

Are You Your Brother's Keeper?

When God demanded of Cain, “*Where is Abel thy brother?*” he responded sullenly “*I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?*” (**Genesis 4:9**). Since God was not at all fond of Cain (**1 John 3:12**), it is plausible to assume what Cain said was the opposite of what was true. In other words, that he SHOULD have been his brother’s keeper. The word used for “keeper” is the Hebrew *shamar*, which means, among other things “to protect, attend to... observe, preserve, regard ... watch (-man)”. The question Cain demanded of God is, “*am I my brother’s protector? Am I his watchman? Am I his preserver?*” and this lesson will show you that yes, he should have been – and so should you and I be.

To really explain, we have to cover several different subjects independently, if you “keep” your brother that requires you to protect him from harm if possible; it means when you see him doing something that will hurt himself, you must warn him – say, if you see him breaking the law of God.

But if you do that, he will probably sneer “who made YOU a judge over me? How DARE you judge me! You sin too!” So you need to understand what it means to judge; whether you and I should do it; and if so, how and when. It seems the one thing nearly every religion on earth agrees on, is that the one greatest sin you can commit is to judge them for their sins. But if judging is indeed wrong; why did Jesus Himself command us to “*judge righteous judgment*” (**John 7:24**)?

After they call you judgmental, they will say, “well, you’re just not merciful enough”, and demand that you simply ignore their sins. You need to understand what mercy is – not according to Man’s definition, but as the Bible defines it. Someone else will say, “You can’t know their heart!”, or they will say, “God works with people where they’re at!” – you need to see if that’s true or not.

These questions and others are central to being a true Christian. You need to understand just what your responsibility is toward your brother; what does God really require of you: to judge your brother, or not? You will learn all this in the next two lessons, starting with...

LESSON 30: JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

“How dare you judge me! The Bible says you should NEVER judge anyone!”

It seems no matter how little anyone knows about the Bible, they know that one verse “*judge not, that ye be not judged*”. They know it is wrong to judge. Whether or not they know it is wrong to commit adultery, they know for sure judging is wrong. That’s the one sin everyone, in or out of church, fully understands and believes.

Is this the ONE THING the entire world has right? Is judging the worst sin a person can commit? Once again it comes back to *reading the context*. **Did Jesus say those seven words alone, intending for them to be ripped out of the Bible and put on a bumper sticker?** Or did He say OTHER things that modified what He said? Read **Matthew 7:1-4**. Millions of people read that verse and walk away thinking it means we should never judge anyone for any reason. But is that REALLY what Jesus said?

Let’s go through it slowly “*judge not, that ye be not judged*”. Ok, that’s clear enough. The next verse says “*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged...*” – In the first verse, He apparently flatly forbade all forms of

judging; but in the very next verse He says HOW you judge will determine how YOU are judged. Did you see that? How does it matter HOW you judge, if you are never, under any circumstances, to judge?

Verse 3 tells you not to worry about the speck of dust in your brother's eye, when you have a beam in your own. In other words, if you are murdering, you shouldn't judge your brother who is skimming from petty cash. But what if the situation was reversed – what if YOU were skimming from petty cash, but HE was murdering... would it be okay to judge him then? Think about that.

Should you let him continue murdering because “we're all sinners”? Or should you stand up and say something about it – which requires you to judge him as a sinner? Of course, if you do that he is likely to stand up and say “You sin too! How dare YOU judge me? You're stealing from petty cash!” and you can respond “Yes, I am, but that's a *petty* problem compared to yours”.

The point here is that you are both sinners, but letting a man continue murdering because Jesus said “*judge not that ye be not judged*” is obviously wrong, ***even if you are sinning yourself***. So what is the real answer? It's in **verse 5!** Why does no one read that verse in the context?? It completely changes the meaning of the entire passage!

First CAST that beam out of your eye – and THEN you shall see CLEARLY to pull the splinter out of your brother's eye! Do you see that! The point *isn't* that you're a horrible sinner, and will never be qualified to say “hey, that's a sin, stop that!” to your brother! **The point is that you should REMOVE that beam! STOP that MAJOR sin, and THEN YOU CAN JUDGE EVEN HIS MINOR SINS!**

Once you've stopped stealing from petty cash, there is no chance of him saying “Oh yeah?? Well you sin too!” – So REMOVE that beam – that is the command of God – and THEN **HELP HIM WITH HIS SPLINTER!**

OTHER PROOF WE SHOULD JUDGE

John 7:24 *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

Everyone knows about **Matthew 7:1**; why does no one know this verse, inspired by the same God in the same Bible? The command of God is to JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT!

When you judge someone, you have to remember your limitations. Your judgment will not send this person to hell – even if there were a hell. Your judgment will not supersede God's will. Your judgment will not kill this person or put them in jail. Your judgment is simply you stating your *opinion* this person is sinning and should stop it. That's all!

Now if you're still steeped in sins, then yes – a wise person would not go around picking at the faults of others, since that's sure to bring attention to your own. But by the time you get to this lesson, you should have already dealt with the majority of your own sins. Certainly by the time you've spent a few years in this way of life, you should have a handle on all the “beams” in your eye, or you should never have been baptized in the first place.

Certainly you will run into new problems here and there along the way, but they should be confronted, dealt with, and resolved so your conscience is clean once more. **If your conscience ever gets so dirty you can't say, “Hey! Idolatry is wrong! Adultery is wrong! Stealing is wrong!” because of a greater beam in your own eye – then you have drifted a very long way off the path you should be on. Probably too far to return in this life.**

What is the commandment of God? **Zechariah 7:9, 8:16**. Should a church judge? **1 Corinthians 5:12-6:1**. Are the saints qualified to judge matters? **Verses 2-4**. Is it a SHAME for a church group to have no one qualified to judge? **Verse 5**. Should a church agree on judgment? **1 Corinthians 1:10**. Do spiritual people judge? **1 Corinthians 2:15**.

Will the saints be judging life-and-death matters in the future? **Revelation 20:4, Daniel 7:22**. How will you learn how to do that? **Hebrews 5:14, Luke 16:10**. Was Jesus upset that people wouldn't judge right and wrong?

Luke 12:57. Does a lack of judgment make God angry? **Habakkuk 1:4.** What does God think of people who hate judging righteously? **Micah 3:9-12.** What did Jesus condemn the Pharisees for (among other things)? **Luke 11:42.**

They tithed diligently *but they passed over – ignored – judgment!* Just as every Protestant church on Earth does today!

UNDERSTANDING JUDGING

All of that was to get you open to the idea that God **LIKES** judging, and it should be a central part of every Christian's heart. There are many verses that speak against judging, for various reasons; most of them due to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means you say one thing, but do the opposite. So if you say you shouldn't sin, and yet you sin, it makes God very angry at you!

Read **Romans 2:1-3.** This isn't condemning judging! Each time judging is condemned in these verses Paul qualifies it by saying "*for you do the same things*". Of course! If you say "you shouldn't steal" – and yet you steal – then you have no excuse. Your own mouth has judged you (**Luke 19:22**). By judging another person for a sin you yourself commit, you admit this sin is wrong, yet you do that very thing so you are "*inexcusable, O man*". Here again, the answer is to remove the beam from your eye, and then you can see clearly to remove your brother's splinter!

The other major anti-judging scriptures are mostly about *things that don't matter*. The point of judging is to condemn SIN. **Judging someone over what is not a sin is wrong.** Saying someone shouldn't be working on the Sabbath is "judging righteous judgment". Saying someone shouldn't wear red to church is not. It's meddling and stirring up division over utterly unimportant topics.

