

Chapter 2

JUDGING OTHERS

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.” Luke 6:36–37 (NASB)

In the last chapter, you learned how you can respond in love to the people who are rejecting you. It is by choosing to believe what God says about you. In this chapter, you will see that there is a connection between judging others and rejection.

- Q1.** Do you feel frustrated or annoyed when people don't do things right? Explain.

You were not made right with God because you were without fault. You need God's mercy and forgiveness. Yet do you have a tendency to be intolerant of others when they fail? Perhaps you think, “I'd never do that!” What does the following parable teach about that kind of judging?

*“Also He spoke this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others**: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’” **Luke 18:9–14** (NKJ)*

The Pharisee had an attitude of superiority, trusted in himself and thought he was better than the tax collector.

Q2. What was wrong with the Pharisee’s view of the tax collector?

Q3. What was wrong with the Pharisee’s view of himself?

This type of **judging** involves condemning others. This attitude of superiority and faultfinding fosters thinking things like “I’m better than you” and “I wouldn’t do what you’re doing.” Faultfinding is overlooking one’s own shortcomings while assuming the role of judge in regard to the sins of others.

Q4. Think about a time when you have judged another person. What was going on in your mind when you were judging?

The Bible teaches that you condemn yourself when you judge others because you are guilty of the sins you see in them.

*“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you **condemn yourself**; for you who judge practice the same things.”* **Romans 2:1** (NKJ)

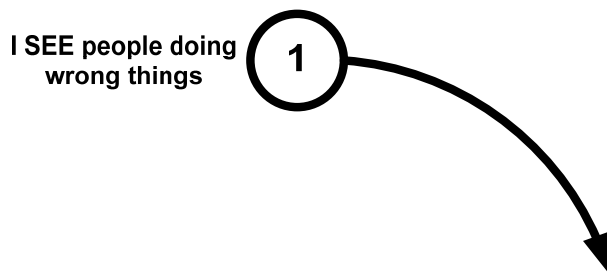
If you think it is right to judge people because what they do seems worse than what you have done, you don't understand how God views sin.

“And the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as the person who has broken all of God's laws.” **James 2:10** (NLT)

The Judgment Cycle

It is easy to get pulled into a cycle of judging. It begins with observing people doing wrong things. Step 1 happens all the time.

Judgment Cycle



Seeing People Doing Wrong Things

At step 1, I see people doing wrong things. They are not following my standards and/or God's standards.

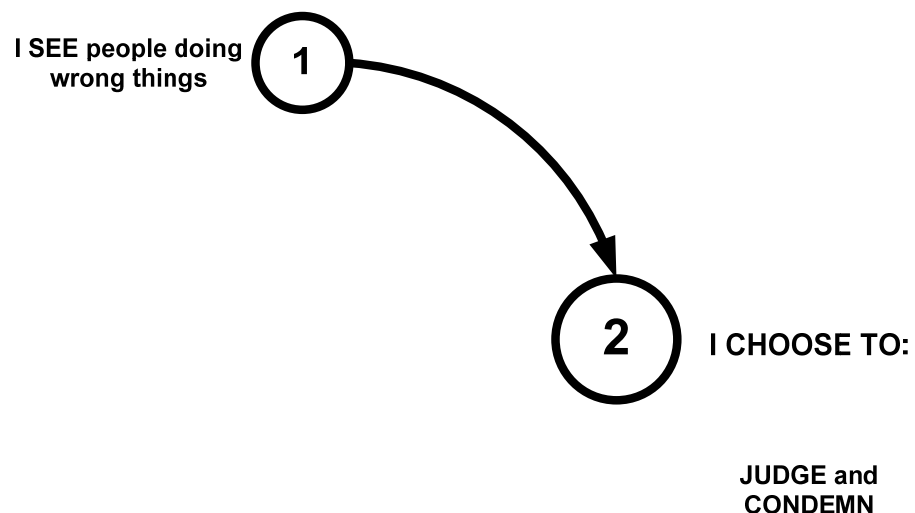
- Q5.** Have you recently seen someone doing something wrong? What was it?
- Q6.** Whose standard was this person breaking? Yours or God's? Explain.

