

# Righteous Judgment

by Brent Barnett

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*Christians are called to exercise righteous judgment, which sees sin for what it is and points it out, while loving unconditionally and seeking restoration.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:29

**Topics:** "Righteous Judgment", "Discerning Sin"

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## Description

Brent Barnett preaches about the societal pressure to ignore evil and avoid calling it out, using the misinterpretation of Matthew 7:1 to discourage righteous judgment. He emphasizes the importance of discerning right from wrong and lovingly confronting sin in fellow believers, while avoiding self-righteous condemnation. Barnett highlights the need for Christians to focus on saving sinners and restoring believers, rather than keeping records of wrongs or hoping to catch others in sin, as Christ loved us unconditionally despite our sins.

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## Transcript

In a day and age of tolerance, there is pressure to turn a blind eye to evil deeds. Greater still, there is a pull from society to not even call evil "evil" or good "good." Some will even rebuke Christians who do point out evil on the grounds that the Bible says that we shouldn't judge. We are told to stop judging people and to be more accepting. Society thus wants us to stop differentiating right from wrong and acceptable from unacceptable. They would have us remove all standards of discernment, and they refuse to recognize that Christ will judge them once and for all after they die. Judgment is a reality of the way the world has been designed. We cannot escape from it, and as Christians we have a call to exercise righteous judgment.

Matthew 7:1 says, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." Jesus here is not forbidding judgment of any kind. His point is to show that some people judge from a self-righteous, condemning,

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and hypocritical stance. They point out slivers in the eyes of others not because they care but because they get some cheap thrill from faultfinding as if it makes them feel better about themselves. Some are so self-righteous that they are even blind to their own hypocrisy, being unable to see the log in their own eyes. Jesus is condemning self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and an inability to judge ourselves rightly, which we must do (1 Corinthians 11:29). In no way does Matthew 7:1 forbid discernment. In fact, later in Matthew 7 Christ explains that we can discern true believers from false teachers based upon their fruit.

Christ's intention is not to forbid judgment that evaluates between right and wrong, moral and immoral. What Jesus is saying is to not usurp the place of God, Who alone can cast into hell (Luke 12:5).

Sometimes it seems that professing Christians enjoy the fact that others are going to hell. Rather than pray for a lost soul and love our enemies, we can find ourselves doing just the opposite. In such cases, we violate Matthew 7:1. Rather than condemn others, we should recognize that those who do wrong stand condemned already (John 3:18). God sees all, and He will judge sin righteously. Our job is to let God be God and to love and share the gospel with those whom we have discerned through righteous judgment to not be acting righteously. This is the point of John 7:24 which says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Righteous judgment sees sin for what it is, and it is not afraid to point it out. But this judgment becomes unrighteous when it stems from "holier-than-thou" motives or when it seeks to condemn rather than restore. Galatians 6:1a says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." Righteous judgment recognizes that some are spiritual and some are not, being carnal and mired in sin. If someone who is spiritual finds a brother or sister in sin, they are to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. Clearly this requires discernment and an understanding of right and wrong. Yet it need not cross into unrighteous condemning judgment. A spirit of gentleness and being intentional about seeking restoration are essential to righteous judgment. When we see a fellow Christian sin, we need to confront the sin (after we have dealt with our own hearts) but humbly, graciously, and with an understanding that we are not above the potential to do the very same thing (Galatians 6:1b).

Unrighteous self-righteous judgment is ugly and repulsive to a world desperately in need of Christ. If Christ judged as these folks judge, He would have never come to earth and died for us. But He loved us even while we were yet sinners and died for us (Romans 5:8). The mentality and focus of the Christian ought to be to save sinners and restore believers, not to judge and condemn, though we definitely need to exercise discernment. When Christianity deteriorates into keeping records of wrongs and looking over one another's shoulders in suspicion and even with a hope of catching another in sin, we have fallen far from Christ's call.

In a day and age where judgment has been itself condemned, we need to judge righteously. There is a shortage of discernment in a time that demands an abundance. There is a lack of love for the lost and our enemies at a time when we most need to demonstrate that central to the Christian gospel is not hate but love at all costs. Justice will be served come the return of Christ; we can rest assured in that fact. In the meantime, rather than condemning the world to hell when it stands condemned already, we need to unconditionally love those who love their sin, and we need to just as adamantly insist that their sin is offensive to God and deserving of hell. Christian love deteriorates into mere tolerance if we do not call sin "sin." But when evil is called "evil," the love of Christ can cause the unsaved to take up a posture of repentance and godly sorrow (Romans 12:20). For the sake of the lost, for our sinning brothers and sisters, and for the glory of Christ, let us judge righteously and love unconditionally.

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