

**PSALM 25: 4-5 "SHOW ME YOUR WAYS, O LORD" GROUP BIBLE STUDIES -
TEACHER'S PACKET - LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

LESSON #2 – GOD'S WAY FOR CORRECTION

GOD'S WAY – Our age has lost sight of the fact that some things are always right and some are always wrong. It has become fashionable to say that all moral choices can be painted in an endless spectrum of grays. Although we admit that there are many things which are neither commanded or forbidden in Scripture, in our lesson, we ask God to help us discern, and witness to that which is right and wrong. We begin with prayer:

THE PRAYER – Dear Lord, like the publican in the temple, I daily need to pray, "be merciful to me a sinner." As one of your children, saved by Your Son, I can rejoice in the forgiveness He has given me at the cost of His life. Now, I ask that You will direct me into a responsible Christian life. Let me live for the Savior in thought, word and deed. In Jesus Name, I ask it. Amen.

THE WORLD'S WAY – Not so long ago a survey reported that 74 percent of Americans said they would steal from someone they thought could afford it; 64 percent would lie as long as no one is hurt; 93 percent say they decide moral issues based on their own judgment; and 81 percent have violated a law they felt was inapplicable. In the ancient world, people approached God as if they were suppliants standing before a supreme Judge. The Lord's decisions were final. Today, in the hearts of many, God has been impeached; His decisions have been reversed, and no one has the authority to say anything is wrong or right. Our way has become God's way.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 – Tragically, even Christians have succumbed to this "no-fault" philosophy. Those who follow such a non-judgmental system of beliefs feel they can find support in Scripture. Look at these passages and see if you can discern their thinking:

PASSAGE	QUESTION	ANSWER
Matthew 7: 1	What are we not supposed to do?	We are not supposed to judge.
Luke 6: 37	What are we not supposed to do?	Judge.
John 8: 7	According to Jesus, who could judge?	The one without sin.

From these passages, it would seem that we should avoid sitting in judgment upon others. The logic is: "How can people, who are blackened by their own sin, presume to condemn the actions of anyone else?" But there are other passages that say something quite different. Look at these verses and answer the questions:

John 20: 23	What power did Jesus give?	To forgive and retain sins.
Matthew 16: 19	What keys did Jesus bestow?	The keys to open or close heaven.
1 Corinthians 5: 3	What had Paul done in regard to the sinner?	Judged him already.
1 Corinthians 5: 4-5	What does Paul encourage the church to do?	Put the man for repentance
Matthew 23	What does Jesus do to the Pharisees?	Judges their actions.
Galatians 2: 14	What did Paul do to Peter?	Talked to him in front of all.

FIRST APPLICATION:

We have two different sets of passages that seem to espouse contradictory actions. What are Christians to believe? How should they live? What is God's way? C. S. Lewis once wrote that the devil wants people to believe two things about him: 1. That he doesn't exist; and 2. That he exists everywhere. Neither, of these beliefs is true. The same thing can be said about judging ourselves and others. It is not God's way to believe we are to judge everything. Nor is it God's way to refuse to judge anything. Let's take a second look at our first group of passages and see if we can find harmony.

2. SCRIPTURE SEARCH - THE WAY OF GOD IS GOOD AND BEST

We read Matthew 7: 1 and Luke 6: 37. Jesus did not stop with the words contained in those verses. He continued speaking. Reexamine these words of our Lord.

PASSAGE	QUESTION	ANSWER
Matthew 7: 2	What will happen here?	People will turn your standard back on you.

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Luke 6: 38 What will happen if you judge? People will use the same standard for you.
 In these texts we see Jesus is not telling us to refrain from judgment. He is telling us to be careful of the measure that we use in our judgments. We dare not set a level that will make us pharisaic. Let's look at the John passage. There, Jesus said, 'only the sinless should throw the first stone.'
 Who in the crowd that day was sinless? Nobody, other than Jesus.
 Since Jesus isn't visibly around today, who can ever 'throw a stone?' Only God has that right.
 Does that mean we shouldn't judge? No, but it does mean God should do the judging.
 Does God ever do that? Yes....read:
 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 Who should be warned that they aren't going to inherit God's kingdom?

Are those words a judgment? Yes
 Who do they come from? God through Paul
 Having answered those questions, many people come to the conclusion they should judge everything and anything. That's not so. If we learned, in the first group of passages, to judge according to God's way, the second group of passages also teach us something. Please answer the questions:

PASSAGE	QUESTION	ANSWER
John 20: 23	Did Jesus give the power to everyone?	No, to the apostles/church.
Matthew 16: 19	Who was to have this power Jesus gave?	The apostles/church.
1 Corinthians 5: 3-5	Who did Paul say should judge the sinner?	The congregation
Matthew 23	Who judged the Pharisees?	Jesus.
Galatians 2:14	Where did Paul straighten out Peter?	Before the congregation.

Most of us are umpires at heart; we like to call balls and strikes on somebody else. These passages tell us not everybody is supposed to be a judge. Judges are appointed by God to perform that action. In the church, most sins are judged by the congregation, or their representative.

Of course, judgments are never made lightly, even when made according to God's commands, and by those appointed to make a decision. Judgments are always made with a purpose. What are those purposes?
 1 Corinthians 5: 6 What will happen if a sin goes unchecked? It will spread.
 James 5: 10-20 What are we trying to do? Rescue a wandering soul from death.
 Galatians 6: 1 What should we avoid? A feeling of superiority/on guard against temptation.

THOUGHT & ILLUSTRATION: - As we talk about God's way of judgment, a couple of final thoughts come to mind. The first is best told in the story of a vacationer who asked an old fisherman, "If I were to fall into this water, would I drown?" The fisherman had a good answer. He said, "Fallin' into the water doesn't drown anybody. It's staying under the water that does." So, too with sin. We are all sinners. By Jesus' blood, rescue is a reality. Only staying in sin kills us eternally. God's way is for those appointed to judge, and using His standards, to rescue souls from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20)

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord, as Your children, we have the responsibility of building up one another, of reviving the sagging loyalties of negligent fellow Christians, of applying the saving ointment of brotherly admonition. Grant those who are appointed to judge the meekness and faithfulness to call people to Your way. In Jesus' Name. Amen.