



# RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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*Paul and Gretel Haglin*

EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

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## Letters of Faith

May 2016

**“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”**

John 7:24 NASB

Dearly Beloved,

We are embroiled in the sticky process of selecting the two main candidates for the presidency of the United States of America, all of the seats in the House of Representatives, and a third of the Senate. This is a great privilege and a daunting responsibility. Our ability to make righteous judgments is the foundation for making a godly decision for whom we choose to vote. This is therefore a profitable time to review some Scriptural guidelines for making righteous judgments, especially those that will determine our choices in the forthcoming election.

“Judgment” ranges from moral relativism to legalism. Our present culture promotes moral relativism (Do your own thing!) that is based on the “snake talk” of Genesis 3:5: “...**you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**” Unfortunately, much of the church today knows only a fragment of the Scriptures referring to judging. As a result, our “position” on judging ends up near one of the extremes on the judgment spectrum: all the way from “don’t even think about it” to “heavy legalism.”

But Jesus said, “...**judge with righteous judgment**” (John 7:24b) so we know we *are* to judge!

“Judgment” can be defined as 1. Ability to perceive and distinguish relationships or alternatives, i.e., discernment; 2. Discriminating appraisal, authoritative opinion; and 3. Criticism or censure. Definitions 1 & 2 match righteous judgment. Definition 3 does not!

Matthew 7:1-5 presents the basic Scriptural principle of righteous judging. It is very important that we understand that verses 1-4 are all one thought and must be understood as such! “*Do not judge*” (verse 1) is *just one part* of the Scriptural concept of judging in the total context of “*How to judge.*”

**1. “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4. Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5. You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”**

When God starts tapping me on my spiritual shoulder saying, “*I want you to look at this issue in your life...*” it’s really tempting for me to deny it being *my* issue and start seeing it in everyone else. Faults I see in you are often faults God sees in me that He wants me to deal with — to get free from.

Notice well, Jesus does *not* say, “*Don’t deal with the other guy’s speck.*” Rather, He says, “*Deal with your own log first, and then help the other guy remove his speck because you’ll be much better at helping him without the impediment in your own vision.*”

Remember Galatians 6:1: “**Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.**” When we discern someone else’s transgression, we are exercising righteous judgment aimed at ministering freedom in him from that transgression, so the spirit of restoration must be gentleness, not heavy-handed criticism or control — righteous judgment, not judgmentalism.

Therefore, when Jesus says, **“Do not judge,”** He is addressing acts of censorious, critical, condemning judgments that we call “judgmentalism.” Judging, per se, is not wrong. We *must* learn to judge words, thoughts, and deeds with righteous judgment, without ever condemning the person.

We need to be wary of three common pitfalls in seeking to practice righteous judgment:

1. The enemy may be attacking the entire Body of Christ in that area of transgression, so many, including ourselves, could be tempted into that same transgression.
2. We may be drawn to notice a particular transgression because God is trying to get our attention to deal with our own problems in that same area.
3. We can fall into the trap of feeling morally superior to the one whom we are attempting to judge righteously (the Pharisee syndrome).

You *are* to discern between good and evil because judgment, or discernment, is a godly and necessary spiritual skill: **“...solid food is for the mature, who because of practice [having worked at it until you get it right — most of the time!] have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”** (Heb. 5:14) If you do not train your senses correctly, sooner or later you are surely going to be drawn into the sin of unrighteous, censorious judgment. It is our enemy’s favorite weapon for wreaking the havoc of division in the Body of Christ.

Here are some practical guidelines for practicing righteous judgment.

1. Judge where you have responsibility, for there you will also have authority and full access to knowledge of circumstances.
2. Judge the deed, not the person.
3. When God gives you spiritual insight about a problem someone else has, your first response is to ask the Holy Spirit if you have that also, if so deal with it, and *then* minister love and healing prayer to the other person.
4. Everyone in the Body has a measure of authority to deal with others within the Body, *but not necessarily* those outside the Body: **“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges.”** (1 Cor. 5:11-13a)
5. Receive correction from others graciously. They may be seeing the log in your eye that you don’t see, even though you can so clearly see the speck in their eye.
6. Everyone within the Body can judge the moral lives of members of the Body because our personal walk directly affects our ministry, and the fruits of our ministry directly affect the whole Body. Confrontation must always be done in love and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. *If you cannot do it in love, don't do it!*
7. **“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”** (James 5:19-20)

Here are some practical warnings to avoid illegal judgments.

1. Avoid judging the motives of others!
2. Refuse judging based on rumors or suspicions. Deal directly with the person or situation.
3. Finding fault with something in someone else’s life that is really a major problem in your own life is hypocritical judging. We are easily blinded *by* our own sins and *to* our own sins, yet somehow, we quickly see the same sins in others. Gretel and I also call this “log-jamming.”
4. Finding fault with others for doing something God told you not to do will most surely result in your practicing unrighteous judgment.
5. Not recognizing cultural differences will lead to unrighteous judging.
6. What we like to call “Deafening Judgment” is thinking a message of correction is for someone else, not for us.

Be conscious that a person's eye can have perfectly good vision, but be hindered by a wee little speck in it. God designed our eyes to be cleansed by tears, not by the probing forefinger of a "helpful" brother or sister "with good intentions, but bad training!" Tears of repentance wondrously clear your spiritual vision!

Jim, a precious friend in our church, had a vision of the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle. A sacrifice was burning on the altar. A sweet aroma was going up to God, and ashes were falling down from all around the altar. His eyes went directly to the ashes and he asked, "Lord, what about all these ashes?" The Lord spoke to him, "*Do not to look at the ashes, but instead look at the sweet-smelling bouquet that is going up to Me from the sacrifice.*" Then God said to him, "*Look at your brothers and your sisters like that too. Don't look when they are on the altar getting purged. Don't look at the imperfections that are falling to the ground. Look at the sweet-smelling aroma of their living sacrifice that is coming up to Me, for that is how I look at them, and that is how I look at you!*"

Be determined that your choices for the extremely important elections ahead of us are based on solid, Holy Spirit-led, and righteous judgments of the candidate's character, careers, capabilities, and commitment to constitutional concepts. The future of this great country depends on how each and every one of us prays and votes in the coming months.

Responsible hugs,



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