

*I Corinthians 4:1-5*  
*Judge not your brother*

▪ **Test your attitude**

1. Do you tend to evaluate others by your strengths or preferences?
2. When asked to comment on someone's ministry do you tend to emphasize what was wrong or what should have been done differently?
3. Do you tend to criticize any changes from what you were used to?
4. Can you receive ministry from God through someone who differs from you politically, socially, educationally, economically, ethnically, etc.?
5. Are you easily edified?

▪ **Two trends in our culture**

**Postmodernism** - where tolerance is the core virtue and judgmentalism is the greatest sin. Note: Postmodernism is relativistic in areas of religious, moral, and philosophical values but maintains absolutes in areas of science, logic, nature, etc. It often entertains unacknowledged absolutes in its faith assumptions.

**Fundamentalism** - where truth is the core virtue and finding God's perfect will is the goal. Judgmentalism is often seen as a sign of virtue.

▪ **Two problems in the Corinthian Church.**

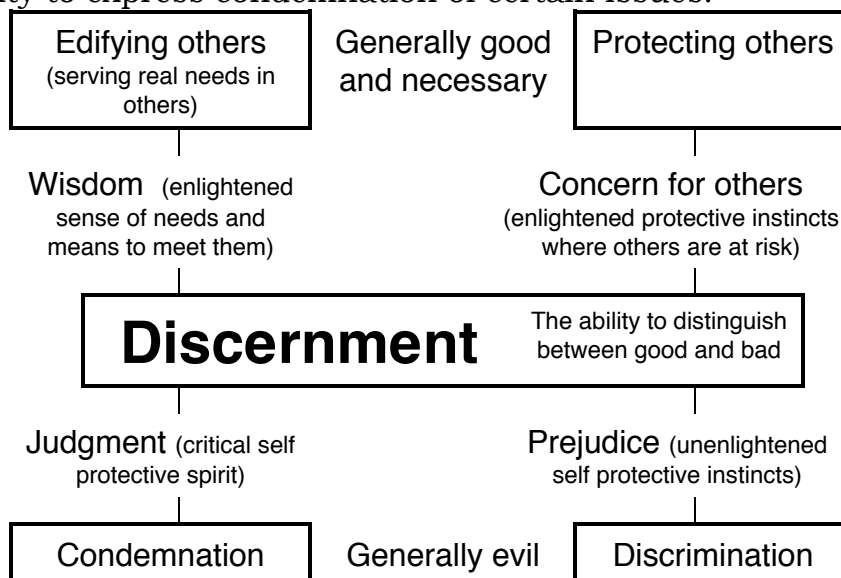
**Tolerance** - in areas where they should have been passing judgment. (6:1-8)

**Judgment** - in areas where they should have been tolerant. (4:1-5)

▪ **Discernment is a basic Christian virtue that can be used for good or evil.**

**Phil.1:9-10** "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. So that you may approve that things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."

The following chart shows the relationship between discernment and both good and bad applications. It should be noted that there are legitimate times for proper authority to express condemnation of certain issues.



(judgment + action)

and  
inappropriate

(prejudice +power to  
influence social  
systems)

▪ **Five facts about human judgment.**

1. As Christians we will one day be judges with Christ. I Cor.6:1-3
  - a. We will judge the world. I Cor.6:2
  - b. We will judge angels. I Cor.6:3
2. All believers are to judge themselves. I Cor.11:31
  - a. To see if they are "in the faith." II Cor.13:5
  - b. To evaluate their ministry. Gal.6:4
  - c. To avoid God's discipline. I Cor.11:31-32
  - d. The believer is not to compare his work with others but only with what God is expecting of him. Gal.6:4-5

3. Those in positions of spiritual authority must often pass judgment on others. I Cor.6:1-6

**Church officials – I Cor.6:2-3** "Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?"

**Parents in a family – I Tim.3:4** "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity."

4. Unauthorized judgment by believers is forbidden. Lk.6:37
  - a. We will be held accountable to our own standard of judgment. Matt. 7:1-2
  - b. We are not to judge the motives of others. I Cor.4:5; Jas.4:11
  - c. We are to be especially patient with younger believers. Rom.14:1
  - d. We are not to pass judgment on others in areas of doubtful conduct. Rom.14:3,4,10,13; I Cor.8-10

5. God has authorized the state to exercise judgment in civil matters. Rom.13:1-7

**Human government – Rom.13:4** "for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil."

▪ **There are moral absolutes.**

**I Thessalonians 5:21** "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

▪ **But not every issue is a moral issue.**

**Romans 14:5** "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind."

▪ **The importance of tolerance on nonessentials.**

1. "Nietzsche claimed that if men took God seriously, they would still be burning heretics at the stake." Two types of people agree with this statement.
  - a. **Ordinary bigots** - "That's why we should burn heretics."
  - b. **Reactionaries** - "That's why we should suppress the public expression of belief in God."
2. Tolerance cannot be neutral about what is good, for its very purpose is to guard good and avert evils. What is tolerated depends upon what is viewed as the ultimate good or concern.
3. Tolerance is a moral virtue between the two vices of:
  - a. **Soft headedness** - We stand for little and fall for anything. When radical tolerance is the only virtue, we must dignify every form of human expression no matter how weird, as beautiful and noble.
  - b. **Narrow mindedness** - We cannot see beyond our own preferences, which we mistakenly assume are also God's standards. Modern notions of political tolerance grew out of a reaction to the religious wars in Europe during the 1600s where as much as one third of the population in some areas was lost to bloody conflicts.
4. Tolerance involves right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Political Conservatives and Liberals often share a common core goal (liberty and justice for all). They however have very different ideas as to how that goal is reached and preserved. The danger is that the means of reaching the goal can be so closely identified with the goal itself that to challenge the means is to be understood as a challenge to the goal. Those who do not share our means to reach the goal are assumed to be motivated by something other than reaching the goal. That "something other" is usually pretty ugly, selfish, and un-American.

