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WHAT IS “JUDGING”?

General definition: “Playing God” = attempting to take things that belong to him alone

How do we do this?

1. Assuming that you know the *MOTIVES* of someone's heart, which God alone can read

The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16:7

...(God) alone know the hearts of all men.... 1 Kings 8:39

The LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. 1 Chr 28:9

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Heb :12-13; cf. Matt 7:1-5

Reflection: Think about times when you thought you understood someone's motives but you were later proved mistaken. When are you most tempted to judge in this way? What can you do to avoid this kind of judging?

2. Seeking *PERSONAL RETRIBUTION* by your actions or in your thoughts

Note: This might be vengeance or “pay back,” or trying to personally punish someone for their wrongs, rather than relying upon God's judgment through proper human authorities—and ultimately trusting the Final Judgment when all things will be known and everything made right.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not

take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
Rom 12:14-21; cf. 13:1-10

Reflection: When you are wronged by others, this when you are most tempted to take judgment into your own hands. When have you judged others this way, either in action or thoughts? What can you do to avoid this kind of judging?

3. Elevating mere human opinion into the equivalent of God's Law, leading to a CRITICAL SPIRIT

Note: Personal opinions are usually legitimate *applications* of God's law, but those particular applications might not be morally binding on all people. There is usually more than one "right" way to obey God.

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
Matt 5:1-2; cf. Rom 2:1-2

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Rom 14:10-13

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.... 13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Gal 5:1,13-14

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you-- who are you to judge your neighbor? Jas 4:12

Reflection: When you have strong opinions about certain things, this is when you will be most tempted to look critically at those who differ from you. When have you judged others this way, by words or thoughts? What can you do to avoid this kind of judging?

Overall Reflection: How does the Gospel of God's grace, demonstrated in Christ's redemptive work, help you to fight temptations to violate the commandment, 'Do not judge.'?