If people are breaking your standard, are they really wrong for not keeping it? The next diagram reveals what you might do after you observe others not doing things right.

Choosing to Judge

At step 2 of the Judgment Cycle, you make a choice. You **choose to judge and condemn them**.

Judgment Cycle



You make a conscious choice to judge someone as guilty for what they did wrong. Some people seem to be well deserving of your judgment because they are breaking God's standards. However, when you judge others, you are taking God's place.

"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" James 4:12 (NASB)

- Q7.** How have you been justifying your judgments of others?
- Q8.** List the people in your life who enjoy being judged by you.
- Q9.** Do you enjoy being judged by others? Describe why or why not.

Example of Judging Others

Jesus' disciples were caught in this cycle of judging others. They had gone into Samaria to make arrangements for His visit, but they were not well received.

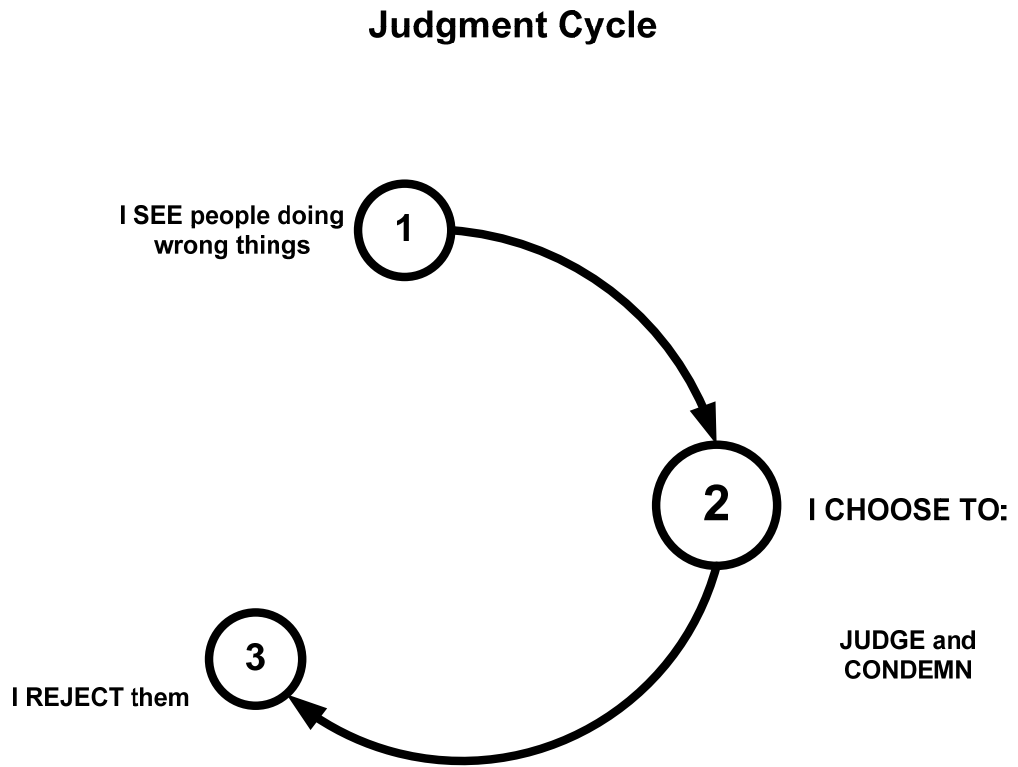
"And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.'"
Luke 9:54–55 (NKJ)

The Samaritans were wrong when they did not welcome Jesus, but Jesus responded by continuing to love them. James and John chose to judge the Samaritans and wanted to see them die. Jesus rebuked James and John. He wanted to see the Samaritans saved.