That's what we find happening in **1 Corinthians 8** and **Romans 14**. Both of these chapters are about eating meats offered to idols. As we discussed in earlier lessons, the conclusion was "*meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse*" (**1 Corinthians 8:8**). In other words, **it's a non-issue!** God simply doesn't care whether you eat meats offered to idols or not, provided you're not eating it *because* it was offered to an idol.

When there was considerable division in church over this subject, Paul told them to drop it! (**Romans 14:3-4**). Stop judging each other over what didn't matter! This man is God's servant, not yours. This means **GOD** makes the rules over what this man should and should not do. Not you!

Now as this man's fellow-servant you have the right and – as I will later show, the obligation – to point out when he is not living up to your mutual Master's laws. But you do NOT have the right to impose NEW laws on him! **Romans 14:10-13.**

It is not your place to say wearing red to church is a sin; that eating meats offered to idols is a sin; or anyone not wearing a tie to church is not a Christian. These are rules you could impose on your OWN servants, **but rules God has not imposed on His, and therefore you should not judge His servants for breaking them!**

That, incidentally, is the same thing God condemned the Pharisees for doing; *they* invented all sorts of rules and traditions, then put them on an equal level of importance – greater, in some ways – than God's own laws (See **Matthew 15** and **Mark 7**). They were binding rules on God's servants that God had not made, and thus "judging another man's servant".

In addition, God complained because of their hypocrisy, even in following their *own* made-up laws! "*...Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers*" (**Luke 11:46**) – not only were they judging another man's servant, they were "inexcusable" because they did the same things they condemned others for doing. See how neatly that wraps it all up?

Incidentally, it allows us to explain another difficult scripture, **James 4:11-12**. James was condemning judging another man's servant; judging the law; reinterpreting the laws as a judge would do, not simply obeying the law as a servant of God would do.

NOT HIS TIME

A third major objection is that Jesus did not judge anyone, and therefore we should not. The woman taken in adultery is the classic example (**John 8:1-16**). Read through that passage right now. Was that written to command us not to judge someone caught committing adultery? If you return home and find your spouse in bed with someone else, does this scripture command you not to say anything?

Or suppose you catch your neighbor's spouse in bed with someone else; does this mean you should pretend it never happened? Think about these questions! Those who casually dismiss all judging never consider these questions, so WE MUST!

We will go through **John 8** in detail in a moment, but first let's ask the question; WHY did Jesus "judge no man"? What is Jesus' job? **John 5:22**. When will Jesus judge mankind? **2 Timothy 4:1, 8**. Did He come to this Earth to judge sinners? **John 12:47**.

Will Jesus' words when He was here, judge mankind *when He returns*? **Verse 48**. Did Jesus come to Earth in authority as a King and a Judge? **Philippians 2:5-8**. Was He, the heir to the universe, LOWER in authority while He walked this Earth than the Pharisees and civil rulers? **Galatians 4:1-5**.

Two facts that we just learned shed much light on **John 8**; first, Jesus did not come to Earth to judge sins. If He had, few on Earth would have been left alive. Next time He returns, He will be doing that. Second, **when Jesus was here He had no legal authority to judge or condemn anything**.

He "differed nothing from a servant", "humbled himself", "made Himself of no reputation", etc. The only thing He could do was to relay God's judgment to mankind – that is, to tell them God had already said they were sinning. **Which is exactly what you and I do when we say "you should stop committing adultery" to someone – no more, no less!**

And He could also offer His own opinion, which you read about in **John 5:30**. But Jesus' opinion was based, not on HIS words or HIS laws, but on His FATHER'S will and His FATHER'S laws. **That is our perfect example**. Now then, let's go back to **John 8**. Did Jesus have legal authority to judge this woman? Or was that responsibility on the Pharisees? **Matthew 23:2**. Did Jesus say she was *not* worthy of stoning? **John 8:5-7**.

He never said Moses was wrong. He said that they – these men – had BEAMS in their eyes too large to judge her mote clearly! Which their own consciences knew (**verse 9**), and so one by one they left her alone with Jesus. God many times condemned adultery, and commanded the death penalty for it. **But adultery is a small sin compared to changing the commands of God, which these Pharisees were doing (Matthew 15:1-9)**.

These men should have FIRST removed the beam from their own eye – rewriting the commandments of God – and THEN they would have been able to see clearly to remove the relative "mote" (a speck of dirt) from hers!

Finally, after they had all left, Jesus asked her where her accusers were, and she said they had all left (**John 8:10-11**). **If this happened in any modern courtroom, the judge would throw out the case for lack of witnesses!** God's law requires two or three witnesses for any crime, and there were none left to accuse this woman, **so even if Jesus had the authority, there was nothing for Him to condemn! There was no evidence of any crime!**

So He said, *"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"*. He never said adultery didn't matter under the new covenant! He never said she shouldn't be punished for her crime! He simply said THESE MEN had no right to judge her, and their own consciences agreed with Him. And it was not His place to judge her, since He was a servant, not yet a king – and besides, He had no evidence of her guilt! So He told her to go **BUT TO SIN NO MORE!**

Notice that phrase, "...*SIN NO MORE*". Even here, the "judgment" was still made that what she had done **was a sin and she should stop doing it!** He left her with that final warning, just because she may have "gotten away with it" this time, she was still in the wrong and should change her ways!

(NOTE: It doesn't say what Jesus wrote on the ground; speculations abound, but there are no facts that have been dug out of the Bible yet. It is possible it was a list of their crimes, it is possible it was a certain scripture that condemned them, or it is possible it was merely random doodling; we simply don't know, and it doesn't really matter).

WHO HATES JUDGING?

Those who despise judging invariably point to the above scriptures; without them, they have no leg to stand on, but they still hate the idea. Because *judging condemns sin and encourages righteousness*. Humans aren't that complicated; we are proud, selfish, vain creatures. We want others to think well of us, and knowing we will be "caught" is a good deterrent to sin.

The thought of the shame we would feel when others knew of our sins, and mocked, condemned, or even pitied us is a very strong motivation to keep our nose clean. Or at least, not to get caught. Because what we fear most is being judged; being thought of as inferior in any way to others. **It is only those who do wrong, and do not wish to change, who hate judging.**

In **Acts 7:26-27**, Stephen recites a story from the book of Exodus regarding judging; and who does he say resented Moses' interference? Who demanded of Moses "How dare you judge us??" Was it the man who was righteous... or the man who had sinned? Who hated being judged?

What is God's word? **Psalms 119:105**. What does telling someone God's words do? **Verse 130**. What is light? **Proverbs 6:23**. What does light do? **Ephesians 5:13**. And who is it that hates "hearing" that light? **John 3:19**. Why do they hate it? **Verse 20**. And who loves being corrected – judged – by that light? **Verse 21**.

So you see, those who hate hearing "idolatry is wrong"... are those who love to have idols. Those who love righteousness, when you tell them "dream catchers are an idol and should not be in a Christian home", will say "thank you for telling me! Mine will be burned to ashes by dark!"

Those who "hate the light" will say "how dare you judge me!!" It's that simple. Those are the people who believe judging is the worst sin you can commit – those who hate to be corrected by God's word.

REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT

These are three important words used a lot in the KJV and some other translations. They are all used together in **2 Timothy 4:2**. People today read right over them and don't seem to grasp they are all commanding you to judge your fellow Christians.

