



Tolerance and Judgment

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 29 | Loving Others

Lesson Overview

1. Define

What is the difference between tolerance and judgment?

2. Read

The New Testament appears to say contradictory things about judging others. When are we to make judgments? pp.1-2

3. Righteous Judgment

The Writings describe judgments people should make and why pp.3-5

New Church Concept Judging Others

The Lord alone knows the nature and the amount of remnants a person has. The person himself cannot possibly know this, for at the present day man is such that he is able to counterfeit what is good while within there is nothing but evil. A person can also appear to be evil and yet may have good within. For these reasons one is never allowed to judge the nature of another person's spiritual life; for the Lord alone knows this. But one is allowed to judge the nature of another person's life, private and public, since this is of importance to society. *Secrets of Heaven* 2284.3

Define

What do “tolerance” and “judgment” mean? Come up with your own definition of each word and compare your definitions with definitions from dictionary.com.

Tolerance

1. A fair, objective, and permissive attitude towards those whose opinions, beliefs and practices differ from one's own.
2. A fair, objective and permissive attitude towards opinions, beliefs and practices that differ from one's own.

Judgment

1. The ability to judge, make a decision, objectively, authoritatively, and wisely, especially in matters affecting action; good sense; discretion.
2. The forming of an opinion, estimate, notion or conclusion as from circumstances presented to the mind.

1. In what ways is tolerance a positive quality? When might it lead a person into danger?
2. How is exercising judgment a positive quality? When might it be harmful?

Read

While He was on earth, the Lord talked about judging others.

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck out of your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.” Matthew 7:3-5

Concerning a woman who found to have committed adultery Jesus said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” John 8:7

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” Matthew 7:1

“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” John 7:24

Some of these sayings may seem contradictory. We are told *not* to judge others, but to search our own hearts and try to remove evils we see there. We are also told *to judge* others with “righteous judgment.” So how are we to treat people who have broken the Ten Commandments, or who are acting in ways that that are obviously disorderly? And what is “righteous” judgment?

How should we treat people who act contrary to the Word?

The Writings give the clear message that we should always treat others charitably—but that charitable behavior looks different depending on others' behaviors.

Loving our neighbor is intending and doing good not only to neighbors, friends, and good people but also to strangers, enemies, and evil people. But we exercise goodwill in our dealings in different ways. We exercise goodwill with neighbors and friends by benefiting them directly. We exercise goodwill with enemies and evil people by benefiting them indirectly through warnings, corrective action, punishments, and efforts to improve them. Judges who punish wrongdoers because it is the just and legal thing to do have love for their neighbor. By so doing the judges are straightening out the wrongdoers and are caring for people in the area by preventing the wrongdoers from doing them harm.

Parents who punish their children for doing what is wrong are showing them love. Parents who do not punish their children for doing what is wrong are showing love for evil traits in their children, which has nothing to do with goodwill. For another example, suppose someone under the attack of an enemy repels the attacker and either strikes in self-defense or turns the attacker over to a judge to avoid being harmed. Say the victor maintains an intention nonetheless of becoming the attacker's friend. Then the victor is acting on the strength of goodwill. See *True Christianity* 407

Issues surrounding how we should treat others involve protecting society and the useful activities of society from being harmed by a person's evil or false behaviors. Evil, like disease, is contagious and spreads easily—especially when people do not think deeply about the consequences of what they are doing. For example a person may say, "If she thinks it's okay to do that, then it's okay for me to do it too." (See *True Christianity* 120.2, on right.) Supporting evil might actually harm others.

What judgments are allowable?

While we can treat almost anyone as a casual friend it is important to think about whether it is wise to form a deep friendship with another person.

The Writings give specific guidelines about "judging righteous judgment".