"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." John 12:47 (NASB)

Rejection

At step 3 of the Judgment Cycle, you react to the people you have judged by **rejecting them**.



Q10. In what specific ways have you rejected those people whom you have judged?

Q11. What happened when you rejected others? Did it improve their behavior?

When you choose to judge others and reject them, they will reject you back. This leads to the same living death that the Rejection Cycle does.

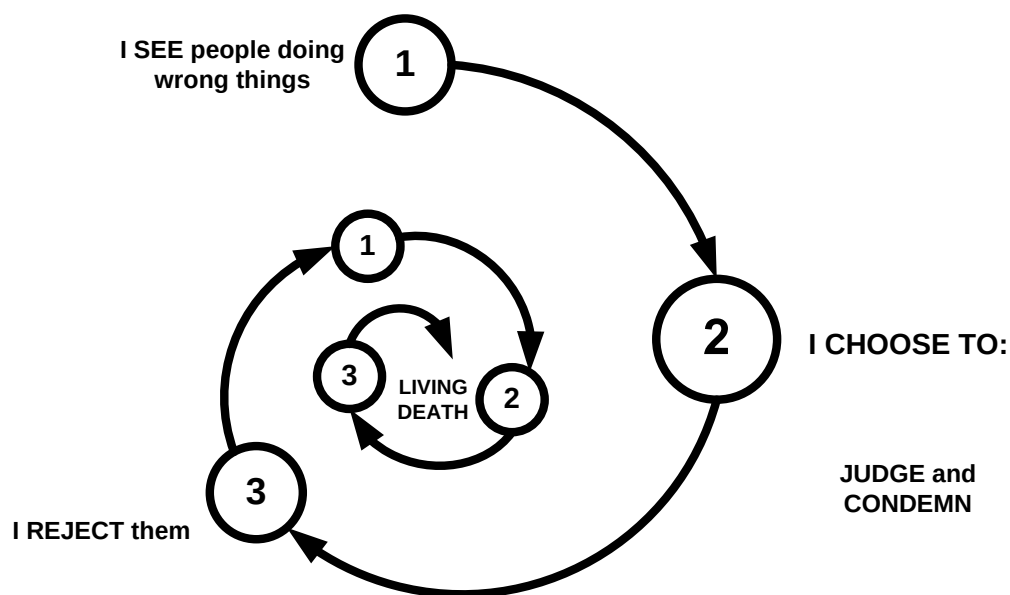
*"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults – unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of **boomeranging**."*

Matthew 7:1–2 (MSG)

Living Death

Judging others becomes a lifestyle that spirals into **living death**.

Judgment Cycle



The following is a list of what the Judgment Cycle produces. Check the things that you can relate to:

- _____ I try to control people and their circumstances so they will do the “right” thing.
- _____ I notice other people’s faults all the time.
- _____ I have periods of feeling frustrated, angry, and depressed.
- _____ I have trouble admitting I’m wrong.
- _____ People say I’m judgmental, intolerant or opinionated.
- _____ I don’t try to understand people, I only want to see if they know what they are talking about.
- _____ I have never found a church or job that suits me.
- _____ I call people bad names or mentally curse them.
- _____ I have a hostile relationship with former friends or family.
- _____ I do the same things I judged others for doing.

If you checked anything on the previous list, it may be the direct result of judging others. You cannot live in the Judgment Cycle without making others around you miserable.

