

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

Lesson 8. Judgment Disqualifies

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. - Luke 6:36

If there is the slightest trace of judgment in your heart toward a person then you are disqualified from interceding for him or her.

True intercession is to pray according to the will of God, and it is impossible to agree with God's will when you are holding judgment.

Judgment demands a payment to atone for offenses committed. God's mercy atones for sin through confession, forgiveness, and redemption.

Instruction

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. - Romans 14:4

True justice demands satisfaction. There are only two possibilities: right or wrong. If the standards are not met, then the wrong must be reconciled. Reconciliation means to make restitution, to make atonement, to right the wrong. Judgment, in its truest sense, is the act of assessing what is right, identifying what is wrong, and declaring the gap between the two. The guilty party is the one responsible to repay or settle the difference in the account.

While justice demands satisfaction, God offers mercy. In order for God to be just, He must execute justice. He cannot simply overlook the debt, but must account for full restitution. God's mercy is only effective because Jesus Christ paid the debt. As perfect judge, God can transfer the payment made by His Son to cover the debt owed by His child. This is a description of forgiveness in the language of accounting.

Intercession means to pray the will of God. In 2 Peter 3:9 it says: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." There is no room for the intercessor to operate in judgment while still agreeing with the stated will of God that all should reach repentance. The intercessor must pray in agreement with God's desire to offer freedom and healing to the debtor. It is God's character and nature to forgive all who call on Him.

Justice will be served on the "Day of the Lord." It is God that will judge on that day and declare the final matter of all things. The point of this article is to remind us that judgment is His job, and that we are not equipped to take the responsibility from Him. We can trust that He will not jeopardize true justice while operating in His patience.

Judgment versus Discernment

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. - 2 Corinthians 10:5

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). There is an absolute standard of Truth, and His name is Jesus. All discrepancies between Truth and opinion must be resolved and reconciled to Christ. Healing prayer is a process by which we interrogate beliefs, sometimes called strongholds, and replace them with Truth.

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Discernment is the perfect judgment of God who is the source of all truth. The judgment of man is incomplete because it is sourced from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is why we must rely on God's judgment rather than our own. God's truth is passed as discernment through conviction and a pure conscience. The conviction of sin is one of the roles of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of discernment is to prompt the child of God to confess and repent so he can be reconciled to the Truth.

Judgment in the hands of God's enemies becomes accusation. Satan accuses the brethren day and night before God (Revelation 12:10). The purpose of the accusation is to hold debtors captive through guilt and shame. The unbeliever struggles under the burden of this debt because there is no hope of restitution or remediation.

However, judgment in the hands of God's allies becomes discernment. The Holy Spirit makes a man aware of the discrepancy between right and wrong. The intercessor that is filled with the Holy Spirit acts in agreement with Him. Then the believer chooses to confess the sin and ask for mercy. Jesus accepts the consequence of the sin because He has already paid the full price. Complete remission of sin will be declared by the Father on the Day of the Lord.

Prophetically speaking, the remission of sin is already as "good as done."

Intercessors have been given the ministry of reconciliation. We surrender our right to judge. We choose to love instead, which is to agree with God's desire for mercy. We discern the discrepancy and invite the participant to confess the sin. Then we act as witness to the spiritual transaction and proclaim the forgiveness complete according to the promise of God (1 John 1:9). We attest to the fact that reconciliation is already as "good as done."

Sources of Judgment

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. - Romans 14:10

Where does the temptation to pass judgment on others come from?

The first source is a justice mentality. We are created in God's image and desire true justice. We have been given dominion, or authority, over things on the earth. It is natural that we would use that dominion to attempt to preserve justice. Unfortunately, we were not created to take that responsibility on ourselves. We can only do this work as long as our authority is directly linked to God's, through the Holy Spirit. Operating independently of God with a justice mentality is to usurp God's authority. It leads to a battle of wills with Him. We must surrender any justice mentality.