"Reprove" comes from *Elegcho* meaning, among other similar things, "to... admonish... tell a fault... convict" (Strong's), "generally with a suggestion of shame of the person convicted", "to find fault with, correct... show one his fault, demand an explanation" (Online Bible Greek Lexicon = OBGL). Doing any one of those things God plainly commanded will get you kicked out of most modern churches. If you don't believe me, try it.

"Rebuke" in this verse comes from *Epitimaō*, meaning in this sense "... chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely ... to admonish or charge sharply" (OBGL). So this is a very stern, harsh or "sharp" correction. There is a place for this, for Jesus Himself did it many times (**Mark 8:33** for instance).

"Exhort" is *Parakaleō* which basically means to instruct or teach in a pleasant manner. These three words are different ways in which you correct sinners; "reprove" means telling someone they are wrong; firmly but calmly; "rebuke" means to tell them they are wrong sternly and sharply. And "exhorting" means telling them they are wrong pleasantly, or simply telling them the right thing if they didn't know it before.

Should you deal with different people in different ways? **Jude 1:22-23**. Some, you can turn around by pleasantly saying “Hey! You may not have known this, but the Sabbath starts at *sundown*, not midnight”. If someone was ignorant of this, there is no reason to jump down their throat about it.

On the other hand, if someone won't stop bringing unclean food to a potluck, it's time to sit them down and say, “Look, God says eating unclean animals is an *abomination*. The same word He uses to describe homosexuals and witches. Do you want to end up in the same resurrection as them?” This is saving them with FEAR. There is a place for both. After telling someone the same thing over and over, should you ever give up on them? **Titus 3:10**. (More on this in a future lesson).

How should you correct the unfruitful works of darkness? **Ephesians 5:11**. Should you rebuke sin in a corner, quietly? **1 Timothy 5:20**. How should you deal with people teaching false doctrine? **Titus 1:13**. Should you rebuke with authority? **Titus 2:15**. Where does that authority come from? **Mark 13:34**. On what do we base our judgments when we use that authority? **John 5:30, 8:16**.

Should you LIKE to be rebuked? **Ecclesiastes 7:5**. What happens when you rebuke a wise man? **Proverbs 9:8-9**. If you tell a wicked man – even tacitly – that he is righteous and God loves him as he is – what will happen to you? **Proverbs 24:24-25**. Does God love judgment? **Isaiah 61:8**. How does He feel about those who justify the wicked? **Proverbs 17:15**.

Does accepting those who do evil, and pretending they are good – not judging them – weary God? **Malachi 2:17**. Does God pronounce a curse on those who call the evil “good”? **Isaiah 5:20**. How should we feel about evil? **Amos 5:15**. Does hating evil REQUIRE judgment? (Same verse, and common sense). Who praises and coddles the unrighteous – and who argues with and condemns the wicked? **Proverbs 28:4**.

If you seek to find excuses to justify sinners rather than telling them their sins... and/or condemn the righteous for judging those sinners... what does God think of you? **Proverbs 17:15**. There's that word “abomination” again.

HOW DARE YOU NOT JUDGE?

So far, we have explained the scriptures used to oppose judging; but we have not yet touched on most of the ones that explicitly COMMAND you to judge your brother. One of the most important is in **Leviticus 19:17**. This verse is fundamental to behaving as a true Christian. It commands us not to hate our brother – we knew that, but HOW it tells us not to hate our brother is probably new to you!

It says “*REBUKE thy neighbour, and [do] not suffer sin upon him*”. In other words, correct him *sternly* – tell him his sin – and don't just allow him to sin without saying something. The KJV margin renders the last part of this verse “*that you bear not sin for him*”. This verse is saying if you see your brother sinning, and DON'T correct him, *it is possible for you to bear his sin in his place!*

RSV translates this verse... “*you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him*”, and Douay says “*reprove him openly, lest thou incur sin through him*”. What a frightening thought, to be blamed for your brother's sins! You probably have enough of your own! So how is it possible to bear his? **2 John 1:11**. Simply saying “goodbye” to a heretic – literally meaning “God be with you” – can make you a partaker of his evil deeds!

Can you be a partaker of other men's sins? **1 Timothy 5:22**. By attending a false church, **tacitly agreeing with them by your silence, can you be a partaker of her sins** – and therefore, her plagues as well? **Revelation 18:4**.

How can you avoid bearing your neighbor's sins? By obeying the command to “reprove him openly”. God lays the concept out in great detail in **Ezekiel 3** and **33**. God was appointing Ezekiel as a prophet over Israel, giving him a job to do. This job was to be a watchman over them, as a shepherd watches over the sheep. Read **Ezekiel 3:17-21**.

Ezekiel's job was to tell them the truth about their sins – if he warned them and they listened, great! If he warned them and they *didn't* listen, that was too bad for them, but Ezekiel was blameless because he warned them. If Ezekiel chickened out and DIDN'T tell them the truth, and DIDN'T warn them of their sins – then not only would God kill them for their sins, He would blame Ezekiel as well! If Ezekiel "*hated his brother in his heart*", and didn't "*rebuke them for their sins*", He would "*bear sin for them!*"

Did it matter whether Israel listened or not? **Ezekiel 2:5**. Should it matter to Ezekiel what names he was called by them because he did the job God gave him to do and condemned (judged) Israel for their sins? **Verses 6-8**. Did God really expect them to listen? **Ezekiel 3:5-7**. Was Ezekiel supposed to try anyway? **Verses 8-11**.

But does any of this apply to us? Surely it did to Ezekiel, but God hasn't appointed US to be watchmen, has He? Are WE our brother's keeper?

WATCHMEN

I began this lesson by quoting the story of Cain and Abel; Cain sarcastically demanded of God "am I my brother's *shamar*", and one of the definitions for *shamar* was **WATCHMAN!** So he literally asked "am I my brother's watchman??" and **Leviticus 19:17** answers "yes, you are". But there is much more proof than that.

The second time God brought the subject up to **Ezekiel** was in **chapter 33**; start reading in **verses 1-6**. Here God sets up an analogy, showing how in war, cities post a watchman – a guard or lookout – on top of a wall to warn the city when the enemy comes. This way, he can sound a trumpet and everyone can gather up weapons and be prepared when the enemy comes.

If this watchman appointed by the people sounds the trumpet and the people don't listen, well, that's hardly his fault. But if that watchman is asleep on the job and the enemy comes and kills everyone, he bears their blood on his hands *because his laziness caused everyone to be killed*.

But imagine for a moment the watchman SAW the enemy coming some night, but he "loved" the people so much he didn't want to blow the trumpet and rouse them out of their sweet sleep. Suppose he felt their comfort was so important, that he decided he wouldn't wake them up; and then the enemy came and killed them all. His "love" killed them! And their blood is on his hands.

This is the case in modern churches. The watchman *the people appointed* – the minister/pastor/priest – loves the people too much to correct them and make them uncomfortable. He knows they love to hear easy, fun, uplifting things so he *encourages* them but *never corrects* them (unless they judge someone or question church doctrine of course – but he never corrects actual sins).

He never warns them of the danger coming to them unless they repent and change their ways **so when Jesus returns, they'll still be comfortably "sleeping" and most will be killed with the rest of the rebellious world (Matthew 25:1-13). Next time Jesus comes, it won't be as a "lamb to the slaughter". It will be as KING OF KINGS! And next time He WILL be coming to JUDGE ALL NATIONS! (Revelation 14:7, Revelation 11:18, Jude 1:15).**

Today, the pastor never warns the people that judgment is coming; the minister never condemns their sins so they will be **READY** for that judgment. The priest absolves their sins and tells them God loves them "just as they are", that Jesus has saved them **IN** their sins – rather than saving them **FROM** their sins. Why do people love ministers like that? **2 Timothy 4:3-4**.

