

Monday, May 18

*Welcome with open arms . . . [those] who don't see things the way you do . . . Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Romans 14:1,10 (Message paraphrase)*

In his book *The Grace Awakening*, Charles Swindoll recounts an experience he once had while ministering at a Bible conference. On the first night he had briefly met a couple who seemed to be friendly and quite glad to be at the meetings. However, as the week went by, Swindoll noticed that roughly ten minutes after he would start speaking at every meeting, the husband would be fast asleep!

This experience began to irritate Swindoll so much that by the time of the final meeting, he was convinced that the man was there only to please his wife, and was "probably a carnal Christian." At the conclusion of the final meeting however, the wife requested to speak to Swindoll for a few minutes. He figured she wanted to talk to him about her husband's lack of interest in spiritual matters.

Imagine how greatly embarrassed he was when the wife mentioned that her husband had terminal cancer and that they had attended the conference mainly at his request. It was his "final wish" to be at the conference even though the pain medication he was taking made him drowsy.

She then said, "He loves the Lord, and you are his favorite Bible teacher. He wanted to be here to meet you and to hear you, no matter what." Swindoll wrote, "I stood there, all alone, as deeply rebuked as I have ever been."

As much as I'd love to say I've never judged anyone, having a judgmental attitude seems to be a gift of mine. I jump to conclusions about the character of the person who does, or doesn't wear a face mask, or I'm hypercritical of those who disagree with me.

The ability to see sin in others and ignore it in our own heart is one of the distinctive characteristics of a Pharisee, and being a Pharisee is so easy. It's appropriate to make rules to guide our own behavior, but when we apply our personal rules to everyone around us, we're in danger of becoming pharisaical.

One life principle I've had to learn is to be intentional to try to understand people and their circumstances before saying anything.

Jesus said (John 7:24 [NLT]) *Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.*

We need to admit our perspective isn't necessarily the entire picture. Seek understanding from the person and from the Holy Spirit.

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

Have I given the person a chance to share their perspective?

Have I done the very same things?

What questions should I ask before drawing a conclusion?

It's a dangerous thing to judge others. Jesus said (Matthew 7:2) *You will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

And especially . . . the best way to overcome a judgmental attitude is to embrace God's love, and then love as He would. The world needs our love and kindness more than it needs our opinion.