When people love what is good in another person, they love the good qualities inside them independently of the person's outer qualities. If they do not find these same qualities inside the other person after death, they withdraw from the friendship, and the Lord connects them to people who have a similar kind of goodness. It is impossible for any of us to investigate the inner qualities of mind in people with whom we socialize and interact. But this type of investigation is not necessary provided we take care not to form bonds of love with just anyone. Outward friendship formed for the sake of various benefits does no harm. See *True Christianity* 449

New Church Concept Evil is Contagious

As you spend time with thieves or pirates you eventually become like them. As you live among adulterous men and promiscuous women, eventually you think nothing of adultery. If you join a rebel group, eventually you think nothing of doing violence to anyone. All evils are contagious. They are like a plague you become infected with just by breathing in and out. They are like cancer and gangrene that spread and corrupt nearby areas, then more and more remote areas, until the whole body dies. The cause: from birth we all enjoy evil. *True Christianity* 120.2

Friendships

A "bond of love" is an inner friendship in which we love not only other people's outer selves but also their inner selves without investigating what their inner selves or spirits are like. We should investigate this to see whether the feelings in their minds relate to loving their neighbor and loving God and are therefore compatible with angels in heaven or whether they relate to forms of love that go against their neighbor and God and are therefore compatible with devils. Many form deep bonds of love like this, for a variety of reasons. This is different from friendship with someone's outer persona alone, which we develop for the sake of physical and sensual pleasures and different types of social interaction. This second type of friendship can be formed with anyone, even with a jester who jokes around at a duke's table. *True Christianity* 446

Righteous Judgment

The Writings support making “righteous” judgments with the following statements. Choose a few statements to read and discuss (see discussion questions on p. 5).

1. We can make judgments about civil life but not spiritual life

I have occasionally conversed with spirits on the question of whether it is allowable to judge a person's inward qualities, and when they agreed that it is, I said that it is allowable to judge about their civil and moral, but not their spiritual, life. About this the Lord Alone judges, because He Alone knows. Their civil and moral life it is allowable to explore on the basis of their words and actions, for societies are put together in this world for a variety of reasons and purposes, and one must know whether or not one may join company with them. Otherwise, the state of the world being what it is, people would easily be led astray into evils, and robbed of their every possession. By moral life is meant all that is respectable in society. But how moral virtues work together with faith, and what someone is like inwardly in regard to faith—about these questions, one cannot judge. *Spiritual Experiences* 1220

2. Good must be done with discrimination, for the sake of supporting what is good

People who are born compassionate and yet do not make their earthly acts of compassion spiritual by doing them out of genuine goodwill tend to believe that goodwill is giving to any poor person and helping any needy person without first finding out whether the poor or needy person is good or evil. They say this is not necessary, because God notices only the helpful gesture and the act of mercy. After death, however, people like this are identified and completely separated from people who have done prudent kindnesses related to goodwill. The people who have done kindnesses based on a blind idea of goodwill do just as many kindnesses for the evil as for the good. The evil use the kindnesses to do evil things and harm good people. In that case the benefactors share the responsibility for harming good people.

Doing an act of kindness for an evildoer is like giving bread to a devil; the devil will turn it into poison. All bread that is in the hand of a devil is poison. If it is not, the devil will turn it into poison by diverting the act of kindness to an evil purpose. It is as if you handed your enemy a sword, and the enemy killed someone with it.... It is as if you gave leadership and control to a thief whose sole focus was keeping an eye out for things to steal; the thief would create rules and make decisions based primarily on the abundance and value of the loot. *True Christianity* 428

3. There must be public consequences (penalties) for evil behavior

Order cannot be kept in the world without having governors to note everything that happens according or contrary to order, rewarding those who live orderly lives and punishing those who are disorderly. Failing this, the human race will inevitably perish. For everyone inherits by birth a tendency to wish to rule over others and to possess other people's goods; and this leads to quarrels, envy, hatred, revenge, deceit, cruelty and many other evils. If therefore people were not kept under restraint by laws, rewarding those who do good by advancing their interest, conferring honors and advantages on them, and punishing those who do harm by opposing their interest, threatening the loss of honors, property and even life, the human race would perish. *Heavenly Doctrine* 312

4. We must not judge another's character

The Lord says, "Judge not, that you be not condemned." (Matthew 7:1) This cannot in the least mean judging of someone's moral and civil life in the world, but judging of someone's spiritual and heavenly life. Who does not see that if people were not allowed to judge of the moral life of those dwelling with them in the world, society would collapse? What would become of society if there were no public courts of law, and if