That shepherd is the watchman the **PEOPLE** appointed. **THEY** chose their minister and trusted him to watch over them – just as most modern church congregations choose their own pastor by a vote. But **GOD** appointed Ezekiel to be the watchman over the people in **Ezekiel 33:7-9**. It was Ezekiel's job to reprove these people *whether they asked him to or not! GOD had commanded him to do so!*

But that was for Ezekiel; God didn't make **YOU** the watchman... did He? Let's extend God's metaphor one step further.

THE JANITOR IN THAT CITY

Let's say you're in the same ancient city God mentioned in **Ezekiel 33:1-6**. There are guards all around the top of the city wall who are supposed to be watching for dangers to the city, but they're all playing cards, or drunk. You are just a lowly serf, with no rank or title or responsibility. A janitor, let us say.

And yet you look out through a knothole in the wall and see an enemy coming to destroy the city! What can you do? What would you do? What **MUST** you do? You now know something no one else in the city knows – and that knowledge makes you **RESPONSIBLE** to warn your friends and family! Your first task would be to warn the watchmen – “Hey up there, the enemy is coming!”

Their response, of course, is “No, the enemy isn't coming. Don't you know that **WE** are the watchmen? If the enemy was coming, **WE'D** know. Mind your own business, janitor!”, and they keep playing cards, laughing about a lowly janitor presuming to tell *them* how to do their job. Clearly they aren't interested in listening to you any more. So where would you go next? Your next thought would be to tell your friends and family the enemy is coming.

They would of course say, “if the enemy is coming, why haven't the **WATCHMEN** told us? Who do you think you are?? Leave this sort of thing to the professionals!” And after arguing with them, they too, refuse to listen to you. Then you go to the town square and shout it to everyone that if they don't wake up now they will all be killed when the enemy comes!

They then ride you out of town on a rail, mocking and making fun of you. What next? You know that once this village is overcome by the enemy, they will soon attack the other villages nearby, so you move on to the next village, where many of the same things happen, but perhaps a few listen to you this time.

That little analogy is a very good practical example of what we are talking about. There is a good chance that you already recognize this series of events because it has happened to you when you told preachers, family and friends about the immortality of the soul, the trinity, the Sabbath, and so on.

Like you, the janitor had no official responsibility to the village to watch for the enemy, but when he saw the enemy coming, that knowledge *made* him responsible! By knowing that an evil was coming upon his people when no one else knew it, he was *obligated* to warn his village! **If he hadn't, it would have been his fault they were massacred!** He would have known it and felt guilty for the rest of his life!

If the janitor had stuttered, would it have given him an excuse not to warn the watchmen, his family, and finally the whole town? What if he had had a limp? Or looked like a geek? Or wasn't able to write well? Or had been poor? Would any of these things have excused him from warning the rest of the village? I think not. No more do they excuse you or me.

WHO WOULD YOU BLAME?

Let's try a different analogy. Let's say you have two children, ages eight and three. Both are standing near a hot stove. The younger child doesn't know about fire, and reaches out to touch the stove. The older one sees him doing it, and knows the stove is hot, but is either too busy, or too tired, or (_insert lame excuse here_), to warn his younger sibling from being burned.

I ask you, who will you hold responsible for this child's burns? Is it not the older child? The older child will tell you “But you didn't **TELL** me to watch him!” How will you respond? Will you not say “But **YOU KNEW** he was going to hurt himself, it was your **RESPONSIBILITY** to warn him because **YOU KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING WOULD LEAD TO PAIN!**”

Of course you would. So would any sane parent. And so would God. Anyone who knows anything about the Bible knows there is no hell; that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament; that we are not born again; and dozens of other things. They also know the law of God is still binding, and anyone who breaks it is not only not going to be saved, but will bring suffering upon themselves in this life as well. They know sin leads to pain. If

they know that, and their brother doesn't... that makes them responsible. It makes them their brother's watchman.

God may not have come to you in a vision, appointing you as your brother's watchman. But *God gave you the understanding you have now!* It is the very few who are able to understand the truth you understand. Only those whose minds God opens can see it, and there is a price for that understanding – responsibility (**Luke 12:47-48**).

The more you know, the more responsibility there is. It's only fair to warn you that understanding the truth can be a heavy burden sometimes (**Ecclesiastes 1:18**). Heavier than you can understand yet, and probably not in the way you're thinking.

But it's a take-it-or-leave-it offer. You don't get knowledge without getting responsibility along with it. The statement "ignorance is bliss" is rooted in Biblical fact. But if you are worthy to be a child of God, you will choose knowledge of the holy (**Proverbs 9:10**) over temporary bliss in an instant.

A JUDGMENTAL RELIGION

As you may have guessed, I've had this argument with many, many people for many years. This subject is fundamental to true Christianity. We are a judgmental religion – history itself proves this. The Roman Empire in the first few centuries had incredible religious freedoms. It was an incredibly tolerant nation, and it actually LIKED to have many different religions practiced in its realm.

But the early Christians weren't content to have "just another religion". Rome would have happily let them have their religion *but the Christians wouldn't leave well enough alone*. Christianity taught that their religion was the ONLY true religion, and all others were pagans. They taught that those who served these false gods were spiritual Gentiles, blocked off from the blessings of the true God.

Everywhere they went, they stirred up trouble, bringing entire cities into conflict (**Acts 19:23-29, Acts 17:1-9**, etc.), causing people to say things like "*...this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*"

Paul said these gods, as beloved by the Greeks as Mary is by the Catholics or Jesus is by the Protestants, were not gods at all; and he was gathering enough of a following that the income of the idol-makers was suffering and they feared for the destruction of the temple to Diana! This is not the act of a live-and-let-live, agree-to-disagree religion!

Yet that's all that's left of Christianity today, a milksop of fake love and shallow traditions and tolerance of sin. The religion of the apostles was a thoroughly judgmental religion which was confident in the fact that there was no other religion but their own. Jesus Himself set this tone when He said, "*The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*" (**John 7:7**)

Testifying that the world's works are evil *requires judging the world as being evil*. Naturally, the world hates this, and so as Satan watered down the truth in successive generations, the world's false churches have completely eliminated all judgment. And because they hate judgment so much, this is very important to them. There are many objections they have developed. So we'll work through the most important now...

"BUT YOU CAN'T KNOW SOMEONE'S HEART!"

This phrase always pops up whenever you start judging people, usually from bystanders trying to defend the sinner's rights to sin. They claim their motivation is to keep you from sowing dissension and hurting this babe in Christ. Their true motivation, whether they realize it or not, is they don't want you judging *them* – and they're afraid when you move on from this sinner you'll turn to them next.

The axiom “you can’t know someone’s heart” is treated like scripture **but there is no verse in the Bible that says that**. If they quote a verse at all, it is usually **Luke 16:15** and **1 Samuel 16:7**. Neither says “you can’t know someone’s heart”. Ironically, they seldom quote the verse that supports the idea the best, **1 Kings 8:39**. But that merely says only God knows the hearts of ALL men. **It does not say we cannot have any idea what is in someone’s heart**.

What *does* the Bible say? **Matthew 15:18-19**. What comes out of the mouth came from where? The heart. So what comes out of the mouth... tells us what’s in the heart? **Mark 7:21-23**. So what a person says and does tells us what is in a person’s heart? Can you tell if their heart is good or evil by their works? **Luke 6:45**. Did Peter have any problem knowing Simon the sorcerer’s heart? **Acts 8:21-22**. Is the word of God a tool to help you discern what’s in the heart? **Hebrews 4:12**.

