

Lesson 14

The Scales of Justice

Group Icebreaker:

Tell the group one decision you made that you regretted?

Introduction:

“Do not judge lest you be judged.” This statement falls with conviction on Jesus’ hearers like a ton of bricks. It is perhaps one of the most misunderstood passages of Scripture and difficult to swallow for many. If that statement were left to stand on its own it would appear that Christians should never make a decision regarding anything. However, this is not the case. Taken in the context of the statements that follow it, we see Jesus is speaking about two different subjects: **1)** judging other people and **2)** discerning what is good and what is evil, then taking the appropriate actions.

In this lesson, the topic of judging other people will be covered. In lesson #15, we will cover discerning good and evil for one’s self. Before going into Jesus’ commentary on judging other people, let’s see what elements are required in order to make a **fair, impartial** judgment of another person.

1. A **judge**.
2. A **law**.
3. An **accuser**.
4. An **accused**.
5. Testimony of **witnesses**.
6. A **verdict**.
7. And if necessary, a **sentence**.

A legal, civil, religious or divine **authority**, must appoint the judge. The questions to those who are disciples of Jesus Christ are “Have you been appointed a judge and if so by whom?” According to Scripture there is one who has been appointed by God to judge and that is Jesus Christ. The book of Acts 10:42-43 says, *“And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”*

A legal, civil, religious or divine **authority**, must establish a law. There are many laws that have been established by a constituted authority and include: family, civil, God’s law, the Law of Moses and the Law of the Spirit to name but a few. In order to bring charges against the accused it is important to know which law he is under. The judge must have a thorough knowledge of that law and remain within its boundaries in order to produce a righteous judgment. For example, it would be inappropriate for a U.S. municipal magistrate to pass a sentence under Islamic law. He was not appointed to do it, has no knowledge of the Koran, and certainly would not be able to stay within its boundaries.

The accuser must bring his case to the judge of the constituted authority. He cannot serve as judge! Otherwise it would be a travesty of justice because there would be no impartiality, due to

his bias in the case. And the accuser cannot legally charge the accused. Only those who have legal authority over the accused can bring formal charges.

To be a fair impartial trial, the accuser must bring satisfactory evidence to convict the accused of breaking the law. Usually the evidence is in the form of, the testimony of witnesses. These witnesses can be people or material evidence such as DNA, fingerprints, written records, etc. According to the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:1, he states that *EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES*.

The judge, not the accuser, is the only one who can render a verdict of innocent or guilty. Both the accuser and the accused must abide by his decision. If the accused is found guilty the judge alone decides the appropriate sentence for the crime committed. Then the judge hands over the guilty party to the person who will carry out his sentence. The accuser is not permitted to carry out the sentence, only those appointed by the judge!

Perhaps Jesus issued this command “*Do not judge, lest you be judged*” because He knew the hearts of men. Most want to serve as lawmaker, judge, accuser, witness, and executioner when they see another do something, they consider wrong in their eyes. But most would not want to be treated by another in the same manner.

Group Discussion:

1. What commentary do you have on the introduction to this lesson?

Reading the Scripture:

The Scales of Justice
The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 6:36-42
Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. And do not judge¹ and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. And 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? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

The Commands:

- ❖ Be merciful.
- ❖ Do not judge and you will not be judged.
- ❖ Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
- ❖ Pardon, and you will be pardoned.
- ❖ Give, and it will be given to you.

¹ **Do not judge.** Do not be a faultfinder. This does not mean that we are not to be wise and discerning people who can make sound judgments.

- ❖ First take the log out of your own eye.

The Lesson – Part 1:

After His opening volley of words, “*Do not judge lest you be judged*”, Jesus begins to reinforce his position. He explains the system of justice in the family of God. The first part of God’s justice system He expresses this way, “*For in the way you judge, you will be judged.*” In other words, the method and manner in which a disciple judges another, is the same way in which God will judge the disciple.

Since we will be judged in the same manner as we judge others, some sobering thoughts should come to mind. One thought might be, “Which law do I want God to judge me under, the Law of Moses or the Law of the Spirit, which is the law of liberty²?” Another thought might be, “Would I want God to serve as both my accuser and judge at the same time?” Would I expect God to listen to other witnesses instead of just the accuser? Would I hope that He would check the credibility of those witnesses? And would I want the opportunity to provide for my defense? Then perhaps we should accord others these same courtesies!

Jesus explains the second part of God’s justice system this way, “*By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.*” In other words, the verdict and sentence you mete out to others is the same one you will receive from God. “*Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned: forgive and you will be forgiven.*” The disciple of Jesus needs to ponder more questions. Do I want God to condemn me or forgive me? If He condemns me do I want the punishment to be gentle or harsh?

