

Coach House Church BEACONS

JUDGING..?

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Our culture often sees Christians as "judgey". The world thinks that we think we have all the answers and have it all together and we are judging them for how they act and what they think or say. They think that the bible is a rule book that we are meant to follow and nothing else. They think that we secretly fail all the time but put on a front of being perfect. According to a study done in the US in 2007, nearly 90% of people aged 16-29 said that they thought Christians were judgemental.

Part of this comes from how the church has spoken out about certain issues, such as abortion or homosexuality. It has given its views on how the country should rule on these issues and has generally been against the national opinion and the church's views haven't always been said in the most helpful way.

Some of it is also from the way evangelism has been attempted. I saw a tract today that said, "Are you going to hell?" in big letters on the front. Questions like that make people feel as if they're being judged to be definitely going to hell without any chance to change without becoming judgemental themselves about who gets to go to heaven.

If we are all honest with ourselves, we are all judgemental in one way or another. This is one reason that reality TV has become so popular in recent times. Maybe it's the way someone dresses, or what they say or how much they drink. We take an action on the outside and make an assumption about what they are like on the inside. Or we see a sin that they commit and judge them on it.

In Matthew 7:1-5 Jesus says this: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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? 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? 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.

Jesus is saying that we need to be careful to measure up by the standard we judge with. The picture He uses is funny and it's meant to be. I mean imagine someone with a whole plank of wood in their eye. But the point is still clear. We need to look at our own lives and deal with our own sin before we talk to others about their sin. I can't talk to you about your stealing while also shoplifting every Saturday without repentance, for example. This doesn't mean that we have to be perfect to help others with their sin or tell them about it, but let's not do this in the wrong way.

We all do things wrong. None of us completely see the right path and follow it exactly. I went through a period where God taught me about this when I would see someone do something and judge it, and then, while that incident was still in my memory, I would do the exact same thing. I would always have a justification for it, but that meant that I understood a bit more of why the person did it. My experience of this ranged from things like cutting someone up, or being late to meet someone, or boasting about something. It was really interesting to see why I shouldn't judge others because at some point I could be found doing the exact same thing. It got to the point where I would see something or hear of something and make an immediate judgement and seconds later would realise I would do the same thing at some point in the near future. We can't see someone's internal intentions or their heart from the outside.

There are things that are right and wrong, and we should be under no illusion about that. What the bible says is true and we need to stick to that regardless of what the culture tells us. Culture changes, but our opinions shouldn't. If someone asks, we are welcome to tell them about what we think gently, but let's not force our standards on someone else. We shouldn't expect them to even try to live up to God's standards. If they did try, they wouldn't be able to, just like we aren't. Without the Holy Spirit, we would fall at every turn, so let's not try to force others to live up to a standard they don't have the resources to meet. So, as a church we shouldn't mandate the laws of this country. Biblical law shouldn't necessarily be the law of the land.

The phrase has been used "Love the sinner and hate the sin". This is what we need to do with those around us. We shouldn't hate those that do wrong. In fact, if anyone gets the sense that we hate them, they will be shut off from all we have to say and driven further away from God. But they are human beings and deeply loved by God. We need to speak to them in a loving way and accept them into our lives as they are, rather than trying to preach. We should be forgiving of all they do wrong towards us.

However, we shouldn't accept what they do as right. We need to follow the bible and accept what it says is right and wrong. This is really hard in the culture we live in today. Our culture says that to love a person you need to endorse all their actions and it's hate to say that you disagree with what they do. This is tough because we still need to stand up for what is right, but let's do it in a way that is clearly seen as love. Let's be gentle.

We need to do this with Christians as well as non-Christians. If there is something you believe and you disagree with another believer, talk to them about it but show respect. Show that, even though you differ in opinion, you can still love one another.

So we need to admit that we do wrong and love those around us. We need to clearly state what is right and wrong, but not hit people over the head with it violently. Instead we should introduce them to Jesus gently. We should let the Holy Spirit do His work and help us and others act in the way they should, rather than expecting everyone to be the finished article. Let's not judge people on what we have seen them doing, but let's show how we should live and show how God loves.



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