Did Jesus come to reveal the “thoughts of many hearts”? **Luke 2:34-35**. Can you tell a fool’s heart by what he says? **Proverbs 12:23**. Do those who “imagine evil” reveal what’s in their hearts? **Verse 20**. On the other hand, does a righteous heart reveal itself by its words? **Proverbs 10:20**. Does what’s in our hearts directly determine what our actions are? **Proverbs 23:6-7**.

Can you tell what’s in someone’s heart (and their conscience as well)? **Romans 2:13-15**. The work of the law that is written in their hearts IS REVEALED BY THEIR DEEDS! Did Peter know where Ananias’ lies came from? **Acts 5:3-4**. How did Peter know what was in Ananias’ heart? **Proverbs 27:19**.

The BBE translates that last verse “*Like face looking at face in water, so are the hearts of men to one another*”. When we look at someone else, we can understand their motivation *because we are motivated by the same things*. We are all selfish by nature; we all want our own way (**Jeremiah 17:9**). When you truly understand that about yourself, you have no difficulty seeing it in others. So looking at their heart is just like looking into a mirror and seeing your own.

Did Jesus know what was in our hearts? **John 2:24-25**. How did He know that? **Hebrews 2:16-18**. He took our nature upon Himself; so that He could be made IN ALL THINGS like us. He didn’t need someone to tell Him what our hearts were like *because He could look at His own and see!* And then looking at others was like looking at His own in a mirror.

Like Him, you can look at the works of other people, and know everything they do comes from the things in their heart; so ask yourself what would have to be in YOUR heart for those works to happen, and you’ll know what’s in their hearts. That’s all there is to it.

Knowing someone’s heart doesn’t require a telepath. It simply requires that you look at someone’s fruits and see whether they are good, or evil (**Matthew 7:15-20**). If their actions don’t tell you clearly enough, then “*provoke them to love and good works*” (**Hebrews 10:24**). Use that two-edged sword you have, the word of God, and tell them where they are sinning. That will provoke an action – good or bad – which will help you discern what’s in their heart.

If they take it to heart and mend their ways, then they are sincere, love God, and love truth. If they respond with verbal abuse, violence, and hatred – then that’s what’s in their heart. Because “*The wise in heart will receive commandments*” (**Proverbs 10:8**). **Therefore, if they won’t listen to the commandments, they aren’t “wise in heart”**. It’s really that simple.

There is a clear principle in the Bible which cannot be broken: **You cannot offend someone with the truth**. Can you? **Psalms 119:165**. You can’t love God and hate His law (**1 John 2:4-5, 5:3**). If you love God’s law *nothing can offend you*. If you love righteousness, then being told where you’re sinning – so you can stop and be more righteous – will make you LOVE the person who told you! It won’t offend you or “drive you from Christ”! **You can’t hurt someone with God’s law**.

And if there is a situation where God *really* isn't ready for someone to hear a certain piece of truth – because it might hurt them – then you can talk until you're hoarse **and they won't understand you. I've done it, many times.**

If you tell someone something too harsh, too complicated, or just plain too advanced for them, they just won't get it. Many people have come to me and said “wow, I read that lesson ten times and I never saw that before now! But now it makes SENSE!” ...because God hides that mind away in ignorance, so it can be protected by grace, until they are able to understand. **But you still speak the truth, and let God handle the protecting of the babes. They are, after all, His children, not yours.**

This is why God spoke in parables (**Mark 4:11-12**). Does God shut the eyes of people and close their ears? **Isaiah 6:9-10**. Does God have to GIVE us a heart to understand these things? **Deuteronomy 29:4**. If God doesn't open our understanding, can we understand the scriptures? **Luke 24:31-32, 44-45**.

God is in direct control of how much people understand, and when they understand it. Our goal should be to learn why and when God does this; but if we try to teach something too hard too soon, they won't even hear what we're saying. They might get mad, they might stare at us blankly; they might even appear to understand, and forget it 10 minutes later. I've seen all of those happen. **But you can't hurt someone with too much truth. God won't let you.**

You might waste your time and theirs; you might force them to make a decision sooner rather than later; they might have hung around church for another decade before finally leaving the church, if you'd left them alone; corrupting and diluting the church with their sins the whole time. But rest assured, *there is nothing you can do WITH the truth that will drive a person FROM the truth!*

Because NOTHING will offend those who love the truth. Why? **John 8:47. Therefore anyone who doesn't hear God's words is... ?**

“BEWARE THE MILLSTONE”

That leads us directly to the millstone scriptures. When you start judging people, and they get offended – which you now know is evidence their heart was not right with God – someone will point out Jesus' words in **Matthew 18:6**. If you can't offend someone with the truth, why did Jesus pronounce such a scary warning on those who offend “babes in the truth”?

Most people think it means you have to be very careful correcting their sins too soon. For example, suppose someone has been coming to church for a few weeks and then brings pork chops to a potluck. Should you FEAR to tell them you can't eat unclean meats – lest you offend them? Agonizing over this question makes some ministers nervous wrecks, and completely ineffectual because they are scared to say “boo!” to a new convert lest God curse them with a millstone necklace. But is that really what an offense is?

Is it *words* or *actions* which cause offense? **1 Corinthians 10:31-32**. [NOTE: The focus in that passage is on the word “DO” – things you DO; things you SAY are not mentioned]. Why is it important to avoid *doing* things that cause offense? **2 Corinthians 6:3**. What causes an offense? **Matthew 13:41**. What is it you offend against? **James 2:10**.

It is breaking the law and practicing iniquity – lawlessness – that causes an offense. Not speaking the truth, nor judging a sinner. Did Jesus offend people? **Matthew 15:12**. Did that bother Jesus? **Verses 13-14**. Was He fully aware the things He said would offend many people? **John 6:60-64**. WHY did His words offend some people? **Verses 6:65-66**. Who *wasn't* offended? And more importantly, WHY? **Verses 67-69**.

The people who were SURE that He was the Christ, and who KNEW He had the words of eternal life were not offended by the truth! Everyone else – THOUSANDS of people in that crowd – were! You see how the context answers these questions? And how we keep coming full circle back to these same important scriptures such as **John 6:65**?

No one can come to Jesus unless their minds are opened by God. Until then, what Jesus and His disciples say is gibberish to them (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). These things have to be understood with the help of God's spirit! To everyone else, they are nonsense! (**1 Corinthians 1:18-25**).

Can Jesus be an offense to some people, and a blessing to others – at the same time? **1 Peter 2:7-8**. And WHO “stumbles” at Jesus’ words? (Same verses). Just as Jesus said earlier, every plant not planted by His Father – all those who are not “drawn to Jesus” by the Father – will be rooted up. On the other hand, this verse cannot be quoted too much in this context: **Psalms 119:165**.

So if you can't offend someone with the truth, what can you offend them with? **Romans 2:17-22**. You offend babes in Christ, *not with the truth, but with sin!* If you say you should not steal, but they catch you stealing, **that is a great offense to them! And a great excuse for them to reject everything you say and go back to sinning!** And woe unto you when that happens!

Did David's dalliance with Bathsheba give great excuse to the enemies of God to ridicule God's way of life? **2 Samuel 12:14**. **David offended those “little ones” by breaking the law of God he taught others to keep!** Does a preacher's disobedience to the law cause many “little ones” to stumble? **Malachi 2:7-8**. What will happen to those who break the commandments, and teach men – even by their example – to do so? **Matthew 5:19**.

