

Week Three - Judgment

John 8:1-11

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Do you believe that Christians have an obligation, or duty, to judge the sins of others? Why or why not? Is there a specific Bible passage that you use to get that opinion? What is it?
2. Let's read a challenging story. Go to John 8:1-11. What is the outline of this story in three or four bullet points?
3. Were the Pharisees telling the truth? Had the woman committed the sin they claimed or was this a false accusation?
4. Based on Brené Brown's distinction between guilt and shame (shame=you are a bad person, guilt=you did a bad thing), which is the better way to describe this woman, an adulterous woman or a woman caught in adultery? Why does the difference matter?
5. How did the woman's guilt affect Jesus' handling of the situation?
6. There are two truths that Christians struggle to hold in tension: sin demands justice; Christ gives mercy to sinners. In this story, on which side of the spectrum did Jesus fall? What do you think are some principles that can guide us as we struggle with similar situations today?
7. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God for His discernment to help us when we try to live with both justice and mercy in a sinful world today.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. On day one this week, we talked about the tension between knowing when to apply judgment and when to apply mercy to another person. Today, let's look at some biblical principles to guide us. Read James 4:11-12.
9. This is a difficult passage to understand! What do you think James means by this? What kinds of situations might he be referring to?
10. Do you think there are still situations where it, in fact, would be acceptable to judge our brothers and sisters? How would those be different from what James is talking about?
11. For some clarification, read what James says a couple of chapters earlier in 2:8-13. What f-word does he say clouds our judgment when we try to convict lawbreakers?

12. Watch this fascinating short video about something we all have without realizing it, a moral circle.
<https://vimeo.com/141912402/96906d26bc>.
13. How can understanding our moral circle change the way we apply judgment to others?
14. End your FIFTEEN by praying that God will help you see your own blind spots and favoritism when you apply judgment to others. Ask Him to help give you His eyes to see people the way He sees them – and to apply judgment or mercy appropriately.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. Let's look again at the incident of the woman caught in adultery. Read John 8:1-11. How ironclad was the case of her accusers?
16. Now read the original law they were using to justify their action in Leviticus 20:10. What key part of this law were the Pharisees ignoring?
17. We see that there was an intentional choice to punish the woman and not the man in a consensual, illegal act. What might have motivated this choice?
18. If the woman had been stoned to death, as the law technically required, would justice have been served? Why or why not? When Jesus arranged her release, was justice served?
19. Whose guilt was actually the deciding factor in the judgment of the woman caught in adultery?
20. The guilt of the accusers is what decided the woman's lack of punishment. When you have been in situations to express judgment of others, how often does your own general guiltiness affect your decisions? Should it? How much? In every situation?
21. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, ask God to give you an accurate awareness of your own flaws and guilt, not so that you would feel ashamed, but so that you would be driven to mercy whenever possible in your judgments of others. Then ask God to help you remember your own need for mercy when you're tempted to judge others.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. Let's read another difficult and highly nuanced passage, Romans 14:1-12. According to Paul, what's the difference between a weak believer and a strong believer? Look especially at verses 1-3. Which kind of believer has more rules to follow? Why is that?

23. Can you think of examples where something might be a sin for one believer, but not for another? For example, a recovering alcoholic Christian might not drink because it would be a sin, but another Christian could drink without sinning.
24. Now reread verses 10-12. Why does Paul say it's not our business to judge another Christian in grey areas?
25. Who will ultimately judge all believers and unbelievers alike?
26. How hard or easy is it for you to trust God that people, including yourself, will ultimately get a right and just reward for their actions, in light of the action of Jesus Christ?
27. End your FIFTEEN by praying a prayer of praise to God. Thank Him that He is the almighty judge and that His application of judgment and mercy will be absolutely right.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

28. Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. Paul makes two main points in this section. What are they?
29. How are these commands different from what we read yesterday in Romans 14:10-12? What about this situation requires a different attitude toward judgment?
30. In grey areas, we are not supposed to be quick to judge, but Paul seems to think that there are some non-grey areas. Do you agree with his list of which sins require a harsher approach?
31. Paul then makes a very important pivot in verses 12 and 13. About which group of people does he start talking?
32. Today, how well do Christians do at following the command from verse 12?
33. If we are not supposed to judge unbelievers, then how do you think Christians are supposed to witness to the world?
34. Close your final FIFTEEN this week in prayer and ask God to curb your judgmental impulses in order for you to better share His love with everyone.