach, because of Matthew 7:1, that we should never **serve on a jury** because we’ll have to make judgments at the end of it – guilty or innocent. But is that a correct conclusion?

Because of *misunderstanding* Matthew 7:1, many believers and non-believers refuse to ever say anything judgmental.

**Is there a true standard of TRUTH and right and wrong?**

Others go so far as to talk about how we all *have our own* version of TRUTH. “Your truth, may not be my truth”, they say, and use this verse. They say there’s no one absolute standard of right or wrong, so we can’t judge, they say.

But Jesus tells us clearly there *is* one standard for right and wrong. Yeshua said, in prayer to Holy Father in heaven, “Your WORD is truth” (John 17:17). Earlier he had said that **HE, JESUS, is the “Way, the Truth and the Life” – John 14:6.**

**So what Jesus said and did is our standard for truth.** He is the living Word of God. God’s word in his scriptures guide us in making right judgments.

**The Bible is all about God’s standards in fact, of right and wrong, sin and righteousness, good and evil – but it’s also about love, mercy, grace, forgiveness.** Put those concepts together and it starts to point us to the balance we must have on this subject of judging.

*So don't buy into this nonsense that there's no standard for right or wrong. God gives us CLEAR right and wrong, and therefore clear judgments can and should be made when necessary, as I'll continue to clearly show, but with love and mercy coming into the picture as well.*

### **TOOLS to properly explain God's Word**

**Several rules** we should all remember when explaining GOD'S word are these:

**\*\* Always check the context of what's being said.** It has to make sense in context. Always check several verses before and after the verse in question.

**\*\* Learn what other scriptures say about the same subject.** We must teach "the whole counsel" of God, as Paul terms it in **Acts 20:27**. Never decide doctrine on just one verse, but look at other verses on Judging or judgment, for example, and you'll get a better understanding. Scripture won't contradict other scriptures.

**\*\* For those of you who can, check the original Greek or Hebrew word and how it's used in scripture.** Nowadays everyone can do this even with Google search or ChatGPT.

It would also be advisable to compare a verse we're discussing with other translations of that verse. Contemporary English Version says about Matthew 7:1, for example: "Don't condemn others and God won't condemn you."

So we'll look at context in a minute. But first I want to review what other scriptures have to say about judging, shedding light on what Jesus also said.

### **OTHER SCRIPTURES about JUDGING.**

Let me ask: How could Yeshua/Jesus be saying we are to never ever be judging – when a **WHOLE BOOK of the Bible is titled "Judges"** – men and women appointed by God himself to JUDGE Israel before they had a king. **Judges 2:18** says GOD appointed these judges; men like Gideon, Samson, Samuel and women like Deborah. So clearly, God cannot be against judging.

And if we are to never judge, why would Jesus say this next verse?

#### **Luke 22:28-30**

"But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. 29 And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, **and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"

That's pretty clear. Jesus will appoint the twelve apostles to each judge a tribe of Israel in the Kingdom of God. Obviously, right judgment must be OK.

The apostles and ministers were often called upon to make judgments. Read **Acts 15** some time on your own. The top leaders from all around came to Jerusalem to make a judgment on how to handle the Gentiles – non-Jews – who were coming into the church. Did they need to be circumcised? Did they have to follow all the law of Moses exactly? See Acts 15:5-6 where the topic of discussion is disclosed.

After hearing everyone's ideas including those from Peter and Paul, we find James, the overseer of the Jerusalem church saying, "therefore I judge that..." **Acts 15:19**. Or as the NIV has it: "**It is my judgment**, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

So that's pretty clear. James made a judgment. Jesus appointed the Twelve to JUDGE. So there are numerous examples of judgments being made by saints.

Apostle Paul actually says WE'RE being called as saints to someday judge the world and even judge ANGELS. ***We're being called to be judges!***

**1 Corinthians 6:1-3**

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

**2 Do you not know that the saints will JUDGE (Greek "krino") the world? And if the world will be judged by YOU, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?**

**3 Do you not know that we shall JUDGE angels?** How much more, things that pertain to this life?"

And in Chapter 5, the previous chapter, Paul tells the Corinthians that he, Paul, has already judged a situation they needed to deal with. They needed to throw out a member who was openly practicing horrendous sexual sin.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-5**

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

**3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already JUDGED (Greek: KRINO) (as though I were present) him who**

**has so done this deed.** 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
5 **deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,** *that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”*

So Paul made a judgment and had that man thrown out of the church!

