**Judging versus Discerning**

Jesus commands, “Do not judge others so that you will not be judged” (Matt. 7:1 NAU). However, Paul commands, “It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, ‘You must remove the evil person from among you’” (1 Cor. 5:12-13). How can we reconcile these seemingly incompatible commands?

# Definitions

## “Judging” is used in these two passages in two different ways. In the first text, Christ refers to acting negatively.

## However, Paul's judgment of the Corinthians is a positive action. One might even call this judging a use of “discernment.”

# Contrasts between Making a Judgment and Showing Discernment

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| ***Issues*** | ***Judging*** | ***Discerning*** |
| *Scripture* | Matt. 7:1; Isa. 11:3b | 1 Cor. 5:12-13; Isa. 11:3a |
| *Context* | Takes things out of context | Sees an issue in context |
| *Research* | Does not do the hard research | Checks out the facts |
| *Perspective* | Negative: knows only the problem | Positive: knows what needs to change |
| *Prayer* | Prays rarely or wrongly about it | Prays for God to be glorified |
| *Hypocrisy* | Has little self-evaluation (Matt. 7:3-5) | Extends grace (Gal. 6:1b) |
| *Shows* | Concern only for self | Cares for others |
| *Style* | Critical spirit | Constructive spirit |
| *Motivation* | Prideful exaltation of self | Humbly exalts God (Rom. 12:3) |
| *Source* | Empowered by self | Empowered by the Spirit |
| *Standard* | Oneself or others strong in that area | God’s perspective or God’s Word |
| *Emotions* | Reactive | Evaluative |
| *Objects* | Judging unbelievers is improper  (1 Cor. 5:12a, 13a) | Judging believers (positively) is mandated (1 Cor. 5:12b, 13b) |
| *Procedure* | Talks publicly to others about the problem person | Talks privately to the problem person (Matt. 18:15) |

# Application

Think of the last questionable comment you made about someone else. Now, circle or tick either the second or the third column above on each line to see if you were judging or discerning that person. What does God want you to do about this now?