

Judging Others

Objective

To understand what judging others means.

To learn why judging is wrong.

To learn when it is acceptable, and even necessary.

Reference

Judging Others by HH Pope Shenouda III

Scriptural Verse

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:1-2)

Lesson Outlines

- ❖ To what extent and by what explanation we can understand the meaning of judging others?
- ❖ Is it a commandment that we take by its absolute meaning, so that we cannot mention any bad word about someone, no matter what the circumstances are, and no matter how sinful a person is?
- ❖ Is judgment wrong in all cases? Are there some cases in which judgment can be acceptable or even necessary?
- ❖ If so, when is judgment acceptable, and to whom? When is it necessary? When do we sin if we judge others?

Chapter 1: The non sinful judgment

There are many cases in which judgment is acceptable and is not a sin. For example:

1. **Responsibility and care:** when you are in a position with people under your authority, or a parent. Examples: teacher, manager, judge, priest...
2. **Normal distinction between good and evil:** to recognize what is right and what is wrong.
3. **Some commandments in the Bible judge evil:** Proverbs 22:24, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Genesis 39:9
4. **Judging heresies**
5. **Advising, guiding and blaming:**
 - a. It might be your right or duty to advise or blame, however you should do it politely, with humility and love.
 - b. Blaming should be done justly, not unfairly.
 - c. You should not blame a suffering person (like Job’s friends did to him). A suffering person needs consolation not blaming, advising or judging.
 - d. Advising and blaming are not good unless it is the right time for them.
 - e. Sometimes it is acceptable to blame a wrongdoer if it is done in private (Matthew 18:15)
6. **Criticizing:** that is the objective and fair evaluation without cruelty.
7. **Self-judging:** that is a virtue that leads to humility, repentance and not judging others.

- It is wrong to make a guilty person innocent if he's really guilty (Proverbs 17:15)

8. The conditions for the non sinful judgment:

- a. If it comes from a responsible person
- b. If it is done based on knowledge
- c. Do not judge too early
- d. You cannot judge someone while you are like him or even worse
- e. Judgment should not be done with envy, anger, or hate
- f. Judgment should be just

Chapter 2: Types of judging others

1. Judging by thinking.
2. Judging by talking.
3. Saying bad things about an absent person.
4. Gossiping (includes talking about something bad happened).
5. Judging someone as guilty (includes talking about wrong things in somebody's character).
6. Making somebody's sins known to public.
7. Judging through publications and records.
8. Judging by listening (listening to judging is participating in it).
9. Saying things that open the door for judgment or facilitate it intentionally.
10. Embarrassing and revealing others or asking about private stuff that embarrass or judge them.
11. Judging might be in complaining.
12. Judging might be through facial expressions or body movement without talking.
13. Judging can reach the level of despising or degrading others. He who despises someone and despises him for his fall has a more difficult sin than he who talks about an absent person or gossips or judges.

Chapter 3: The sin of judgment is a complicated sin

Harm to many

1. Harm to God
2. Harm to who is judging
3. Sin against who is being judged
4. Harm to listeners
5. Harm to people you do not even know: what you say might disseminate widely

Judging is a complex sin

The sin of judgment has many sins related to it:

1. Absence of love
2. Cruelty
3. Injustice
4. Lying
5. Absence of humility
6. Stumbling others
7. Degrading others and despising them

8. Absence of appropriateness
9. Judging intentions
10. Hypocrisy: judging others on sins we do or do even worse

Chapter 4: Treating judgment

1. Get used to respect people.
2. Resolve the problem of having nothing to do, talk or think about.
3. Do not listen to judgment, and do not believe everything you listen to, and even if it is right, do not care or think about it, and pray for the judged person that God may cover him, forgive him, have mercy upon him and make him right, but never despise him or judge him.
4. Do not take “making people right” as an excuse for judging. Making people right should be done in a right way, without degradation or talking about them. Plus, did you start by making yourself right first?
5. Be careful while you are trying to make people right, not to make yourself wrong. On judgment day, God will not judge you for other people’s sins, but He will judge you for your sins only.
6. Humility and self-judgment.

Conclusions

It is very important to know what judging others really mean. We should be very careful while judging others to know when and how judgment can be acceptable. We should train ourselves not to fall into the judgment sin.

Activities/Discussion Points

Discuss the following exercises on how to overcome judging others

1. Train yourself to be quiet or not to interfere in whatever has nothing to do with you.
2. Sit with yourself and think whom you are judging all the time and how you fall into the judgment sin and be careful about those sources that make you judge others.
3. Try to love others.
4. Remember that judging others harms you because you might lose God’s grace and help and so you will be subject to fall.
5. Train yourself not to misjudge others and do not judge fast.
6. Get used to have pity on people in judging them.
7. Do not judge by appearance.
8. Train yourself to bear people who harm you.
9. Be careful not to judge someone for a physical problem he can do nothing about.
10. Be very careful while judging others through blaming because not all people can handle being blamed.
11. Do not make the sin of judgment a character of yours, because there’s a difference between a one time judgment and a judgment that becomes a permanent habit.