An “offense” is quoted in the same context as a “stumblingblock” several times, so let's briefly look at that word “stumblingblock”. What did God say about it? **Leviticus 19:14**. In other words, don't stick your foot out to trip the blind or make fun of the deaf who can't hear you. But by now, you certainly shouldn't be surprised to learn this was not written *only* for the literally deaf and blind!

Can you put a spiritual stumblingblock before people? **Revelation 2:14**. How? (Same verse). The stumblingblock that Balac put before Israel was *teaching them to sin!* They were spiritually blind as many scriptures tell us. And the temptation he offered them (idols and fornication) was a temptation for them to “trip” and fall. Can you put stumblingblocks up for yourself? **Ezekiel 14:3**.

Paul was constantly on His guard against this (**1 Corinthians 9:27**), as Jesus taught us all to be. Must your conscience be kept clean of offense against God AND men? **Acts 24:16**. We should all be like Daniel (**Daniel 6:4**), **in whom no fault could be found by the people; he gave them no excuse to reject God based on his actions!**

There is no example of telling someone too much truth harming them! But dozens of examples of men who were supposed to be examples of the truth sinning – and that sin offended many, and put a stumblingblock before them that they tripped over! **And THAT is why the CONTEXT of the VERY FIRST VERSE answers the question! (As it nearly always does!) – Matthew 18:7.**

In this world, there will always be stumblingblocks; there will always be excuses to sin! **But woe unto the man who gives babes that excuse!** They NEED those excuses, so God can see who loves truth and who doesn't (**1 Corinthians 11:19**). But woe to you if YOU provide those babes with one *by doing those things which you say should not be done!*

Telling a new convert that he has to stop working on Friday nights, teaching that angel statuettes are idols, or saying that hell is a perverted Satanic doctrine *is not the offense Jesus warned against!* **Working Friday nights yourself, keeping your own collection of angel statues, or having a license plate that says “Jesus – It's Hell Without Him!” IS such an offense** – because how can you teach against these things when you yourself do them! *That's millstone territory!*

But teaching the truth – any truth, no matter how advanced, harsh, or unusual it may be cannot hurt babes. If you teach them what Jesus taught, they can only be blessed by it: **Matthew 11:6**. That's why the Bereans are held up as a good example of true Christians (**Acts 17:10-12**). The exact same things were also taught to the

Thessalonians, who were greatly troubled by it and tried to undermine the exact same teaching (**verses 1-9, 13-15**).

“DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN”

In **Proverbs 6**, when listing the seven things God hates (**verses 16-19**), God says He hates “...*he that soweth discord among brethren*”. If you judge someone, and they don’t want to hear it – because they are not of God – they will react loudly, sometimes violently. Some bystander will invariably point a finger at you and say you’re in trouble because God hates “*he that sows discord among brethren*”. Is that what this scripture was meant to condemn – someone telling someone else that their sin is wrong?

If anyone ever just read the context, they’d see exactly what God meant. **Proverbs 6:12-15**. This is a person who sows discord – “a wicked man” who “devises mischief”! He’s not “sowing discord” by speaking the truth or judging sin, **but by sinning himself!** Later in Proverbs, a clearer example is in **Proverbs 16:28**.

Surely you know this talebearer; he goes to one brother, and talks for hours; then he goes to the other, and tells him everything the other one said about him, sometimes twisting it a bit; then goes back to the other one. Soon, without hardly ever talking, these two hate each other, mostly because of what the talebearer said. The same principle is repeated in **Proverbs 17:9**. This is the person who “plants the seeds of strife” between brothers; a gossip with nothing better to do than stir up trouble – even though that usually isn’t his motive, that’s always the result.

“ONLY SATAN ACCUSES THE BRETHREN!”

When you point out a sin, invariably someone responds with this; that it is Satan who pokes at the faults of brethren, not God. This is based on **Revelation 12:10**. I could point to a hundred scriptures where God, the apostles, prophets and writers pointed out sins, but that never seems to slow this argument at all – because it is based in emotion, not fact.

Let’s look at this a different way. Satan accuses the brethren before the Father; but he’s not the only one who does! Read **John 5:45**. Moses accuses the Pharisees before the Father. But Moses is dead – how can he accuse the Pharisees? Well, how can Abel witness against us? **Hebrews 11:4**. Abel is dead, but he speaks to us. How? Because GOD TESTIFIED OF HIM. Where? In **Genesis 4**. God wrote his witness down so we have access to it.

In the same way, Moses’ words were written down and those words accused the Pharisees, because “*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?*” (**John 7:19**). In fact, do we have a “great cloud” of witnesses against us? **Hebrews 12:1**. Who are these witnesses? **Hebrews 11:1-31**. Anyone else? **Verses 32-40**. (So basically everyone in the Bible.)

How did Noah condemn the world? **Hebrews 11:7**. How did Jesus condemn sin? **1 Peter 2:21-24**. Jesus condemned sin by overcoming sin; Noah condemned the world by obeying God when everyone else said it was impossible, or a waste of time. Moses accuses us to the Father every time we don’t follow any commandment he relayed to us.

Satan is far from the only accuser of the brethren. Every righteous man who has ever lived is an example, a witness, and an accuser of everyone who fails to be righteous. That’s the whole point of this plan – to prove that Man can obey God. Every righteous man in history is a witness that they can. When Jesus was here, it wasn’t His place to accuse the Pharisees to the Father. Is that still the case? **John 12:48, John 5:22**.

Now, we can paraphrase Jesus’ own words when they call us Satan, accuser of the brethren and respond “Do not think that *I* will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even *Jesus*, in whom ye trust”.

Jesus told them, “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?*” **Luke 6:46 (RSV)**. Every time they call Him “Lord” while going to church on Sunday, Jesus will accuse them before the Father – just one example of many.

“DON'T MAKE WAVES”

Some will tell you that Christians should never speak out against sin, but only be examples of the truth. This requires them to ignore dozens of scriptures like **Isaiah 58:1** and **2 Timothy 4:2**, but most people who use this argument aren't that skilled in the Bible anyway.

They like to say things like “we'll just agree to disagree”... that's one thing when you're arguing with a stranger, but can you do that with a brother? **Amos 3:3**. You can't walk **as a brother** with someone you disagree with about something fundamental to your way of life. You can walk as an *acquaintance*, as a business associate or a Facebook “friend”; but not as a brother in Christ. Because who is your brother in Christ? **Matthew 12:50**.

Regardless which of you is right, if you serve the will of two different fathers, you aren't brothers. It's one thing when you're debating the exact date when God created Lucifer – that's not really important. It's something else when you're debating whether or not God expects us to judge sinners, or whether He is a trinity, or whether sinners go to hell. You cannot “agree to disagree” over anything so fundamental and still pretend to be brothers. If you try, you will never be able to have a relationship deeper than you have with your accountant or plumber or mailman.

So let's ask the question, does a true Christian argue? Are we only to be examples of the truth, or are we also to speak out for God? What happens when we meet someone who tells us, for example, we'll go to hell when we die – should we grunt noncommittally, quietly disagree, or is it ever appropriate to get into a heated argument about it?

Every Christmas, the entire Christian world sings that Jesus came to bring “peace on Earth, good will towards men”. This is based on **Luke 2:10-14**. But why not ask Jesus why He came? Was it to bring *peace* on Earth? **Matthew 10:34-36**. Did He come to bring unity to the church? **Luke 12:51-53**. Did people argue whether Jesus was the Christ or not? **John 9:16**. Did Paul ever preach the gospel “with much contention” (much conflict or argument)? **1 Thessalonians 2:2**.

