

Judging One Another

By Dr. David DeWitt

Here are some reasons why believers should judge one another:

(1) One of the purposes of judging one another is to help make us less naive.

Solomon stated the purpose of the book of Proverbs like this: *To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion* (Proverbs 1:3-4). Later he wrote, *Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all things* (28:5). Jesus said, *...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees* (Matthew 16:6, also verse 12).

The apostles told the church to be sensitive to false prophets (Acts 13:6, 2 Peter 2:1), false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), false brethren (2 Corinthians 11:26, Galatians 2:4), false wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3). If we refuse to discern truth, wisdom, and righteous behavior under the flag of non-judgment or tolerance, we mortgage the future of our children and disciples. Discernment-type judgment is essential for spiritual growth and maturity.

(2) One of the purposes of judging one another is to help keep one another from the judgment of God.

James wrote, *my brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins* (5:19-20). Paul told the Galatians, *...if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...* (6:1).

Judging one another is one way in which we bear one another's burden (v. 2) and love one another (1 John 4:17-21).

(3) Judging one another helps keep the leaven out of the whole lump.

An unrepentant brother, left alone in his sin, can be corrupting to other believers. Paul said, *do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?* (1 Corinthians 5:6b).

(4) Judging one another helps keep believers out of civil courts.

Paul said, *does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? (1 Corinthians 6:1-3). ...I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren* (v. 5)?

His advice is to be wronged rather than to go to court (v. 7). This would involve marriage/divorce, child custody, estate settlement, property disputes, etc. Christian judgment is to replace the judgment of civil courts.

APPLICATION

Doesn't Jesus say not to judge one another—period!? Not if your definition of judgment includes discernment. We should not judge one another in the sense of (1) motives, (2) bringing about an eye-for-an-eye, or (3) measuring others by our extra-biblical standards.