

"Judge Not"

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I served as a soldier in the Korean War. While there, I acquired an opinion that South Korean soldiers were afraid of the North Koreans and would retreat when attacked. And that this put more of a strain on the allied soldiers. As the war wound on, this negative opinion became even stronger: I came to feel that the South Korean soldiers were cowardly and dishonorable.

Looking back at this now, I am very ashamed of my attitude. It was manifold ignorance and arrogant judgment. This feeling of shame has caused me to look at myself critically; and to assess my tendency to judge others.

Many religions teach us not to be judgmental. This is not easy. For we have to make judgments when we make important decisions. For instance when we are considering marriage, either we have good judgment or we may end up with an unhappy marriage. We use judgment when we decide to lock our homes up when we go out. We use judgment on getting a job, whether to see a doctor, what foods we choose when shopping at the grocery store, and in thousands of other ways.

These decisions involve discernment, and are necessary. The problem comes in the separation of discernment from judgment.

Let's say we see a man selling vegetables on the side of the road. We pull over, get out of the car, and look at the vegetables. We notice that man is not clean and there is trash on the ground near the vegetables. If we decide not to buy any of his goods, that is discernment.

Here is the point: if we decide not to buy any of his goods, and get into our car, we should not stand in judgment of the man. We should not think of the man as inferior in any way. Nor should we even feel we are wiser, or more intelligent than the man. The statement, "Do not judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes" is appropriate. We do not know what misfortune or turmoil the man is facing. He is dealing with life in his way. We are dealing with life in our way. We should leave with peace in our hearts.

When we judge others we block the natural process of loving them.. Therefore, look at yourself when you begin to judge others harshly. Every time someone says something we disagree with, and every time someone is disrespectful to us, there is the challenge to keep our hearts open.

Every time our heart starts to close, we have the opportunity to change our pattern. When we are faced with a person who is angry with us, or who is voicing an opinion that we strongly disagree with, we can do this:

We can breathe, relax ourselves, and go to that quiet place that is within us – a place of peace. Then, in the quietness of our minds, we can send love to him. Even if he continues to rant or fuss at us, we can stay in this quiet place. We can continue to breathe easily. Either he will stop, or we will rise to a place of such peace, that nothing can dislodge us.

The way we can open our hearts is to face adversity and overcome it by love.

The Bible contain the following sentence: "Judge not that ye be judged." This is a powerful statement.

Yet if we avoid judging others because we may, in turn, be judged, this is only a contract, a means of benefitting ourselves. Yes! We do not want to be judged!!

Rather, we should not judge because in making a judgment we make the assumption that we are better than the person we judge. Thus we inflate our egos.

When we judge others, we stand in the way of our desire to do good in this world. The process of judging others uses our energy; and this energy can be used to benefit others.

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When someone criticizes us, we jump in quickly to defend ourselves. To defend our reputation – to show that we are of high caliber – to show that the person is mistaken. We become slaves to our ego.

We should not take ourselves so seriously. If we will listen closely to the person who is criticizing us, we may find that he is not angry with us at all; that he is angry about something else and he is taking it out on us.

The goal is this: Even while the person is lambasting us, we should see him as a child of God. In fact we should see everyone under the sun as a child of god.

Let me tell a story to illustrate this:

A spiritual teacher and his student are walking down the street. They see a drunk lying in the gutter. They walk up to the drunk and see that he is very dirty: his pants are wet, and he is drooling. The student snubs his nose, makes a disparaging remark, and steps away in disgust. The teacher looks more closely at the drunk, and says, "This man is enlightened, -- this is the last lesson he had to learn in this life."

Then the teacher gets down on his knees and bows down before the drunk.

How many times do we snub our noses at others?

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Six steps that can be taken to avoid making judgments about others. (The first exercise is the easiest, and each step gets harder and harder to do.)

* 1. Go to a shopping mall. Find a chair or bench. Close your eyes, breathe easily, and go into a meditative state. Ask that you be given help from above in order to learn not to judge others. Then open your eyes. Be alert. When you see others, send light to them. See each person as a child of God. If you see someone behaving in a way that you feel is rude or harsh, then look at that person with empathy, followed by sending them light. Send out light to all – without exception and without surcease.

* 2. The above exercise may help you to be more aware of judging other people. Notice when you judge others, and examine the process. Ask yourself what made you react that

way. If you do this carefully, you may find that in the past, you had a traumatic experience with one person, and this event is causing you to react negatively to everyone that looks like that person. You may also find that your negative reactions to people are the result of an innate fear: (as, for instance, a fear of being assaulted or robbed).

* 3. Stop judging those in government! You may disagree with what they are doing; in fact you may become angry when they make mistakes. Yet you should not ascribe evil motives to them. For instance, you may have the desire to call them stupid or power-crazy or worse. Yet such judgments simply add to the negative thoughts of the world. Be tolerant of people who do not share your religious views. Every religion has value. Muslims teach us generosity to our guests; Jews teach us patience; Buddhists teach us common sense and self-worth; Hindus teach us acceptance of others and the value of inner peace; and Christians teach us how to love one another.

* 4. If you are in a serious controversy with another person, send love to him. This is the ultimate act of non-judgment. Particularly if the controversy is bitter. When a marriage breaks up, the man and wife sometimes engage in highly acrimonious and caustic court battles. Each spouse sees the other spouse as the devil incarnate. If you are a party to a divorce, and are met with this type of venomous behavior from your spouse, surely you qualify as a saint!

* 5. And perhaps the hardest of all is not to be in judgment of ourselves. Some feel that we judge others adversely because, in truth, we judge ourselves adversely.

Resolve to practice gentleness toward yourself. You are a source of light that is connected to the entire universe. Give kindness to yourself. This may not be easy, for your ego enjoys the continual drama of resentment. We were created with infinite love. We have the opportunity to continue the application of this love. When we do this, we can have a loving relationship with all that we meet.

Embrace your strengths, and forgive yourself for the things you have done that you would like to avoid. As you give yourself tenderness and warmth, you may discover that self-hate has kept you in turmoil. As you release yourself from self-judgment you will rid your self of shame, and you will open yourself to love. You will allow more love to come in and you will allow more love to go out.

If you are suffering, **compassion** will give you relief. Not contempt.

If a person has maimed or killed another person, it is very hard to have love for that person. Our ego causes us to separate ourselves from him. And condemn him! Yet the moment you rise above the passion, you send peace to yourself and to the world. Love sees all things with universal compassion. Every time you choose love, you take a step towards God.

* 6. If you practice these steps; if you make non-judgment a way of life; a miracle will happen!

You will no longer be afraid!