It should no longer be a surprise to hear Jesus saying the exact opposite of what the entire world says. He didn't come to bring unity to the church. If that were His intention, He failed miserably because the church is far more fractured now than it was when He arrived!

He came to bring division; argument; battles between brethren. That is shockingly different from what you've always believed, but it's a direct quote from Jesus' own lips. But you'll have to wait a minute to learn WHY He brought division, while we address another related objection...

“THE UNITY OF THE FAITH”

This argument stems from the belief that God hates division, and that He expects us all to just put up with each other's sins “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith*” (**Ephesians 4:13**). Not only does this never work in the long run, but it is impossible to square with scripture.

Anyone who believes there was never disagreement or bickering in the church has never read their Bible. Even among the apostles, there was dissension. God reveals understanding to individuals, not to groups – and often God reveals it to the most unlikely, unrespectable person, to teach the respected members a lesson in humility (**1 Corinthians 1:27-30**).

For example, Paul was an enemy of the church of God before his conversion. Yet, God chose to give Paul more understanding than all the apostles put together. God revealed things to Paul, an ex-murderer, **which He hadn't revealed to His best friends, Peter, James and John!** Just to see if they loved truth, or if they were too “important” in their positions as God's apostles to listen to scum like Paul!

Read **Acts 15:1-2**. Paul was teaching – on God's authority – that circumcision was abolished. But the Jewish Christians were going behind Paul's back and trying to undermine his teachings. So Paul and Barnabas had “no

small dissension and disputation” about the question. **True Christians can stand their ground in a debate about what they believe! And aren’t shy about doing so!**

Was the agreement in **Acts 15** AFTER extended arguing? **Verse 7**. Since most of these men WERE called by God and WERE converted and sincere, did the other Christians – James, Peter, and the others – admit they were wrong? **Verses 7-21**. Note this is the exact opposite of their previous teaching in **Acts 15:1-2**. Is debating a good thing? **Proverbs 27:17**.

Debating important issues is a GREAT thing, because it means someone is going to learn something! Most of my understanding has come from arguing with heretics – some from arguing with friends. As long as both sides use the Bible as their sole source of truth, and as long as both sides want the answer MORE than they want to be right, **both sides always profit from the experience!**

Later in the same chapter, Paul and Barnabas had an intense argument – **Acts 15:36-40**. They parted ways because Barnabas wanted to take Mark, and Paul didn’t trust him because he had abandoned them before. This debate was so important to them that they split the church over it! Much later however, Paul changed his mind about Mark in **2 Timothy 4:11**. Was Paul wrong? Perhaps. On the other hand, perhaps what Paul did is exactly what needed to happen to Mark to help him grow into a better, more trustworthy person.

Paul and Barnabas fought over this point, and “*there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other*” (**RSV**). **And yet everyone involved profited in the long run**. When iron is used to sharpen iron, sparks often fly – but the job gets done as long as both sides stick with it. What is the job of true Christians? **2 Timothy 4:2**. What is the responsibility of Christians towards each other? **1 Corinthians 6:1-8**. The church of God at Corinth was a... troubled church to say the least. But Paul makes it clear that he expected **the least respected member** to be able to resolve conflicts between members.

Ideally, the church is composed of fully converted, deeply spiritual people full of faith. In reality, it is always composed of people in varying states of understanding, varying states of carnality and varying states of sincerity. The better the church follows the commands of God, the less of that there is; but while the heart of man “*lusteth to envy*” there will always be some of it. Where does dissension come from? **Proverbs 13:10**.

The arguments between Paul and the Jews were because the Jews were too proud to consider that this one-time enemy of their church might have understanding God hadn’t given THEM, God’s chosen people. After sufficient argument, they were able to see the truth their pride had kept them from seeing. But many people’s pride is simply too powerful to overcome with reason.

God’s church is not always harmonious; a quick glance at the NT will show you that. But if it truly is God’s church, they work out their problems and it works out in the end. Judging each other is necessary for righteousness and peace. Because if no judging is done, every minor problem festers under the surface until it smolders into a flame of hatred. Problems never go away; they are either resolved God’s way, or they stir up strife forever. The next lesson will tell you all about how to resolve problems, so we won’t discuss that more now.

WHY DID JESUS BRING DIVISION?

Imagine yourself in the time of Jesus for a moment; not knowing anything about what was to happen of course. You see this man Jesus saying mighty words, and doing miracles. However, He disagrees with all of the men you’ve ever respected, men you’ve always treated as scholars, and wise men – almost like gods themselves (the scribes and Pharisees).

You would have to make a choice; you could follow what you’d always followed, and stay safe and comfortable; or you could risk everything and follow Jesus because what He said made sense. This is the choice that everyone who picks up a Bible faces, then and now. When Jesus came, what did people say about Him? **John 7:12**.

Some thought He was a liar, a charlatan, a false prophet. Others thought He might be on to something. Some said He wasn't *on to* something, He was just *on* something (**John 10:20**). Others said that someone possessed or crazy couldn't speak such words of truth (**John 10:21**). Still others said there was no way the Christ would come from Galilee (**John 7:41**).

(Galileans were the rednecks and hillbillies of Israel). The Pharisees “knew” Jesus wasn't the Christ because He didn't keep *their* rules about how to keep the Sabbath day (**John 9:16**). Others said no sinner could do such miracles... so “*there was a division among them*”.

Jesus healed a blind man, and the Pharisees claimed that it was some trick (**John 9:17-18**). His parents having just had their son healed, admitted it was their son but refused to comment on the miracle (**verses 19-21**). Why? **Verses 22-23**. Their fear of being put out of “God's church” was greater than their fear of God, so they refused to comment on the miracle that healed their son's sight. Don't think God didn't notice that!

The Jews demanded this man give God the praise (**verse 24**). And surely that was a good idea – *but accepting that Jesus had healed him WAS giving God the praise, for Jesus spoke for God and represented Him!* The man then told them no sinner could have opened his eyes as Jesus did (**verses 25-26**), and said it somewhat rudely because they were obviously not interested in truth (**verse 27**).

They in turn mocked him and Jesus (**verses 28-29**). He responded with a strong argument that Jesus was from God (**verses 30-33**), and they kicked him out – certainly out of their presence, but probably out of the church congregation as well, based on **verse 22**. Now what was learned by this “division among them”? What could God learn from this?

He learned this man was willing to stand up for Jesus against the religious leaders. He learned the man's parents loved the church more than the truth. And He learned the Pharisees would not believe Jesus came from God, not even if He healed the blind. This division gave God and everyone else watching unarguable proof of these facts.

Once this all took place, Jesus turned up again (**verses 35-38**). He had disappeared shortly after healing the man, no doubt to see how the man would react to the Pharisees' inquisition. Then Jesus showed up after this discussion and revealed more understanding to him. Notice how God always waits to see how well you do with what He's already given you before you get more!

Jesus made some harsh comments on the Pharisees (**verses 39-41**); closing with a verse that, incidentally ties all this back into grace; if they were blind, they would not have had sin; but because they said “we see”, their sin remained (could not be covered by grace).

That case history is a perfect example of why Jesus brought division. He brought it to find out who loved truth, and who loved their own way. Who loved the church, and who loved God; He sees to it that we are offered a million heresies in our life, each one an opportunity for us to follow “*the way that seemeth right to a man*” (**Proverbs 14:12**) – or to reject our way, and choose to follow what God said instead.

Without that, if we just spent our life in a comfortably sheltered cocoon of perfect Christians we would have no reason to choose right from wrong, because we'd only be given the choice to do right. Just like Adam and Eve were before Satan came around. Sure, we'd be more righteous... but only as long as our perfect church stayed perfect. When it became imperfect, most people would follow it to serve the Devil just as they followed it to serve God.

