

Judging vs. Spiritual Evaluation

TEXT: Matthew 7:1-5,15-23; Romans 2:1-3

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Luke 6:37,41-45; 13:6-9

KEY VERSE: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. — Matthew 7:18

Have you ever had a foreign object in your eye? It may have been very small, but it still hurt a lot, didn't it? Jesus warned us about looking for and trying to remove the mote from our brother's eye when we may have a beam in our own eye. Usually when a person sees too many things wrong with others, he has a serious "eye" problem. Judgment belongs to God. "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10).

RESPONSES

1. Allow time for your students to offer their definitions. They should conclude that *judge* means "to weigh evidence from both sides and to reach a decision based on evidence examined." In Scripture this word is used in the sense of condemning another or assessing the measure of his guilt.

2. Jesus commands those who have been forgiven not to judge, so that they will not be judged. The forgiveness we receive at salvation frees us from God's judgment for the sins we have committed. Students should be encouraged to realize the importance of not judging. Ask your students what happens when a person does judge another. See Romans 2:1.

3. We examine ourselves to be sure of our stand before God. Allow students' responses. Some answers may include: self-examination, listening to God's Spirit, comparing one's life to God's Word, or looking at ourselves as God would see us. You may wish to point out that simply judging ourselves alone will not secure our entrance to Heaven. We must follow up on the judgment by repenting and receiving salvation.

1. What is the meaning of the word *judge*? How is this word used in the context of Scripture?

2. Jesus strictly forbids judging others. Why do you think He did so?

3. In 1 Corinthians 11:31, we read that we can only judge ourselves. If we faithfully do this in the light of God's Word, we will escape the condemnation which the world will receive at the Judgment Seat of God. Another reason for self-examination is found in 2 Corinthians 13:5. What is it, and how do we judge ourselves?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. While we are warned against judging others, the Bible does tell us, "by their fruits ye shall know them." We can judge ourselves because we have all the information, but we are limited by God's Word to examining the fruit of another's life. We need to be careful in our examination of others because we cannot see their motives or the circumstances involved. When might there be a need to be able to recognize the spiritual condition of others?

5. List the points of evaluation you feel should be used in examining the spiritual condition of another's life.

6. How does the fruit of the Spirit or the lack of it displayed in one's life indicate his spiritual condition? See Galatians 5:22-26.

7. Think about it: If you subjected yourself to the same type of evaluation that you apply to others, how would you measure up?

4. Students may bring up the thought that we must be aware of a person's spiritual condition before we can help him. They should also see the importance of recognizing the spiritual condition of each person who has an influence on their lives. This knowledge will help each of us to not be pulled down by associating closely with those who are not spiritually minded.

5. The points mentioned may include whether the life being examined is doctrinally sound, conversation above reproach, unselfish in actions, reacts under stress in accordance with God's Word, holiness exemplified, respect for things godly, in conformity to God's Word. Point out that the points of evaluation for examining others do not include a right to judge their motives, purposes, reasons, or feelings, unless they have stated them to us. The criterion must be: are their outward actions sanctioned by the Word of God?

6. Our lives display either the fruit of the Spirit or the works of the flesh. Discuss with the students the fact that the fruit of the Spirit cannot be counterfeited. How a person exemplifies the fruit of the Spirit is a good indicator of his spiritual condition.

7. Student responses to this question will not be necessary. But encourage students to look into their own lives. Do they pass? Use the challenge set forth in this last question as a springboard into your wrap-up. Point out that God forbids judging one another, but we must judge ourselves. Looking at the fruit of our own lives is a good indicator of our spiritual condition.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

When the Bible says to judge not, what does it mean?

What is a mote, as referred to in our lesson? Why should we leave our brother with the Lord?

What should we do about our own faults?

How does the Bible say we will know a false prophet?

What is a definition of the word *judge*? Give some examples of how we judge other people; i.e., finding fault, condemning, or passing final judgment as if they had no hope.

What is the danger in judging someone else? What does God's Word say will happen if we start judging other people? See Matthew 7:1,2 and Romans 2:1-3.

In our ANSWER story, why did Peter apologize to Bill?

THINGS TO DO

Write the following examples, or others which you come up with, on a large cardboard or blackboard and have the students read each pair of statements and discuss which attitude they would rather have. The first ones show a judgmental attitude and the second ones show the attitude we should have as fruit testers.

1. (a) I don't know how she can call herself a Christian! She still hangs around with the bad crowd at school and I even saw her going into a movie theater last week. I don't do those things, and she shouldn't either. Wait until I tell our Sunday school teacher.

(b) She calls herself a Christian but still does some things God's Word shows us are wrong for a Christian to do. I hope she asks the Lord to help her.

2. (a) Look at those kids, always doing those awful things. I know they'll get their punishment. There's no hope for people like that.

(b) I know those kids don't know God and don't know how to do right. I'm going to ask the Lord to help me be an example for them to follow.

Take to class an apple and a banana. Ask what kind of tree each one came from. Then ask if a banana can grow on an apple tree. Compare this to the fact that neither will bad "fruit" grow in the life of one who is a Christian. If a person does not have the fruit of the Spirit he is not saved. James 3:11,12 implies that no one can be both good and bad; they will be either one or the other.

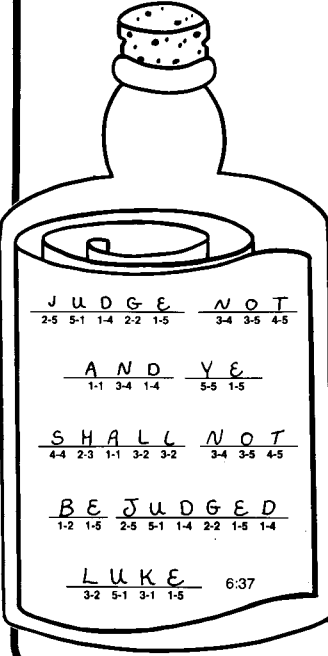

Take to class some fruit, preferably some fresh and some bad or rotten. Use these to demonstrate why we need to test fruit (Matthew 7:20). Present the fruit to the students and discuss how before the fruit is eaten we must make sure it is edible; no worms in apples, no mold on oranges, etc. We must "test" the fruit because if we did eat some fruit that was bad, we might get sick. This has a spiritual meaning too. We must look at others and test their fruit. If their fruit is bad or evil—i.e., they swear, have bad tempers, or other actions that are opposite of the fruit of the Spirit—then we should not fellowship with them. We should help them by praying for them.

Bring several books with different types of jackets or covers to class. Ask your students how they select a book at the library, bringing out that we usually look at the cover or jacket to decide whether we feel the book would be interesting or not. Just so, people look on the outward appearance or behavior of people to determine what type of persons they are.

Answers for ANSWER

Get the Message

To find the message below about judging use this alphabet multiplication table. It works just like the regular multiplication table. The first number will go down and the second number will go across. For example 2-3 will be the letter H, and 4-1 will be the letter P. To find the first letter for you we went DOWN 2 and then ACROSS 5 and found J.

J	U	D	G	E	N	O	T
2-5	5-1	1-4	2-2	1-5	3-4	3-5	4-5
A N D				Y E			
1-1	3-4	1-4	5-5	1-5			
S	H	A	L	L	N	O	T
4-4	2-3	1-1	3-2	3-2	3-4	3-5	4-5
B E J U D G E D							
1-2	1-5	2-5	5-1	1-4	2-2	1-5	1-4
L U K E							
3-2	5-1	3-1	1-5				
				6:37			

	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	K	L	M	N	O
4	P	Q	R	S	T
5	U	V	W	X	Y