



September 2009—*Judging Others*

Forming critical, negative opinions about other people is a universal problem among human beings that inflicts pain, engenders strife, and damages relationships. Although we usually feel justified in the judgmental attitudes we develop about others, the truth is that we rarely have access to all the factors needed to draw correct conclusions about them. Thus, our judgments are not only destructive but often wrong.

C.S. Lewis offers a valuable insight that can help us overcome our temptation to judge others.

Human beings judge one another by their external actions. God judges them by their moral choices. When a neurotic who has a pathological horror of cats forces himself to pick up a cat for some good reason, it is quite possible that in God's eyes he has shown more courage than a healthy man may have shown in winning the Victoria Cross. When a man who has been perverted from his youth and taught that cruelty is the right thing, does some tiny little kindness, or refrains from some cruelty he might have committed, and thereby, perhaps, risks being sneered at by his companions, he may, in God's eyes, be doing more than you and I would do if we gave up life itself for a friend.

It is as well to put this the other way round. Some of us who seem quite nice people may, in fact, have made so little use of a good heredity and a good upbringing that we are really worse than those whom we regard as fiends.... That is why Christians are told not to judge. We see only the results which a man's choices make out of his raw material. But God does not judge him on the raw material at all, but on what he has done with it. Most of the man's psychological make-up is probably due to his body: when his body dies all that will fall off him, and the real central man, the thing that chose, that made the best or the worst out of this material, will stand naked. All sorts of nice things which we thought our own, but which were really due to a good digestion, will fall off some of us: all sorts of nasty things which were due to complexes or bad health will fall off others. We shall then, for the first time, see every one as he really was. There will be surprises.¹

One of those surprises will surely be how erroneous and ill-founded our judgments were. Another will be how much suffering we caused others through wrongly judging them. Yet another will be how often we were guilty of the very thing we judged another for.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

MATTHEW 7:1-5

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), pp. 86-87.