Are Christians Allowed to Judge Others?

Caring for One Another in the Gathered Community

WBC Family Camp 2014

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FAMILY CAMP – FRIDAY DEVOTIONAL

“Muskoxen are known above all else for their clever defense against wolves or other predators. When they see danger approaching, muskoxen run together and they all try to face the threat. If there is one predator—a lone wolf for example—the defense strategy is to form a line. If a wolf pack surrounds the group, the muskoxen will form a tight circle, all facing outward, forming a phalanx of heads and horns. Calves will hug next to their mothers, or huddle inside the circle. Occasionally, one muskox will charge the enemy, but will quickly rejoin the others. If the herd doesn’t run, but stays together in a tight defensive formation, their defense is virtually impenetrable. A muskox caught away from the herd or separated from the others is much easier to kill.”

Consider the following thoughts.

1. Are Christians to Judge Others?
   “Yes, No, Maybe, Depends”
2. Are Christians to Condemn Others?
   “Yes, No, Maybe, Depends”
3. Are Christians to Come Alongside Others and Encourage Them?
   “Yes, No, Maybe, Depends”
4. Are Christians to Rebuke / Reprove Others?
   “Yes, No, Maybe, Depends”
The Bible’s Storyline

- God created you so that you might know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This joy is only known and experienced in His presence.
- One day His presence/glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea for the joy of all nations (Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Rev. 21).
- The Bible tells a single *Story* with Jesus at the Center.

The idea of “judging others” falls within this ONE STORY where JESUS IS AT THE CENTER.

1Q – Why do we find judging/admonishing one another so difficult?
A – Three reasons why
- We have a skewed view of what it means to judge.
- We have seen it done poorly.
- We do not like submitting ourselves under another’s “authority.”

Just to clarify . . .
- The New Testament saves individuals for community. It knows nothing of the Christ life apart from His body, the local church community.
- In our thinking, spiritual growth rests with the individual. In the Bible, spiritual growth comes out of the community.

Understanding our Words
2Q – Who judges – Big Picture?
A – Three categories of judging.
  - **First**, God judges everyone impartially (1 Peter 1:17 [*Substance*]).
  - **Second**, corporate/spiritual/vertical judging (*shadow*).
  - **Third**, personal/relational/horizontal judging (the “one another” passages).

Understanding our Words
3Q – Who judges – Part 1?
A – God judges, 1 Peter 1:17-19.
  - **First**, if you are a believer, God has already judged you. This judgment is objective and thorough. This is the judgment carried out by the Father on His Son for our redemption from sin (John 12:46-48; *1 Peter* 2:24; 3:18).

THE SUBSTANCE
- God judges everyone’s work impartially.
- If you are holding on to your own work, you are damned.
- If you look to the work of Christ, you are saved.
- Only God’s judgment leads to damnation.
The Bible Judges Everyone Equally
- Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
- Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Bible Judges Sin Impartially
- The “issues” of our day are all “judged” by the Word of God.
- We have no right to say otherwise. We might not believe it, but it does not change what is true.

First things First
Understanding our Words

Understanding our Words
4Q - What is judging?
A – Krino, Katakrino – to distinguish, to discern, to call into question, to legally, judicially judge, to condemn.
- Luke 6:37 – “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.
- John 3:17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge/condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged/condemned; he who does not believe has been judged/condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.
- John 8:10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

Katakrima
- Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1 http://www.nps.gov/gaar/naturescience/muskox-circle-defense.htm
Understanding our Words
5Q – Who judges – Part 2?
A – Pastors/Overseers, Matthew 16; 18; 1 Cor. 5.
• Second, corporate responsibility carried out by the pastors/overseers. This judgment is subjective and partial. Here the “church” is calling into question their personal faith in Christ.

Understanding our Words
6Q – Who judges – Part 2?
A – Pastors/Overseers, Matthew 16; 18; 1 Cor. 5.
• Here Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 and “delivering people over to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20) come into play. This is why the “church” has the “keys to the kingdom” (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).
• The thought of judging one another is inside of a larger context.
• We first must judge ourselves. This is self-control.
• When self-control fails, then we have immediate friends speaking into our lives.