Righteous Judgment *continued*

4. We must not judge another's character *continued*

no one was permitted to have his judgment of another? But to judge what the inner mind or soul is like within, thus what a person's spiritual state is and so his fate after death - of this one is not permitted to judge, because it is known to the Lord alone. Nor does the Lord reveal it until after death, in order that everyone may do what he does in freedom, and that good or evil may consequently be from him and so in him, and the person thus live his own life and be his own person to eternity. *Conjugial Love* 523

5. Judgments should be made by means of truth from the Word, and civil law

Actions are regarded in one way by a person acting by the feeble light of his reason, in another by a judge following the law, and in another by the Lord judging the state of a person's mind. This is why we speak of what they are called, how culpable they are and how far they are imputed after death. For what they are called depends upon a person acting by the feeble light of his reason; culpability is determined by a judge following the law; and imputation is by the Lord judging the state of a person's mind. These three cases are very different. For a person acting on his rational conviction may, depending on circumstances and contingent events, acquit someone, whom a judge sitting in court may not acquit by law. The judge too may acquit someone who is damned after death. The reason is that a judge makes his decision in accordance with the facts, but after death everyone is judged in accordance with the intention formed in the will and thus in the intellect, and the extent to which the will and thus the intellect endorses them. Neither of these can be seen by the judge. But still either judgment is just, one on the basis of the good of the civil community, the other on the basis of the good of the heavenly community. *Conjugial Love* 485

6. Judgments should stem from love to the Lord and love to the neighbor

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6. Exercising judgment and discrimination may appear to be uncharitable

A conscience without caring for the neighbor does not exist. People on earth have such an obscure sense and mental image that they cannot tell whether they are caring, because they do not feel affection very strongly, and if they do have it, do not reflect on it. But it is recognized by their zeal for what is good and true, and for what is just and fair. When they are zealous for these, they have charity, namely, a zeal for punishing the evil with the purpose that they may become good, and that the good may not be harmed, and that the community or public may be freed of such persons - for then they are caring toward the neighbor, even though it may not appear so and they themselves may be unaware of it. *Spiritual Experiences Minor* 4547

Righteous Judgment Discussion Questions

Choose questions for discussion.

1. What are the implications of always being tolerant of others behaviors regardless of their actions?
2. Under what circumstances should a person make judgments?
3. When is it useful to make judgments about another person's character?
4. What kinds of judgments do the Writings say we are allowed to make about another person? Civil judgments? Moral judgments? Spiritual judgments?
5. How could judging be merciful or kind?
6. Is judgment a positive or a negative thing?
7. Imagine you are interviewing a person for a job. What kinds of judgments might you make about an interviewee before hiring? Would it be wise to hire a person without making this kind of judgment?
8. What goals should parents have in mind when they punish their children/correct their behavior?
9. What are the consequences of not judging bad behaviors?
10. What is the ultimate goal of punishment? To make a person pay for what he or she has done? To help a person change their life and act in new, better, ways?
11. In what ways might tolerance be harmful?
12. Which is the *most* important source of truth about what is right—civil law, or the Word?
13. Do civil laws that permit specific behaviors make them okay spiritually ?
14. What is the first thing we are to do when we find fault with others?
15. The Writings talk about “discriminate charity”—or choosing who to treat with generosity based on their behaviors and attitudes. What are the benefits of thinking this way? Is this idea popular?
16. People tend to think of judgment as a bad thing. Is judging another person always bad?

The Lord Alone Judges After Death

The affections of a person's life are known to the Lord alone. *Charity* 167e

No one except the Lord alone can judge any one according to his acts; because all acts proceed from final causes, which life deeply concealed within. People are judged according to these causes; and no one knows them but the Lord. Therefore judgment belongs to Him alone. *Secrets of Heaven* 8620.2

People who others judged harshly are good in the other life, and people who others judged well in the life of the body are evil, because people do not know how to judge but from externals; nor do they know whether a person is acting from ignorance, and what was their goal; for the goal is known to the Lord alone. *Spiritual Experiences* 2459