Another good case history is in **Acts 28**; in **verses 17-21**, Paul having just arrived in Rome called for all the respected Jews in the city, and told them what had happened to him, and they said it was all news to them. But they had heard of the Christian sect (**verse 22**), and were curious, because “*every where it is spoken against*”. Everyone hated Christians because *Christians judged everyone else!* It's impossible for everyone to hate most modern so-called Christians, but the true Christians “*testify of the world, that its works are evil*”.

Paul taught them about Jesus all day long (**verse 23**), and some believed – and some didn't (**verses 24-25**). So Paul quoted Isaiah at them (**verses 26-28**), and – here is the important part! – “...*the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves*” (**verse 29**). It is this “reasoning among themselves” that shows God what each person loves, and even if they are all sincere *it helps them understand God better* by their “*iron sharpening iron*”!

If everyone had just “gotten along in brotherly love” so to speak... no one would have had to make these choices. And God wouldn't have known where they stood... and neither would they! Oh, sure, it would have been easier, **but it wouldn't have done anything of value! Value, TRUE ETERNAL VALUE, comes after the fight is over!**

After the bickering is finished, after all the cards have been played, and a decision has been reached... THEN you KNOW what you believe, and you know **WHY YOU BELIEVE IT**, and most important of all – you know you can defend it!

It's not a private, pet doctrine you're afraid to discuss – it's TRUTH that can be defended against ANY argument – because truth can be defended, every time. If you would be afraid of arguing with anyone about any issue you claim to believe, then you aren't *sure* it's true!

Oh sure, you think it's true. It makes sense to YOU. But TRUTH can be defended against ANYONE. Remember this always; **IF YOU CAN'T PROVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO AN OPINION!**

Truth, lasting truth that CANNOT be shaken by another man's mere opinion, only comes AFTER you have been through the fight, and DEFENDED IT. This is the TRUTH that this disagreement between Paul and the rest of the church helped bring about. This is one of the DIVISIONS that Christ came to send.

The word of God CAUSES contention because carnal man naturally RESISTS TRUTH! So the truth must be defended by those less carnal than their fellows, which stirs up further discussion – and possibly draws more people into the debate! But this is not a bad thing – no, this contention is a GLORIOUS thing, because after it's all said and done... everyone knows where each other stands!

This doesn't mean you should *ignore* divisions – but confront them, resolve them, and move on! (**1 Corinthians 1:10**). It may take sharp disagreement to bring this about, but THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DIVISION IN THE FIRST PLACE!

God hates unity at the expense of truth, because such unity isn't unity at all – it's a pretense that any wise person can see right through. It will collapse at the first sign of trouble, because you are only pretending to be united as brethren – in reality “...*when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation....*” (**1 Corinthians 14:26**).

That was not a positive comment from Paul to the Corinthians, it was a complaint that they pretended to be brethren, but every single one of them had his own pet doctrine no one else believed; but Peter told us “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*” (**2 Peter 1:20**).

If you can't defend your opinion from the word of God, then you have no right to have an opinion. If you just “know it's in the Bible somewhere” you have no right to speak in the presence of anyone who knows their Bible – so you should do as **Proverbs 30:32** says.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is your obligation to judge righteous judgment. It is also your obligation to keep beams out of your eye, and not to allow your neighbor to sin without saying something. This will not make you popular with scorners – but wise men will love you for it (**Proverbs 9:8**). And either way, in the long run, will rebuking a man get you more love than flattery or shallow pretense of friendship? **Proverbs 28:23, Proverbs 27:5-6.**

What does a false prophet do? **Lamentations 2:14**. It is the job of a false prophet to pretend the wicked are fine just as they are. Do carnal people specifically choose teachers who will do this? **2 Timothy 4:3**. Do they want to hear easy, fun, uplifting things – or correction? **Isaiah 30:9-12**.

What does God's word do? **Hebrews 4:12**. We have that sword to use, to prick the hearts of the unbelievers (**Acts 2:37**), but so few are willing to use it (**2 Corinthians 2:17**). What does God say to those who change the word of God to soften it, make it "smoother" for the people? **Jeremiah 48:10**.

God says those who are supposed to do the work of God are CURSED when their sword does not bring blood! Obviously, this is spiritual blood – such as when Peter pricked people in their hearts in **Acts 2**. God has given those of us who know the truth a sword – a sword which makes sinners uncomfortable, even pains them. Most preachers use the word of God deceitfully, only quoting half of verses out of context to make the people feel good and never correcting them with the sword of the word of God!

God expects us to USE this sword, and pronounces a curse upon anyone whose sword does NOT bring forth blood! Anyone who doesn't use this sword of God, the truth, to lay bare the sins of mankind and prick the consciences and hearts of the wicked is CURSED! That's pretty scary, but plain fact.

But doing that isn't always easy. That's why God wrote **Proverbs 24:10**. Who hasn't heard that scripture? **But who has read the context??** Read **verses 11-12**. It takes STRENGTH to stand in the day of adversity... and that day comes whenever you stand for what's right. If you don't feel like telling your family, your church, your preacher, they are wrong... if you say "well, I didn't know..." or "it wasn't my place"... doesn't "*He that ponders the heart consider it*"? And doesn't "*He that keeps your soul know it*"? **And won't He "give to every man according to HIS WORKS"?**

All these verses are in the context of judging righteous judgment; of "delivering those" who are headed for destruction. Whether they are reaching out to touch a hot stove, or there are barbarians boiling up over the horizon, or they are keeping Christmas and praying to "God the Holy Spirit". They're all headed for pain, suffering, and destruction, and God will hold you responsible for not saving anyone you could have helped.

People often say "when the persecution of the church comes, we'll do such and such". But that persecution won't come until everyone in the church stands up and teaches the truth God gave it to teach – until they use that sword God gave them to use.

Did God expect us to get run out of cities? **Matthew 10:23**. Should men call us all manner of foul names because of what we believe? **Matthew 5:10-12, Luke 6:22-23**. Should it gravely concern you if everyone speaks well of you? **Verse 26**. Are you guaranteed to have trouble in the world – if you're doing what you should be doing? **John 16:33**.

Why did the world hate and crucify Jesus? **John 7:7**. Did He say they should hate us as well? **John 15:18-20**. Specifically in the end time? **Matthew 24:9**. **What is there about you that all nations could possibly hate? If you are a true Christian, there should be many things – and more all the time, as you learn more of the truth.**

But suppose God hasn't sent you; should you still teach the law of God to everyone you can? **Jeremiah 23:21-22**. Maybe God hasn't sent you! Maybe He hasn't sent me! Maybe He doesn't even know we're alive! **IT DOESN'T MATTER!** Because if we STAND in the counsel of the Lord, and cause people to HEAR HIS WORDS, and PREACH THE PLAIN, untarnished, unadulterated, UNDILUTED TRUTH from the BIBLE, **we will turn them – some of them – from their evil ways!**

Jesus complained about the Pharisees that they had passed over – ignored – "judgment, mercy, and faith". All modern churches have as well. They not only ignore them, but they actively teach against all three. But Paul said it well when he said...

Philippians 1:9 *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge AND IN ALL JUDGMENT;*

But this is only part of the story. The next lesson is even more important – for it tells you what to do after judging.

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This publication is not to be sold; "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

We are dedicated to providing the SIMPLE answers to difficult questions. Please submit questions and/or comments to us using the contact information below.

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