Another source of judgment comes from unresolved trauma or pain. We have observed that if an intercessor has any unresolved issues they are likely to be triggered in a prayer appointment. The reason is that an old wound or existing offense against someone can be awakened by a similar situation that affects the participant. When the feelings and beliefs are activated it may cause the intercessor to resent and judge the participant. A similar form of judgment can come when the intercessor is triggered into a codependent response. In this case, he or she may be trying to carry the offense for the participant. This can lead to judgment, as well.

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Judgment can also come from the intercessor's unresolved stronghold or offense. A stronghold is a "lofty opinion" or ungodly belief that is lurking in a person, affecting how they perceive truth. It could also be a coping strategy or emotion that the intercessor still employs to deal with such false beliefs. Finally, it could be a judgment felt by the intercessor that is projected onto the participant.

Judgment can take the form of prejudice because of the intercessors core values and worldview. If the intercessor applies his or her standards to another person and finds them wanting, this is a form of judgment. This is especially true in cross-cultural circumstances. It is wise to remember that the values you hold most dearly are the ones that cost you the most to obtain. For instance, a painful experience may have taught you to guard your heart with fear, and then self-protection becomes a strong core value. It is judgment to hold someone else to your standards.

Release Judgment

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." - John 7:24

There are three key ways to release judgment.

First, exercise humility. Surrender your right to be right, and allow the Holy Spirit to convict the sinner. As it says in Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Lay down your paradigm and core values, and allow the participant full personhood.

If you find yourself triggered in a prayer appointment interrupt the process and pray for peace. Proclaim a blessing on the participant and close. Work on the unresolved issues or strongholds, and then reschedule if appropriate.

Second, exercise compassion. Ask God to show you the person from His perspective, and care deeply for him or her despite their circumstances. This obeys the commandment to love one another. Remember, everyone has a story. If you know what the person has lived through and the challenges they have faced, you cannot help but be moved to compassion.

Sympathy feels similar to compassion; it means to identify with someone and how they feel. This is loving, but avoid codependence which would entice you to take on their emotions for them, rather than resolve them in true reconciliation. Pity is a form of judgment because it judges the person as trapped in his current condition. A heart of compassion overcomes the temptation toward judgment.

Third, exercise prophetic faith. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment so you will be able to see the person as God intends them to be. Identify the discrepancy, such as an offense or stronghold, as a temporary condition. Use your spiritual vision to see the person after the transfer is complete. Believe and proclaim the future truth of the person's God-given identity. Call forth his or her perfected beliefs, behaviors, and feelings. The ministry of reconciliation will make him or her a new person, and in faith you can declare that it is as "good as done."

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Lesson 8: Judgment Disqualifies Exercise

Interrogate your judgments by using the table below.

What sin, offense, or action tempts you toward judgment? <i>(anger, sexual sin, control, etc)</i>	
Who or what caused you to be sensitive toward this issue?	
What will you do to replace the judgment with compassion?	
Ask God to forgive you for judgment and to replace your sense of justice with a heart of compassion.	

Sharing: Judgment Disqualifies

Discuss these points and questions in your small group.

- What sin seems worst to you, such as murder, rape, addiction, pride, control, adultery, weakness, deception, etc.?
- Identify the top one or two offenses by consensus of the small group.
- Assume that a (mythical) person charged with that offense is being tried. Take turns acting as a defense attorney for that person, while the rest of the group takes the role of jury.
- In two minutes or less, tell a story about the defendant that addresses his or her condition. Feel free to be creative. You are trying to move the jury to compassion, not trying to convince them of the defendant's innocence.
- At the conclusion of each defense attorney's statement the "jury" gives a thumbs up or thumbs down vote based on how they were moved to compassion.
- What was the most effective tool for building compassion?

Caring: Judgment Disqualifies

Spend some time in prayer together. Confess together your judgments and then repent to a heart of mercy. Use this time to act as witnesses for each other, and guide in the release of offense as necessary.