

21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING



THEME: ONE ANOTHER

"The Lord reconciles us not only to himself, but to each other, creating one-another love out of one-another pain."

JANUARY 8 - 28, 2024 | 6:00 AM



JANUARY 8, 2024 MONDAY - DAY 1

PRAY THAT WE WOULD NOT JUDGE ONE ANOTHER

ROMANS 14:13

In the cartoon sitcom, *The Simpsons*, the family's conservative Christian neighbor, Ed Flanders, tells Homer, "We've been away to a Christian camp. We've been learning how to become more judgmental."

OUR JUDGEMENTAL LABEL

Why is it that American Evangelicals have come to be known not for the grace, love, and forgiveness we say God has granted to us, but rather for harsh, judgmental, unforgiving attitudes? Like twenty first century Santa, we're making a list and checking it twice."

- Real Christians don't wear make up this repeated most often by those who need it most.
- Real Christians won't smoke a cigarette after dinner but a half gallon of ice cream before bedtime is allowable.
- Real Christians never consider divorce murder, perhaps, but never divorce.

The problem with reducing our faith to a list of rules is that it results in one of two devastating consequences either shame if you break the rules, or pride when you don't. There is no need for shame for anyone who is in Christ, for the good news is "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). And of all the sins God sets himself against, none is so prevalent nor so odious to God as pride. "God resists the proud" (Jas.4:6). Jesus reserved his worst epithets for the religious leaders of his day who condemned others for not living up to their list of rules.



He called these toxic leaders "hypocrites...blind guides... fools...serpents...vipers" (Matt. 23:15 -33).

TWO ROMAN ISSUES

This same type of spiritual abuse was being practiced in the early church at Rome. The issue there was whether or not to eat meat or to observe certain days. Those who ate meat freely belittled and condemned those whose conscience would not allow them to. Those who refused it felt others were licentious. Those who observed certain days were critical of those who did not. Paul clearly addresses both groups as equally when he writes, "Let us stop judging one another." The word "judge" is in the present active subjunctive tense in Greek, meaning we must not continue in the habit of judging one another. Here Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). Instead of judging, Paul encourages resolution of the issues that tend to create a "stumbling block," causing others to fall. The Stoics believed there were things that were, of themselves, indifferent neither good nor bad. They said it all depends on the handle by which you pick them up. A piece of art to one person might be a

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genuine work of art, while to another it might be obscene. To one person a discussion might be stimulating. While to another it might be boring. A particular type of activity might be enjoyable to one and dull to another. In each case it is not the are of discussion or activity that is good or bad, but the perspective of the individual.

Here Paul is responding to two issues eating meat and observing certain days. He says, it is not the meat nor the day that is the issue, for meat and days are indifferent. It is the perspective of the individual. To the strong believer, eating meat or observing certain days might not be bad, but to a new believer, these could be unacceptable. While we must not allow others to dictate our choices, Paul teaches that we must be considerate of the feelings of others and not judge them. Neither should we continue in some activity that creates a stumbling block for others.

A MATTER OF ACCEPTANCE

In the body of Christ, we are to accept one another unconditionally. Every generation throughout church history has had to deal with this issue. In the fourth century, they argued whether those who had recanted under persecution could be allowed back into the church. The disagreement even turned violent. During the Reformation, after virulent "pamphlet wars" the discussion spilled over onto the battlefield in the Religious Wars of the sixteenth century. More recently Orthodox and Catholic priests have come to blows in Jerusalem over who gets to refurbish the Church of the Resurrection.

And the plethora of Protestant denominations is due in many respects to our inability to refrain from judging our brothers. A rather recent country song had the man excusing his shortcomings and begging for non judgemental mercy by saying he was "a work in progress."

Surely we can beat other believers with equal non judgemental mercy and allow them to be works in progress. Pray that we would "not judge one another."

ROMANS 14:13 Therefore let us not judge One another anymore, But rather resolve this, That no one put a stumbling block or A cause to fall in his brother's way.

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. Ask God to reveal to your heart people you have "written off" because of something they may have said or done.
2. Ask God to allow you to see them as he does fellow saints for whom he died.
3. Take the time to express your gratitude for God's patience and grace in your life.
4. Remember that we are all "Works in progress."

The God who created every Snowflake to be unique does not Demand that all children look and Act the same. God loves variety!

Any plan for world evangelism that does not take into consideration interdenominational Cooperation is doomed to fail.