

Word One Bible Study

Facing Judgment

By Jennifer Probst

Text: John 8:31-36 for Reformation Day, Lectionary Series C

OBJECTIVES

Our culture today continues to provide us with opportunities for judgment. Despite the consistent cries for tolerance, society encourages judgment on various areas of our lives. In this study, individuals will take a closer look at:

- The prevalence of judgment in our culture
- How the world judges God
- And what to do when faced with judgment

The goal of this study is to establish that fair judgment needs to be measured against the truth; and truth can only be found in Christ.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper
Writing utensils
Bibles
Bible Study Questions

GROUP GUIDELINES

This study was designed to alternate between large group participation and small group discussion. The questions posed in this study should be discussed in small groups first, then groups are invited to share the highlights of their discussion.

Small groups should be broken into teams of four individuals. Within the small group, each person will have a role. It is the responsibility of the small group to determine who will fill what role. The roles are as follows:

Reader - This individual is responsible for reading the Bible passage or question that is addressed.

Timer - This individual is responsible for making sure that the group stays within the designated time frame for the activity and stops any activity when the time limit has been reached.

Discussion Leader - This individual is responsible for making sure all individuals are able to comment and contribute to the group discussion.

Reporter - This individual is responsible for sharing key points that were discussed in the small group, with the large group.

If you have an additional person, due to uneven numbers, this person can serve as the **Resource person**. The resource person is responsible for making sure that the group is supplied with the materials needed for the activity and returning them when the activity is over.

Small groups may have a smaller number than four. In this instance, the study leader must determine which roles will best serve the discussion and activity, then identify them to the group with the smaller number, so that they may determine who will fill those roles.

If the study group is small, do all of the activities together. You can still assign roles, but some may not have one. In this instance, be diligent in encouraging all members of the group to participate.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Have participants form groups of four and have them establish what roles each member will have. Have each group collect and distribute the materials for their team. Explain the guidelines for the group activity, as follows:

Television Scattergories

Directions:

We are going to play a game called "Television Scattergories." The goal of each team is to have the greatest number of unique answers. Here is how we will play:

- Each team needs a scribe. The scribe will write down all the answers generated by the group.
- Teams will have one minute to write down as many answers for the category, within that time frame.
- When the minute is up, teams will be required to stop writing. Reporters will then share their responses with the group.
- If another group shares an answer that is on your team's paper, the team must scratch it off their list. Each answer not shared by another team, receives a point.
- The team with the most points wins.

I will give you one minute to designate roles and get your papers ready before I reveal the category.

Game Category: Write down as many shows that have judges or make judgments. Ready? Go!
Examples of shows: The Voice, Judge Judy, Cupcake Wars, America's Got Talent, Fashion Police, Pardon the Interruption (PTI), and so on.

After the minute is up, select a group to list the shows that they identified as having a judge or making judgments. Remind the group that they must cross off any shows that are stated by another group. Go through all the groups until all the shows on their lists are named. Have each team tally up their points and declare a winner.

Ask the question, "For each of the shows that were named, what kinds of judgments did they make on individuals?"

(Have each of the small groups discuss the question for 2-3 minutes, then have the reporters share key points that their group discussed.)

Examples:

The Voice - Judging singing ability

Judge Judy - Judging who was right in the eyes of the law

Cupcake Wars - Judging the best baking

Fashion Police - Judging how people are dressed

PTI - Judging athletic ability

Ask the question, "What criteria do you believe those making the judgments on these shows used to make their judgments?"

(Again have groups discuss for 2-3 minutes, then share key points with the larger group.)

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

Read or have small groups read: John 8:1-11. (The following questions should be addressed first in small groups.)

1. What kind of judgment is being passed in these verses?

Possible answers:

- a. The scribes and Pharisees have judged Jesus to be a fraud and are looking to discredit Him
- b. The scribes and Pharisees have judged an adulterous woman to be punished
- c. Jesus is being challenged to judge the adulterous woman
- d. Jesus challenged the group to judge their own actions
- e. Jesus challenged the woman to judge her own actions

2. What criteria is being used to determine judgment?

Possible answers:

- a. The Law of Moses
- b. The scribes' and Pharisees' own bias

3. What was Jesus' judgment of the situation?

Possible answers:

- a. Jesus did not make any judgments, He directed those around Him to weigh their knowledge of God's law against their own actions.
- b. As the people judge their own behavior, the Law should have directed them to their need for repentance, their need for forgiveness, and their need for a Savior.
- c.

Read or have small groups read John 8:12-30.

Information to share:

After the episode with the adulterous woman, the scribes and Pharisees were even more determined to discredit Jesus, especially as a judge. They begin to apply practices in Jewish law to undermine Jesus' reputation and authority.

1. What qualifications are needed to be a judge?

Possible answers:

- a. Extensive knowledge of the law
- b. Passing a test to verify knowledge of the law

2. What characteristics are needed for a good judge?

Possible answers:

- a. Unbiased
- b. Fair
- c. Honest/Ethical
- d. Winning record
- e. Good reputation
- f. Not influenced by others

3. What does it mean to, "judge according to the flesh"?

Possible answers:

- a. Judgment is influenced by personal bias, peer pressure, cultural dictates, human nature, etc.

4. By what authority does Jesus have to judge the world?

- a. God the Father, He is the ultimate witness to Jesus' role and the only One who is able to grant this responsibility

5. When will Jesus pronounce judgment on humanity? Read John 3: 17-21 and Revelation 22:12-16

- a. When Christ returns

Read or have small groups read John 8:31-36.

1. Where does Christ direct the people?

- a. Jesus directs them to His Word

2. How does the Bible free us?

- a. It shows us our need for a Savior and all that Jesus has done to save us from our sin and judgment.

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

The ability to make judgments seems to be an automatic function of our human nature.

1. How often do you see others judging or being judged?

Possible answer:

- a. It is evident in the people we are around and all over the media.

2. By what standard does the world judge others?

Possible answer:

- a. They judge according to the flesh

3. When faced with judging others, how can we follow in Jesus' example?

Possible answer:

- a. Point them to the Bible, where God establishes what can and cannot be done.

4. When we are being judged, what should be our response?

Possible answer:

Look at God's Word to examine our motives and behavior. If we are in the wrong; repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness.

CLOSING

In this world, we will face a constant barrage of judgment. There is no escape from those who are making judgments, including ourselves. While we cannot control the behavior of others, our true test is the standard by which we use judgment. In all that we say and do, our goal is to point all people to Christ. We can use God's Word to show others their need for a Savior or show them the abundance of God's grace. Using this method of judgment allows Christ to be the True Judge.