

From Self-Protection to Self-Examination

Series: Encountering Jesus (through the Gospel of Luke)

Brad Bailey - March 17, 2019

Luke 6:37-42

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

³⁹ He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

⁴¹ "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? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

We can recognize that Jesus is not renouncing the gift of discernment and good judgment, when we consider... ..

1. His _____ reflects the common use of exaggeration ...with an impossible "absolute" meaning.

2. His _____ (of making appropriate judgments)

3. His further _____ about judging others (... what he goes on to say)

Jesus is calling us from _____.

How do we become safe people...who can lead the way to mercy?

1. Decide who we will _____.
Isaiah 53:6

2. Develop freedom to focus on allowing God to search _____ ... to change _____
_____ inward disposition.

Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

3. Live as a light to others of the freedom to _____
of fear... and _____.

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Intro: I want to begin helping us hear God this morning by asking us to each reflect on this question:

Are you a safe person?

Are you a safe person for other sinners to come out of hiding and be open with?

From my experience we tend to **swing between** what we might call **being “judgmental”** ...and being **“avoidant”** ... between **condemning and condoning**. Often, we live as **spiritual schizophrenics...** living with a **double message that makes us crazy**. [1]

But in that midst...there are **those who are sober and safe...** with whom there is **no sense of condemning...nor condoning...** they are **fellow sinners...**in whom there is **no ultimate judgment...**but in whom **there is care** to help me confront what I may need to confront. They are those who are truly safe.

Today...Jesus calls us to follow him in making a way for others to come out and find mercy.

We are continuing our journey of **Encountering Jesus** through the Gospel of Luke. Last week... **Love Your enemies...** be merciful as God is merciful.

Luke 6:37-39 (NIV)

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

³⁹ He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

Luke 6:40-42

⁴⁰ A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ "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? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Our **text begins** with what is **arguably the most popular verse** in the Bible today...most quoted verse in the Bible used **on social media today...**

"Do not judge"

“Hey... don’t judge me.”... and may even reference Jesus.

Usually expressed when people feel that someone is either making some judgment upon a particular issue or group...or upon judging them personally.

At which point...one feels the need to defend by saying...

"You shouldn't judge people." or "You're being judgmental." or "Who are you to judge?"

In many respects the idea that we shouldn't judge anything is **sort of a mantra for our times. We live in a time of such intense division that naturally there is a lot of talk of the need for tolerance...and many assume that comes when we stop making judgments.**

But it’s **important that we understand that Jesus isn’t speaking about every form of judgment.**

Jesus isn’t placing people in some **impossible pursuit of living without basic human judgment.**

So let me note **three quick reasons why it should be obvious that Jesus wasn't intending to renounce good judgment:** the nature of his **expression**, his **example**, and his **explanation**.

We can recognize that Jesus is not renouncing the gift of discernment and good judgment, when we consider... ..

the nature of his **expression**, his **example**, and his **explanation**.

1. His expression reflects the common use of exaggeration ...with an impossible "absolute" meaning.

Jesus uses the common form of hyperbole which uses **striking statements** and **exaggerated contrasts** in a **figurative fashion**...to bring light to what is wrong.

In the **same section of teaching**...known as the Sermon on the Mount....he **says that** anyone who **lusts is guilty of adultery...and should gouge their eye out.**

> In a similar way, he is saying that we are not to judge people in a certain way.

And it should seem clear that he can’t mean that there is no healthy judgment of matters.

The general nature of distinguishing good from bad is not only acceptable...it's **an essential part of life. We make judgments every day on what is best** and what is **good** and what is **right.**

This is why it’s important to grasp the true meaning of tolerance.

Tolerance is how you tolerate what you do not agree with...how you maintain a basic regard for another person when you have differences.

I’m afraid that **the true virtue of tolerance is construed and co-opted today when it is used to suggest that one shouldn’t make any judgments...or has to agree with others in order to accept them.**

The truth is that everyone believes that somethings are right, and some are not... in other words...we all have judgments. And now we fear being judged for having judgments.

Fred Baumann, a political science professor at Kenyon College wrote of how his campus like many is defined by an amorphous entity he calls "Camp Nonjudgmental." [2]

"They make the mistake of saying that not making judgments is the same thing as being tolerant. It's not. If you want tolerance, you have to think something is right. And that requires making judgments." - Fred Baumann, political science professor, Kenyon College, Ohio

2. His example (of making appropriate judgments)

Jesus himself made judgments upon people's behavior... as did so many deemed faithful to God.

In fact, Jesus **calls us** to consider the fruit **of anyone who claims to speak for God**. He says that we need to evaluate what they say with how they live – rejecting those who bear bad fruit and listening to those who produce good fruit.