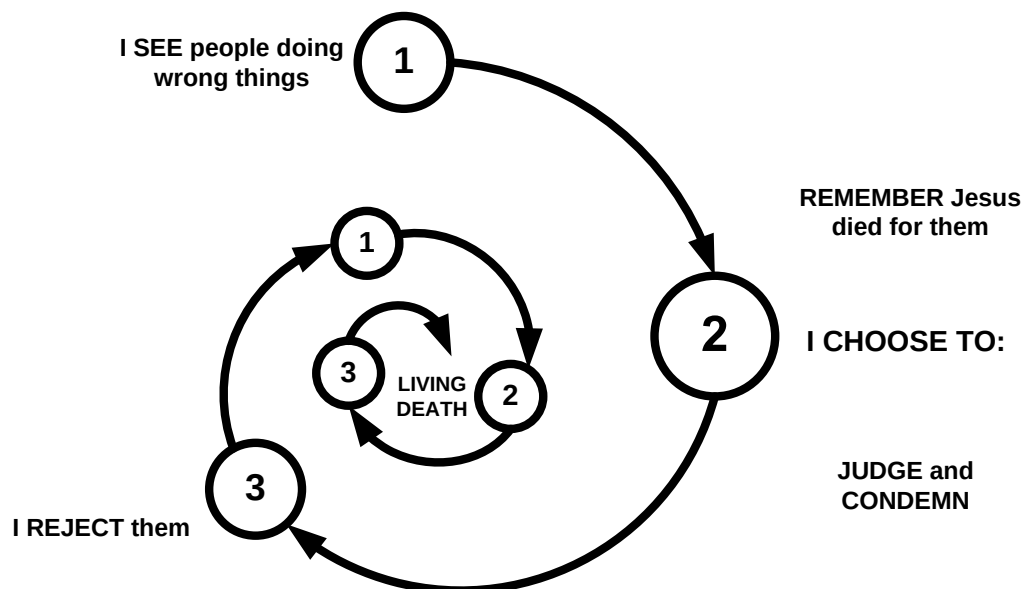
Q12. Ask the Lord if you have been making people around you miserable by judging them. What did He tell you?

Reversing the Judgment Cycle

You do not have to spiral down the Judgment Cycle into a living death when you see people doing wrong things. There is a different way to respond to people's failures.

The following diagram shows you the way out. At step 2, you make a different choice.

Reversing the Judgment Cycle



Remember Jesus Died for Them

At step 1, you still see people doing wrong things. However, at step 2, instead of choosing to judge them, you **choose to remember that Jesus died for them**. You choose to see them the way God sees them. He loves them and wants to help them.

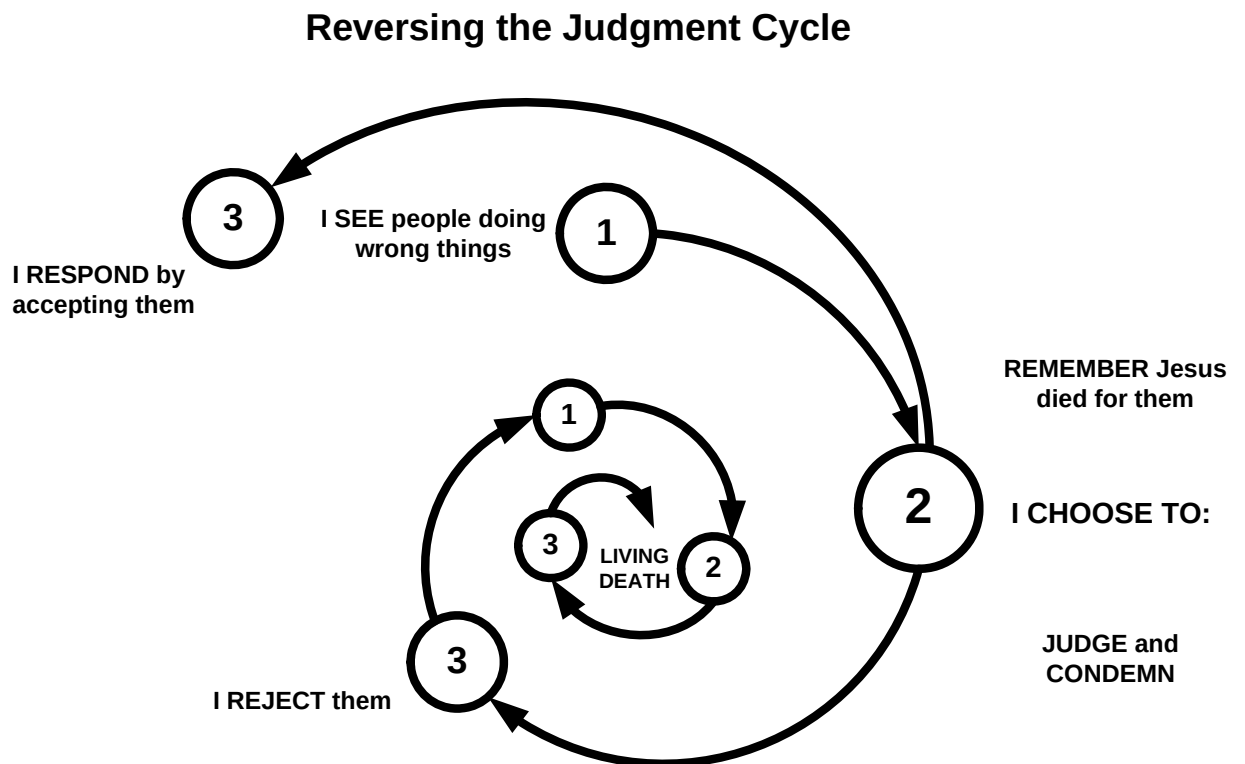
If it seems difficult to make this choice at step 2, it may be because you think you are better than the person you are judging. The reality is that Jesus came to save the person you are judging just like He came to save you.

