

Gathering Question: Think of a time when you felt you were unfairly judged by someone you care about. How did that make you feel? What did you want to do in response?

Stop Passing Judgment On One Another

From the beginning the church was a very diverse place and its diversity was of a different kind than we normally experience in our churches today. Today our diversity might consist of people coming from different socio-economic strata or from different parts of the United States. In some churches there might be some racial diversity. But the people in most of our churches have a background in the Church of Christ, so our diversity comes mainly from slight differences in the ways we interpret some Scripture.

In Paul’s day diversity was much different. Remember there were no second or third generation members of the church. Everyone was new. And in a place like Rome, there was incredible diversity. Not only would there have been Jews (of all different persuasions), there would have also been people from different nations with different native languages and cultures. The church was a huge mixing pot of diversity!

It also seems like the church in Rome was a place of judgment. Paul’s statement in Romans 14:13 implies that those in the church at Rome were practicing judgment on each other. Paul commands them to stop! In verse 14:1, Paul makes it clear that the focus of all the judgments that were taking place were disputable matters. These were not central issues of the faith. This had to do with what a person ate or how a person viewed certain days. Even though we do not know exactly what Paul is talking about in his examples, his message to the disciples is clear – You are not to judge each other! Notice some of the ways in which he states this.

- “The man who eats everything must not look down on the man who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does.”
- “God has accepted him.”
- “To his own Master he stands or falls.”
- “We will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”

Paul concerns echoes those of our Lord, “Do not judge or you will be judged.”

Read: Romans 14:1-13; Romans 2:1-4; Matthew 7:1, 2.

Discuss:

1. List some other words for “judge.” Why are Christians not to judge?
2. How do you deal with I Corinthians 6:2 in light of what Paul has written here?
3. List some things that you once thought were essentials of the faith but that you now consider to be disputable matters? What caused the change?