> He not only made judgments upon behavior...he taught his followers sound ways to make such judgments. [3]

3. His further explanation about judging others (... what he goes on to say)

We can tend to read those first three words...."Do not judge..." and stop right there.

We may think everything that follows is just filler. But trying to understand what Jesus is saying by only looking at those words is like seeing only one small corner of a painting and thinking we know the whole picture.

All of what follows this statement...is not just filler...it's what explains it.

Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

His very next words begin to **speak to the type of judgment he is renouncing...that of condemning** someone. **To condemn another** is to make a **final judgment**...which is something no one is in a position to do.

No one who is truly caring about another will go from judging a particular matter to condemning their future.

No one who truly understands the mercy by which they are forgiven...will condemn another.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Nobody would ever forgive anyone for wrongs he had done; we only forgive people for what we blame them, and we blame them only after we have judged them."

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

What is he saying? He is saying... **Be generous** in the way you relate to others... **and you will discover how gracious and generous God is with you.**

But also **warning** that the **tendency to not be gracious will itself prove costly.**

We have a tendency to not judge fairly...with equal measure.

This is the **self-righteousness** which he is calling out. Self-righteous people **cannot see their own position.** And while those who are self-righteous **may think they are leading the way to goodness...in truth...it only leads others to destruction.**

He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Unless you seek true righteousness...you are **just leading people into a pit.**

Finally...he **brings this problem of unequal assessment home...**

"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? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Quite an amusing way to call us out.

It should be very **clear by this point**, that **Jesus is engaging HOW** we judge...not simply dismissing that there could be a healthy ability to speak.

In fact ...last line:

"...first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Did you catch that... **there can be a way in which we can help** one another... to see clearly... but it **begins with focusing on ourselves.**

We have to begin by understanding that we are part of a long line of hidiers and deflectors.

Biblical view is that we are hidingand hurling...

In the very first Book of the Scriptures... Genesis...the Book of Beginnings...we are given a picture of how humanity sought to become like God...and in doing so...found themselves naked...uncovered... and in shame. And it describes Adam and Eve as trying to hide from God. When the truth and goodness of God is before them they are hiding in the bushes...sowing coverings... and quickly blaming ...trying to deflect responsibility.

And it is **this disposition of hiding and putting the focus on others** that Jesus is calling people out of.

It is the very means to self-righteousness... that the religious leaders were forming in the people... for which one is tragically unable to receive the very mercy of God.

This is what is captured so profoundly in the incident we find in the Gospel of John...in which a woman is caught in adultery... and brought before Jesus to trap him. (John 8:1-11)

The religious leaders lead the people into raising their stones... preparing to stone this woman. It is a **picture of the separation and projection** of sin upon others. In projecting their stones...they are trying to project their own shame.

Jesus understood they were like the interrogators who use the huge lights shining upon the subject of their scrutiny.... while standing **behind the brightness where they can't be seen.**

This kind of judgment isn't about **helping...**it's about **hiding.**

Most of our judging of others **bypasses ourselves.** It directs our moral focus upon others in such a way that we feel safely separated...and superior.

Sometimes I think we even speak louder... in order to feel better... to convince ourselves ...or even God...that we are on the right side of a moral issue.

Jesus turns the light around.

Proper judgment must flow not from the false separation of one behind the interrogator's light... but from the reality and humility of standing under the common light of God.

When I watch nearly any of today's cable news commentary... it is the gathering of two or three or four who are brought in to share their common disgust towards what someone else has done.

Somebody has made a comment that appears **racist...or hateful ...or untrue....and they each get a turn of throwing their disdain at that person...** not only to separate themselves from the evil...but to make everyone who stands in their camp feel good about themselves.

In many respects we are playing the same scene with the women brought before Jesus out day in and day out.

Jesus would say to a cable show or social media posting... "Let those who are without sin cast that first stone." Can you hear the silence.

It is true for those of either political position...conservative and liberal.

I know that **each have valuable issues being raised. But we have to face the fact that adultery was and is a significant issue as well. The problem is that We all have some issue that we consider the defining issue of good and evil... and it creates an enemy we can hate...and a sinner we can condemn.**

For some it may be the tragedy of abortion... that can reduce the world to the baby killers and baby savers. ...of the evil of those greedy and the righteous who point them out. The evil racists and those who point them out.

Last week...Joel referred to the recent article this month in the NY Times by Arthur Brooks...a scholar of public policy.

He speaks of the problem of contempt...and focuses on what social scientists have referred to “motive attribution asymmetry” — where each side thinks it is driven by benevolence, while the other is evil and motivated by hatred ...where the **assumption that your ideology is based in love, while your opponent’s is based in hate.**

Cable news and social media can serves as a “contempt machine”... and the easy fix to feel righteous about ourselves.