Another reason it may be difficult not to judge is because you don't want to see them get away with the wrong things they have done.

"I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people." **Jonah 4:2** (NLT)

Accept Them

Once you choose to remember that Jesus died for the people you have been judging, you can respond to them with love and acceptance. Not because they are right but because God loves them.



In the Bible account of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus modeled accepting others when they sin. When the scribes and Pharisees dragged the woman before Jesus and asked if they should stone her, He said to them,

“...He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” **John 8:7** (NKJ)

One by one they left until only Jesus and the woman were standing there alone. Then He said to her,

“‘Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?’ ‘No one, Master.’ ‘Neither do I,’ said Jesus. ‘Go on your way. From now on, don’t sin.’” **John 8:10–11** (MSG)

Jesus didn’t overlook the woman’s adultery; He merely chose not to condemn her like the religious leaders. Jesus accepted her and spoke the truth to her in love. That is how your Heavenly Father has chosen to treat you.

“...We have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.” **Romans 5:16** (NLT)

Showing love to others is making allowance for their faults instead of judging their faults. You can’t love people when you are judging them.

“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.” **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

When you stop choosing to judge, you will see fewer faults in others.

Speaking the Truth

Once you have repented of your judgments and have God's perspective on the person you have been judging, God may ask you to take an active role in seeing this person set free from his or her sin. The best thing you can do is pray for him or her. On some occasions, God may lead you to **speak the truth in love** to the person.

Speaking the truth in love may involve helping the person see how his or her behavior is wrong and encouraging the person to change.

God gives guidelines in the Bible for how to talk to people when they are breaking His standards. Before going to them, you are warned to be humble and have the right attitude (not judgmental and critical). Remember you are susceptible to the same temptations, as well as, pride. Share with them what God gives you to say, not to condemn or put them down, but to restore and help them.

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself." **Galatians 6:1** (NLT)

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 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 from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?"
Matthew 7:1–4 (NKJ)

Repentance

Confess to God that you have been wrong for setting standards, judging and condemning, and having an attitude of superiority.

Tell God you choose to trust Him as the only Judge over your life and the lives of others.

Ask God to use you to love and accept the one you have been judging.

Judgment Cycle

Diagram

Notes

S.A.L.T. – Social Area