5. Tolerance needs an ultimate concern as an end.
6. Christians are to be tolerant on a number of issues for four reasons.
  - a. God does not want unwilling worship. We need to give room for people to disagree with us.
  - b. We see in a glass dimly. I Cor.13:12. No one gets the whole picture clearly in view.
  - c. We are in process. We may see things differently as we become more mature or better informed.
  - d. There is a Biblical precedent for tolerance in **Rom. 14:5** "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind."

#### A. The context of I Cor.4:1-5

1. Paul is addressing the problem of Carnal behavior as displayed by the Corinthian's **division** of the Body of Christ into ministry preferences that exclude and disrespect those who differ in style and emphasis.
2. Paul links this behavior to **worldly wisdom** with its carnal assumptions.
3. Paul is now going to argue that **judgmental attitudes** (which are inevitable in such a posture) are destructive to the church and need to be corrected.
4. I Corinthians 4:1-5

“<sup>1</sup> Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup> But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by {any} human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, {but wait} until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of {men's} hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.”

### B. Why we are not to judge other Christian's ministry styles.

Not because there is no right and wrong.

But because -

1. **They answer to Christ not man.**
2. **We don't have the whole picture.**
3. **We don't see the inner motives.**
4. **We demonstrate our faith when we withhold judgment of others.**

### C. They answer to Christ not man.

“<sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; **but the one who examines me is the Lord.**”

1. **We edify others but they are not our masters.**

2. **We answer to Christ for -**

a. **Our faithfulness to the Gospel, not people's response to it.** Too many Christians assume that they are pleasing Christ if they get tangible results in terms of converts etc. Christ does not ask for numbers, he asks for faithfulness.

“<sup>1</sup> Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and **stewards of the mysteries of God.** <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, **it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.**”

b. **Our inner motives not our outward style.** Too many congregations are not sensitive to inner motives nor can they be. They are left to judge a person's motives by projecting their own personalities into the circumstances of another.

### 3. Note that we are not to be “man pleasers” as those who serve Christ and answer to Him.

**I Thessalonians 2** “<sup>3</sup> For our exhortation does not {come} from error or impurity or by way of deceit; <sup>4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. <sup>5</sup> For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness -- <sup>6</sup> nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.”

**Galatians 1** “<sup>10</sup> For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

We are to seek to remove unnecessary obstacles to the Gospel as Paul indicates in I Cor.10. This is not a contradiction to Paul's concern for compromising the Gospel to gain approval of man.

“<sup>27</sup> If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake. <sup>28</sup> But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat {it,} for the sake of the one who informed {you,} and for conscience' sake; <sup>29</sup> I mean not your own conscience, but the other {man's}; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? <sup>31</sup> Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; <sup>33</sup> just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the {profit} of the many, that they may be saved.”

#### D. We don't have the whole picture.

“<sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, {but wait} until the Lord comes who will both **bring to light the things hidden in the darkness.**”

1. We tend to project our temperament and experience into the behavior of others. This is unfair and often misleading.
2. Both good and evil can be hidden in a person's ministry record.
3. God can use things that we might not appreciate. The sale of Joseph in Genesis and the crucifixion of Jesus are examples.

#### E. We don't see inner motives.

“<sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, {but wait} until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose **the motives of {men's} hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.”

1. While good motives do not equal virtuous actions they do play a part in God's judgment of His people.
2. We may do good things and still be judged for them because they did not come from our hearts.

#### F. We demonstrate our faith in withholding judgment.

“5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, {but wait} until the Lord comes”

1. While we may tolerate some evil in this life, we trust that it will one day be made right
2. Two tests of submission to Christ as Lord:
  - a. Do we use our power to manipulate the future? Can we let God be God and cooperate with Him or do we have to “force our way” into His Kingdom.
  - b. Do we take justice into our own hands?

#### G. The point of this text -

**You are not to judge another's ministry  
because they are God's servants, not yours  
and God, not you, will judge them.**

#### H. When are we to judge?

1. Discerning good and evil is a sign of spiritual maturity.
2. We are to judge in certain circumstances.
3. We are not to judge in certain circumstances.
  - a. Ministry motives
  - b. Style preferences
  - c. Doubtful things

#### I. The characteristics of a judgmental spirit.

- **Disrespect** which usually involves misunderstanding others.
- **Discrediting** which usually involves misrepresenting others.
- **Despising** which usually involves misjudging others.

#### J. Lessons from this text

- See the big picture and hold your fire.
- Don't play to “man's approval.”
- Remind yourself often that God can use things that you would not expect.
- If you want to be encouraged by others, start being an encouragement to them.

**Note:** For more study on this and related topics go to [apptoteach.org](http://apptoteach.org) and theology files #205, #306, #307, #803, #905.