In **2 Corinthians 2:3-11, Paul makes another judgment:** this same man had repented and Paul told them to bring him back in to fellowship! Read it for yourself. Paul tells the church to forgive and comfort him and show him their love. *So Paul clearly was willing to judge and share his judgments!*

*Scripture, by these examples, is also teaching us something else: **Some judgments we make require us stating that a terrible sin has occurred, and we must hate the sin** --- but we can still forgive and love the sinner, as Paul does here to the sinful man who repented in Corinth.*

*I was talking to our webmaster Scott about this topic and that's something he pointed out among other things and I thought it was a great point. Judge, even condemn, the sin – but not the person whom God can still salvage.*

**So it's clear Yeshua could not possibly be saying we are to never judge or make judgments – but do it carefully, lovingly.**

### **CONTEXT is always key in Bible study**

Now let's look at context some more. We'll see Yeshua is actually going to say we *can* judge someone – but need to take certain steps first. This is shocking to some people, but it's all there in context. Here's the start of the passage:

#### **Matthew 7:1-2 NASB**

**“DO NOT JUDGE so that you will not be judged.**

**2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”**

If you and I are going to say judgmental things, it would be best for us to be kind so that kindness will be part of God's judgment on ourselves. Now in verses 3-5, Yeshua clearly explains what must FIRST happen when we judge:

#### **Matthew 7:3-5**

**“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother,**

'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?

<sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! **First remove the plank** from your own eye, and **THEN** you will **see clearly to remove** the speck from your brother's eye."

***So in context Jesus is actually telling us to proceed carefully and cautiously before making a conclusion about someone else's problem.*** But he's not at all saying we can't ever say or do something we see is a problem. In fact we are told in many verses that when there is a problem in the church that we *are* to do something about it!

**Galatians 6:1 NIV**

"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".

Apply those principles to anyone you have to correct. I preach to myself here too. As a parent – if you have to correct your child – do it firmly but gently, privately when possible. Never correct your spouse in front of others.

**James 5:19-20**

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that **he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death** and cover a multitude of sins."

In this last verse, it takes careful and righteous judgment to determine that someone has wandered from the truth. Here a person who successfully turns him back has saved his life, Wow. How many of us have ever done that?

There are other scriptures that caution us from making judgments. So yes, be careful, but yes, we CAN make judgments, but just do so with grace, humility and gentleness. Yes, I'm still learning that too.

Also, regarding CONTEXT: just a few verses after Yeshua says, "Judge not", He says to honor and respect God's word and don't be throwing holy teaching to people who don't appreciate it. He calls them dogs and pigs spiritually! So that requires us making a judgment of what kind of people we're talking to about God's wonderful pearls of wisdom and spirituality.

**Matthew 7:6**

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."

Then later in **Matthew 7:15-20**, Yeshua tells us something else that requires us making a judgment: He says to beware of false teachers and false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. Again, that requires us making a judgment. They can look like a harmless brother in the church. He says we'll know if they are a sheep or a wolf by the fruit of their lives. See verses 17-20.

Deciding if we are seeing good fruit or bad fruit is making a judgement!

So it should be clear by now that in Matthew 7:1 there is no way Yeshua/Jesus is telling us never make judgments about people.

**What we have so far:**

**\*\* GOD sets the standard. HE is truth.** His word teaches us how to make righteous judgment, as I'll even further explore shortly.

**\*\* there ARE times we must make judgments**, as we train to someday judge even angels and *the whole world* (1 Cor. 6:1-4). BUT WE have to learn to make **RIGHTEOUS** judgments.

**\*\* Our decisions/judgments should be done in love and kindness**, realizing we also make the same mistakes sometimes as Romans 2:1-4 and Matt 7:2-5 show us.

In the next two scriptures Jesus tells us to judge righteously – then shows us how to do that. John 7:24 and John 5:30 are great scriptures about judging.

**RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT**

**John 7:23-24**

“If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?”

**24 Do not judge according to appearance, but JUDGE with righteous judgment.”**

So here Jesus clearly is saying, ‘DO judge, -- but *don't judge by first impressions! Don't be HASTY to jump to any conclusions!* Even when something may seem ‘obvious’ – that's judging according to appearances. When we jump to quick conclusions, be on guard. We're not on the right path.

**John 7:24b again from Jesus:** “Judge with righteous judgment”. So the same Jesus/Yeshua who said, “Judge not” – here says “DO judge – but make it righteous judgment.”

**Next Yeshua tells us HOW to make righteous judgments.**

**John 5:30**

**“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and MY JUDGMENT is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”**

We make righteous judgments when we base our conclusion on God’s will, or God’s Word. We should ask ourselves, “how would God judge this? What would our Father or His word say about this? What examples do we have in the Bible to go by?” Then we’ll be on the way to more righteous judgment.

Moses, in speaking to his father in law, described his process of judging by basing his decisions on God’s laws and his word.

**Exodus 18:15-16**

And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a difficulty, they come to me, **and I judge** between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

**It also comes down to what’s in our heart.** If we’re starting from a heart that sees the situation and the people involved as contemptible, we’re starting on a very wrong path and we’ll make bad judgments. Even in the case of the man Paul said to throw out of the church, note that Paul’s intention was “that his spirit may be SAVED in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). Paul still wanted him to be saved, and to be in God’s kingdom! Wow.

In some other verses where it seems we’re being told not to ever judge anyone at all, if you read them carefully you’ll see that it’s when all we can see is the evil, and therefore have contempt for them, that we’re walking down the wrong path. **I’m referring to James 4:11-12 and Romans 14:10-13.**

**So here’s what we’ve seen so far:**

- we must be slow to making a judgment.
- check ourselves first to be sure we don’t have the same or worse problems, or a “plant/lumber in our eyes” as we go to help someone else
- then analyze what God’s will would be about this case,
- then be kind and gentle in what we say and how we do it.
- Our heart must be a heart of love, even when sin is involved. Hate the sin, love the person. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. IN Galatians 2:20 Paul remarks that Christ died for him because Christ loved Paul – and all of us. We must have the same attitude. We all probably have to work a bit on that last part. I do. Remember He died for us all while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).
- Righteous judgements include realizing there may be big consequences.



So that's how we are to make judgments.

### **WHAT ABOUT JURY DUTY?**

**Now what about Jury duty?** Many of us were taught it is wrong to ever serve righteous judgment on a jury because of Matthew 7:1. But surely you see that Jesus' words were terribly misunderstood. Are you seeing it better now? Making righteous judgments is fine to do.

Wouldn't it be better for us all if more righteous people were the ones making judgments in court, if based on fact and righteousness? Just a thought. If I was in court on an alleged misdeed, I would LIKE my believing brothers and sisters to be on juries and judge righteously. And it's a good learning experience. Someday we'll be judging the world, remember.

Remember in these last days, there are going to be many situations where we'll be required to make a judgement, a decision. Like what to do about the Beast and False Prophet trying to make you take the Mark of the Beast. You'll have to make judgments – and for your eternal life's sake, make a righteous one!

If you have been the kind of person who just decided to never make decisions and judgments, beware. That's not right either.

Here are a couple more pointers for us from God's word:

- Don't be quick to make a conclusion. Ponder it. Study it, pray about it.

#### **Proverbs 29:20**

**"Do you see a man hasty in his words?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him."**

- **Don't make judgments when you're angry or upset.**

#### **James 1:19-20**

**"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."**

There's a lot more that can be said about this topic, but I trust you've clearly seen that in fact we're being called to be judges. I believe in Matthew 7:1, the Greek word "krino" translated "judge" – could just as easily have been translated "don't condemn". It's the Greek word. And Jesus said we're supposed to judge righteous judgment. I hope this has helped you understand this topic better.

I'll leave it at that and I hope that has helped clear any misunderstanding about Matthew 7:1. God bless you and all of us as we learn to be good judges full of God's patience, love, mercy – and yes, even justice. I'm trying to learn more of this too.

Closing prayer.