“This “outrage industrial complex” works by catering to just one ideological side, creating a species of addiction by feeding our desire to believe that we are completely right and that the other side is made up of knaves and fools. It strokes our own biases while affirming our worst assumptions about those who disagree with us.” [4]

Self-righteousness knows no political boundaries. It will seek to work in us all.

Here is the good news.

When he said to the crowd ... about to condemn this woman... “Let those who are without sin cast that first stone.”

How many were left? None. Everyone dropped their stones.

We are all hypocrites...recovering hypocrites at best...but potentially recovering hypocrites.

What did he call them to? To look at themselves. They had an opportunity to make a transition... from self-protection to self-examination.

Jesus is calling us from self-protection to self-examination.

Jesus is calling lives to come out of hiding....and to lead the way out of hiding...and into the work of mercy.

That is the true and transforming nature of a new people...a people of the Gospel.

How do we become safe people...who can lead the way to mercy?

1. Decide who you will follow. Will you follow those who offer self-righteous separation and superiority...or the way of Jesus who offers mercy for sinners?

We may have to confront our relationship to our favorite cable news...or talk radio...or social media... and realize that it is serving a false superiority.
It is not merely a source of information...but also a source of formation.

If we are going to overcome an addiction...we have to decide we want to.
It may **begin with some detox**... we may need to get sober...by breaking away from the drug.
That might mean **taking a Lenten fast from cable news**. Or it may mean listening to all sides...and most importantly...**listening with humility**.
It means understanding we that our first responsibility is not defining who is good and evil... but of exploring what God desires to change in us.

Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Entering the community of sobriety begins when I can say:

“Hi. My name is Brad and I am a sinner...and can be a self-righteous hypocrite.”

2. Develop freedom to focus on allowing God to search your own heart... to change your own inward disposition.

It goes **beyond** just being **generic sinners**... beyond saying, “**Well of course I’m not perfect.**”
Because often when we only speak in those terms...they are followed by something to the effect of “**but at least I am not like those others.**”

(It’s good that we may not be acting as harmfully as others... but if we look honestly within...we will find **we are never categorically different.**)

This can be a big shift in itself for many of us. Many of us focus more on the sins of others than ourselves. It’s we who will be left in conflict.

We can join in the **great prayer of David**,

Psalms 139:23-24 (NLT)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

3. Live as a light to others of the freedom to come out of fear... and grow by grace.

This principle doesn’t mean that we have to first be perfect to address what might be harmful to others; it means we have to first face our own selves in the same light.

The way we judge is often as **a way that separates us**...not one who is with us and caring as a common.

Many feel... that not judging anyone or anything is an act of humility...because they know they aren't perfect...but that's not Jesus' point.

Jesus says: take a look at yourself first. Deal with how you struggle in this area.

Closing:

Much of our current western world tends to look at those associated with Christ as judgmental... perhaps not an entirely fair assessment...but there is some truth that Christian culture has increasingly been given to moral separation and superiority... often allowing the work of self-righteousness.

But Jesus is calling us back to become those who have found humility and freedom to come out of hiding... face their own sin...because they have come before the face of grace.

I see a day when people will say that what strikes them most about those who follow Christ...is not how judgmental they are...but how honest they are. When others raise up their take on who is good and who is evil... those known to follow Jesus will bring a very different process...one that leads the way in coming out of hiding...and growing in grace.

Resources: Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III - "Judge Not?"; Tanner Turley - [The Counter--Culture of the Kingdom of Christ: Part 2](#)

Notes:

1. In a previous message I expanded on this tension further, as below:

When issues of sin arises, there is a common feeling of tension between "legalism" and "license". I think we can all feel a bit like spiritual schizophrenics. At times a part of us feels a fearful sense of being legalistic and at other times of compromising our convictions. I believe God wants to speak into our hearts today.

One of the common tensions faced is that of concern for falling into either a spirit of legalism or a spirit of license. The following definitions can help us engage these tensions that we must penetrate:

Religious spirit of Legalism – In it's broader use, 'legalism' refers to the tendency to try to control sin through an overly prescribed approach to moral behavior or an inappropriate sense of controlling such behaviors in others.

Rebellious spirit of License – In it's spiritual use, license refers to the tendency to control permission for inappropriate or destructive desires often based upon a limited perspective of pleasure (that ignores one's ultimate good) and freedom (that ignores responsibility.)

Both "legalism" and "license" reflect our desire to control sin; one to deny permission and one to give permission. The truth is that we are always free to sin. Both the spirit of legalism and the spirit of license are rooted in fear and a false sense of control.

The Apostle Paul knew both of these all too well. He was the elite of Jewish religious lawmakers and law keepers...knew the emptiness of legalism... and how it was unable to change lives. But he also sees the utter destruction of Roman paganism and the pursuit of all pleasure... and knows how deceptive and destructive that which glorifies sin can be. The Roman culture of his day was one in which the poor and weak were trampled down ... violence and sexual desires were ruling and ruining human life. So Paul knew the limits of the law and of license. Neither the religious spirit nor the rebellious spirit will ever lead us to true freedom.

