

Encourage Each Other

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Jesus said, "*Do not judge, or you too will be judged*" (Matthew 7:1). Of all the commandments of Christ, the warning against judging others has been one of the most ignored.

It is true that we humans do need to judge some things. According to First Corinthians 6:5, there must be judgments on civil disputes. Romans 13:1-7 says that the designated authorities are set up by God to judge between those who do right and those who do wrong.

However, when it comes to spiritual matters, the Bible says that for now God is the judge of all men. (Hebrews 12:23) Eventually, the saints will have some part in judging the world. (1 Corinthians 6:2 and Revelation 20:4). But for now, we are to leave judgment in spiritual matters in God's hands.

The reason we are not to judge one another's spiritual condition is that we don't really understand what is inside another person. The Bible says, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

A minister I know had spent years talking to a man about giving his life to Jesus Christ. The man, who I'll call John, lived a non-Christian lifestyle and wanted nothing to do with the church where his wife attended. However, he liked the minister and they developed a friendship.

One day John was working near the top of a tower on a high voltage power line when something went terribly wrong. He was shocked and sent hurtling to the ground about 60 feet below. Miraculously, he survived.

When the minister went to the hospital, John put on a big smile and said, "How are you doing, brother?"

The minister was astonished because John had called him "brother" as if he were a believer. "What do you mean by 'brother'?" he asked.

To which John simply replied, "A lot can happen in sixty feet."

If John had been killed, many Christians would have concluded that he had died as an unbeliever. What they would have not known was that he had made peace with God as he fell through the air. God has promised, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Even in the case of suicide we are not to judge. If John could make peace with God as he accidentally fell from a power line tower, others can make peace with God after jumping off a bridge. We cannot read the thoughts and minds of others. Instead of jumping to conclusions, we ought to be quick to comfort the living.

St. Paul wrote, "*Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God*" (1 Corinthians 4:5). Our task is not to judge one another, but instead to encourage each other to become more and more what Christ would have us to be.