

The Pastor's Pages



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Our next question is one of discernment or understanding of the scripture for Jesus clearly taught, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." Matthew 7:1-5 NRSV

Yet, Jesus also taught that we would know the tree by the fruit it bears, which almost sounds like a judgment. So, our question is **when we look upon others in trying to understand them, possibly trying to know if they are walking in righteousness or not, are we judging them since the Lord told us that we shouldn't?**

This is an interesting question indeed for just in the asking we realize that the one who asks does so to avoid falling into sin, and thus, should be commended for their desire of knowing what is right. And knowing what is right is the primary part of this answer. As the apostle Paul said in his letters to the Corinthians and to Thessalonica, "I do not want you to be uninformed." This same purpose is why Jesus taught what may seem to some as conflicting statements.

First, Jesus teaches judge not, then he teaches, you shall know a tree by the fruit it bears. We truly cannot judge for we never know all circumstances relating to situations. In fact, we struggle to even understand our own feelings and motivations at some times. The only one who knows all things is God and as James tells us, "there is one law giver and one judge, so who are we that we should pass judgment upon another?"

So, why is there the statement about knowing a tree by its fruit? Well, this comes to the point of understanding. If we follow every interpretation or doctrine that comes along we are going to be very confused and probably frustrated as well. We are called into a relationship with God and, as with any relationship, for us to grow spiritually requires us to get to know each other. God already knows us better than we know ourselves, but how well do we know God?

The closer we get to God by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures, the better we will be able to know the ways of God and the better we can identify ways that are not of God, but lead to destruction, for anything that doesn't lead to God surely will lead us to destruction.

So Jesus wanted us to pay attention. If someone professes to be a Christian, then their life and devotion to Christ will show that albeit that we are not perfect. You can see sincerity in those who love God. I'm certain that you can think of saints you have known that reflect this.

Another key point to this however, is that we do not know the fruit of the tree so that we can condemn. Indeed, we as Christians are here to encourage one another, to build up rather than breaking down. Since we know God's intentions are to not condemn as we read in John three verse seventeen, than we should not condemn so our lives reflect that of God.

So we use this knowledge so we are simply not led astray and remain true to the teachings of Christ.

So we are never to use knowledge or understanding of truth to judge and condemn others, but we are to simply point to Christ in what we say in do showing God's love while encouraging others in their walk of faith.

A very good question, indeed.

Shalom,

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