

Part 7 - Immaturity Judges; Maturity Discerns

James' Message (4:11-12)

- * If you start JUDGING & CRITICISING others, you're on very DANGEROUS GROUND.
- * If we don't watch our ATTITUDES, the natural human tendency to JUDGE, COMPARE & CRITIQUE can rapidly SPIRAL out of control.

James warns that judging others is dangerous. Why do you think human nature is so quick to judge?

JUDGING

+ve connotations: Shrewd measures, accurate conclusions, reasoned evaluations, fair decision (Prov 9:10, 1 Sam 16:7, John 7:24).

- * There is no doubt that SENSIBLE judgments, WISELY-handled, LOVINGLY-motivated, HOLY SPIRIT-informed are crucial.

-ve connotations: Condemn, criticise, discriminate, jump to conclusions.

EXAMPLES

- Quick to judge harshly, without knowing the full facts.
- Accepting or spreading unsubstantiated rumours.
- Piling on condemnation from a sense of moral superiority.
- Calling out others' sin while overlooking one's own.
- Assuming everything others do must be critiqued or corrected.
- Judging or condemning in situations we'd expect grace for ourselves.
- Letting prejudice or personal bias drive conclusions.

When does judging slip and slide across the line and into negativity? What are the warning signs / give-aways?
Which of the negative examples (a-g) do you personally struggle with & why?
How can personal bias or prejudice sneak into our judgments without us realising it?

DANGERS

1. The CRITICAL SPIRIT is a form of PRIDE.
2. Christians are already considered to be JUDGMENTAL & HYPOCRITICAL.
3. Personal BIAS can make our conclusions PREJUDICED.

Why is a critical spirit often a form of pride? How can pride distort our view of others?
Is the perception that Christians are judgmental & hypocritical fair? Has that preconception ever hindered your witness?
How can self-awareness help us identify when bias or prejudice is influencing our thoughts or words?

Jesus' Teaching (Matt 7:1-5)

1. Check your MOTIVES
2. Check your INFORMATION
3. Check your ATTITUDES

What distorted motives lead human nature to judge negatively or harshly?
Do you have any observed examples of times someone jumped to erroneous conclusions with humorous (or otherwise) results?
"The Golden Rule: Judge others just as graciously as you would like them to judge you." Discuss!

DISCERNING

To judge: OBSERVE & make intelligent / emotional deductions.

To discern is to PERCEIVE with our SPIRITUAL SENSES.

Holy Spirit INSIGHT: The ability to see WITHIN, BEHIND, BEYOND.

Describe the difference between judging & discerning in your own words?
What does it mean to 'see within, behind, and beyond' with spiritual insight?
What are you looking for? Can you give an example from your life?

HOW to be a Discerner

1. Decide you're going to be ALWAYS FULL OF GRACE
 - * There's always MORE going on BEHIND the SCENES.
 - * Discernment sees the BIGGER PICTURE, past me & my consequences, and into the OTHER PERSON'S HEART.

How does grace help us see the bigger picture? Are there situations where it is especially hard to be full of grace & how do we get past that?

2. Train yourself to PRESS PAUSE & LISTEN
 - * Learn to TAME flesh & carnality and DIG DEEPER for scriptural & Holy Spirit-inspired wisdom.
 - * HASTY, REACTIONARY decisions create problems that can take ages to undo; PRAYERFUL, SPIRIT-LED decisions may take longer, but save a great deal of pain.

What are the warning signs that you are reacting too quickly rather than pausing for discernment? How do you personally pause & 'dig deeper'?

3. Make the WIN about THEM, not YOU
 - * It's not about your self-interest, preservation or reputation, but their REDEMPTION & RESTORATION.
 - * Jesus loved people towards heart change, because He DISCERNED HEARTS rather than merely JUDGING BEHAVIOURS.

Think of examples from Jesus' ministry that inspire us to seek redemption & restoration ahead of personal gratification or vindication.