Self-control
• Ga 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
• Titus 1:8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,
• 2Pe 1:6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

Understanding our Words
• I hope that our friends exist within our small group where people are speaking into our lives.
• Small groups need to be consistent and relational so that others can speak into our lives when self-control fails.
• The Sunday Morning Gathering around God’s Word is the primary means of speaking into our lives.
• The leadership/overseers are a part of the Gathering where God speaks into our lives.
• If all of this fails, corporate church discipline takes place.

PREACHING / CHURCH
• 1 Tim. 4:13 Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.
• 2 Tim. 4: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Understanding our Words
7Q – What is CHURCH DISCIPLINE?
A – The end action of failed SELF-CONTROL.
FAMILY CAMP – SUNDAY SERMON

Understanding our Words
8Q – If I am not judging others, what am I doing?
   A – You are to love and forgive one another
   Q – How might I love and forgive one another?

Understanding our Words
9Q – Who “judges” – Part 3?
   A – Congregants are “admonished” by one another, 1 Thess. 5:14.
     • Third, individual responsibility through the “one another” passages. This judgment is
       subjective and limited. You are not calling into question someone’s faith in Christ. You
       are calling into question their idolatry of self.

Understanding our Words
10Q – What does admonishing one another look like?
   A – 1 Thess. 5:13, 14
     • Live in peace with one another
     • Admonish the unruly
     • Encourage the fainthearted
     • Help the weak
     • Be patient with everyone

Understanding our Words
11Q – What does admonishing look like / feel like?
   A – The One Another Passages

One Another
• The “One Another” passages describe what the glory of God looks like in His Church. They are not prescriptive, but descriptive of His glory. The indicative [what God does for us] causes the imperative [what we do for one another]. The indicative is my relationship to God. The imperative is my relationship to His church.
• The imperative does not carry the weight of the indicative. The imperative carries the weight of my relationship to His church. This is what Jesus looks like and it is what His people look like. The believing community does this to itself. It is very much the principle of “one body, many members” (1 Cor. 12:12) and “individual spiritual gifts” (1 Peter 4:7-11) embodied in community.
• The overarching emphasis of the “one another” passages are enabling and empowering. A handful speak of “warning” (Nouthetic).
  o Overseers (Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:12 [read this text])
  o Congregants (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15)
Understanding our Words

12Q - What is admonishing?
A – Nouthetic – to admonish, to warn
- 1 Thess. 5:11 ¶ Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Understanding our Words

13Q - What is Comforting/Helping?
A – Parakletos – John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1
- John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Helper, that he may abide with you for ever;
- 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Understanding our Words

14Q - What is Comforting/Helping?
A – Parakaleo “I beseech” / Paraklasis– “comfort”
- 2 Cor. 1:3 ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 7 ¶ and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort. 8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, 11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

Understanding our Words

Q - What is rebuking/reproving?
A¹ – The use of elegcho in the New Testament has the “softness” of telling your brother his trespass (Matt. 18:15) and the “hardness” of rebuking an individual over adultery (Luke 3:19).
A² – Matthew 18:15 uses elegcho. Luke 17:3 uses epitimao. It appears they are interchangeable.
A³ – The Word “rebukes / reproves” (2 Tim. 4:2) 
A⁴ - Luke 17:3 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

APPLICATION
Q – Who should we not judge?
A – We do not judge strangers or anyone from another church. We do not judge those outside the church. God will do this. This does not mean you do not teach truth, but it does mean you have no “biblical right” to judge them.

- Learn to love the local church/gathering.
- Look for opportunity to serve one another.
- Admonish unruly friends, not acquaintances or strangers.
- How you say it is as weighty as what you say.
- If approached, accept the statement with grace. If true, change. If not true, grow from it.
- Thank the person for having enough care to approach you with their concern.
- If you get “hot and bothered,” let it rest for three days before you do, say, or share anything.
- If personal, keep it personal and forgive the other individual.
- Only address those issues that are harmful to your local church.
- If corporate, leave it to the discretion of the Pastors/Overseers.
- Always seek to edify. Remember; be teachable, humble, and charitable.

Q – Why?
A - You do not know everything, you might be wrong, and love is always the proper response.