True freedom comes through the transition from fear to love as the driving and defining force of our souls.

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:1--2) God says, go help those on the wayward path by seeking to restore them, but do so with a spirit of gentleness and self--examination, knowing that you are not above the very same sin.

Remember Jesus is building on what he just said in verse 36. “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful.”

2. L.A. Times, January 2, 2002. If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.

3. John 7:24 (NIV)

"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

In another translation...

John 7:24 (NLT)

Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.”

4. “Our Culture of Contempt” By Arthur C. Brooks; The New York Times Opinion, March 2, 2019

One may appreciate this further part of the article: “What we need is not to disagree less, but to disagree better. And that starts when you turn away the rhetorical dope peddlers — the powerful people on your own side who are profiting from the culture of contempt. As satisfying as it can feel to hear that your foes are irredeemable, stupid and deviant, remember: When you find yourself hating something, someone is making money or winning elections or getting more famous and powerful. Unless a leader is actually teaching you something you didn’t know or expanding your worldview and moral outlook, you are being used.

Next, each of us can make a commitment never to treat others with contempt, even if we believe they deserve it. This might sound like a call for magnanimity, but it is just as much an appeal to self-interest. Contempt makes persuasion impossible — no one has ever been hated into

agreement, after all — so its expression is either petty self-indulgence or cheap virtue signaling, neither of which wins converts.

What if you have been guilty of saying contemptuous things about or to others? Perhaps you have hurt someone with your harsh words, mockery or dismissiveness. I have, and I'm not proud of it. Start the road to recovery from this harmful addiction, and make amends wherever possible. It will set you free.”

5. John Hamby notes, “A biblical example of this is found in the life of King David, after his adultery with Bathsheba. The old prophet Nathan visited the king and told him a story about a rich man who took a poor man’s sheep and slaughtered it to feed his guest. The unsuspecting king was horrified and said, “The man who has done this thing deserves to die. He must pay for the lamb four times over, because he did this thing and had no pity” (2 Samuel 12:5-7). Nathan then said to David, “You are the man.” David though blind to the sin in his own life readily saw and condemned sin in someone else. Some how judgmental people seek to lessen their own guilt by judging the sins of others.”

6. One very critical truth that can serve the way that Christians are experienced this: Proper judgment is that which seeks to serve what another has professed to desire.

Perhaps the biggest tension we feel in regards to the judging of other people...is that it seems like one person simply imposing their criteria or values on another person. This is what is so often the issue in our culture wars.

Here's an important truth: We shouldn't be judging those who don't claim to be committed to what we believe. We shouldn't judge those who haven't committed themselves to Christ by the teachings of Christ.

Paul writes...1 Corinthians 5:12-13

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.

Judging non-Christians by Christian standards puts the cart before the horse.

It creates the whole power struggle with religion that so many resent. Without relationship...it's just rules...religious rules. [6] [7]

> To the degree that someone has sincerely expressed a desire for something... sharing a concerning perspective or challenge is actually supporting them.

Does this mean we have nothing appropriate to say to anyone unless they share the same level of commitment to God?

I believe there is still room to challenge another persons choice...IF we sincerely can connect to common desire.

- To a neighbor who is neglecting his family - "If you continue in that direction...you will likely lose relationship with your kids...something I know you value."

- To a child who is venturing into drinking and drugs - "I want to help you face life...and not lose control of the choices you make."

Larry Osborne states, "That doesn't mean that we can't call their sin, sin. It just means we're supposed to leave their judgment to him and focus on ourselves and the family of God when it comes to enforcing his standards. We can learn much from the early Christians. They lived in a culture and under a government system riddled with what the Bible calls sin. Marriage was held in low esteem; sexual excess was tacitly approved; homosexuality was celebrated. Infanticide was an accepted form of family planning. The Coliseum was regularly filled with bloodthirsty crowds cheering the death of the vanquished. As for Christians, there were no charitable deductions, property tax exemptions, freedom of speech protections— just the ominous threat of a coming day when Christianity would be outlawed, believers jailed, and leaders martyred. Yet the New Testament is strangely silent when it comes to harsh judgments and condemnations of Roman government, its leaders, or its soldiers. While it does speak of societal decadence in general, it usually does so in the context of reminding the Christians that they were no longer to live that way. The reason was simple. The early church understood that their job was not to judge and condemn the pagans around them."

Osborne, Larry (2009-04-04). *Ten Dumb Things Smart Christians Believe* (Kindle Locations 1183-1194). The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

More complete texts related to how judging is always done on the basis of what we share.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NIV)

⁹ I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. ¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 (NIV)

¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.