Jesus indicates that the law of sowing and reaping is in effect when He says, “*Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap.*” Not only does a person reap what he sows, but also it will return to him in like manner many times over. Just as one seed produces many seeds, furnishing both bread to the eater and seed to the sower, so are a person’s judgments in this world.

Group Discussion:

2. Based on what you have just learned, how will you judge others?

² **law of liberty** – liberty, freedom, a state of freedom from slavery – freedom from the dominion of corrupt desires, so that we do by the free impulse of the soul **what the will of God requires** (i.e. 1 John 5:3-5, ³ “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*” ⁴ *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.*”) . . . //which furnishes that rule of right living by which the liberty just mentioned is attained (i.e. James 1:22-25, ²² “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.* ²⁴ *For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.* ²⁵ ***But the one who looks into the perfect law*** (“*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul,*” Psalm 19:7), ***the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing,***” and James 2:12-26, ¹² “***So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty*** . . . ¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? . . .* ¹⁷ *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead . . .* ¹⁸ *show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works . . .* ²⁰ *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? . . .* ²¹ *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? . . .* ²² *You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works . . .* ²⁵ *And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? . . .* ²⁶ ***For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.***”) – (<https://biblehub.com/greek/1657.htm>).

The Lesson – Part 2:

Jesus continues to teach His disciples about the judgment of others by speaking a parable to them. He begins the parable with two rhetorical questions. *A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?* And then finishes it with the command, *“first take the log out of your own eye.”*

Several conclusions can be drawn from the parable within the context of Jesus’ subject. First, Jesus equates the blind man as one who seeks to judge another. Second, the reason he is blind is because he has a log in his own eye that is blinding him. Third, the one who judges another should not be directing, leading or making disciples of anyone else since he cannot see clearly himself. Fourth, anyone who judges another, certainly should not follow someone like himself, since they are both blind and will fall into the same trap. And fifth, both blind individuals should find someone who has clear vision to lead them.

Jesus second statement is *“A disciple is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”* For a disciple, it is important to know if his teacher judges other people or not, since the disciple will become like him. According to the Apostle John, Jesus was not sent to judge anyone. *“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*³

As we continue to focus on Jesus’ second statement we understand that a disciple needs to be fully trained. Training consists of two parts: learning and application or to say it another way, hearing and obeying. An individual is not trained unless he accomplishes both parts. It takes time to become trained. And a disciple can never be taught anything from his teacher that the teacher does not already know. A point for Christians to ponder is, whom do they want as their teacher: Satan, who is identified in the book of Revelation as the accuser of the brethren or Jesus Christ, the savior of the world?

Jesus states the final part of the parable this way:

*And 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? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, **first take the log out of your own eye**, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5)*

Some observations are in order to grasp what Jesus wants His disciples to understand. First, both individuals in the parable are related to one another as siblings. They have a common parent. And since Jesus is discussing values in the family of God, the disciples are assured that He is talking about everyone who has God as their Father.

Second, any individual with a log in his eye is certainly going to have a difficult time seeing a speck in someone else’s eye. The log would block his view, essentially rendering him blind. Also the person with the log in his eye must be looking pretty hard in order to see a mere speck in another’s eye. He must be scrutinizing his brother very closely. He is definitely looking for something.

³ John 3:17-18

Third, it is interesting to note that the person with the log in his eye made the discovery of the speck in the other's eye based on **his** sight alone. Usually the person with the speck in his eye would notice the irritation before anyone else. Then that person would remove it himself or possibly ask another if he is having difficulty doing it himself.

Several questions arise about the individual with the log in his eye. How can he not notice a log in his own eye? Has he been so desensitized to pain that he doesn't notice it? And if he is that insensitive, would anyone want his assistance in removing their speck since it requires a gentle touch to do so? Why has he not removed his log? Is he even able to remove specks since he finds it so difficult to remove logs? And since he hasn't noticed the log in his own eye can anyone be sure that he can actually detect specks in other people's eyes?

Group Discussion:

3. From this parable we are able to gain spiritual insight by asking several why questions.
 - a. Why was the person with the log in his eye looking at his fellow believer so closely? (In order to find fault in him.)
 - b. Why would a believer wish to find fault with another? (To make the other person of less value or to gain power over another.)
 - c. What issues do faultfinders have? (Their judging of others arises from a need to increase their own self-worth. They do not really believe that God is doing His job parenting and consider Him a poor dispenser of justice. They believe they are better judges of what needs to be done than God; hence they appoint themselves as judges. The root cause of this stems from pride.)
 - d. Decide for yourselves; is the root cause of judging another good or evil?

The Point of the Lesson:

There is only one judge, and I'm not him.

Application:

Make a conscientious effort not to judge another. Prepare to tell the group at the next meeting of any trials you encounter in this endeavor.