

Loving Just Because

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.—*Jesus, Matthew 7:1–21*

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And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”—*John 8:72*

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As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.—*Jesus, John 12:473*

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Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.—*1 Peter 3:8–114*

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And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.”—*Acts 10:285*

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With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.—*Ephesians 4:26*

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Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are.—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

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If there is any great secret of success in life, it lies in the ability to put yourself in the other person's place and to see things from his point of view.—*Henry Ford*

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When you judge another, you do not define them, you define yourself.—*Wayne Dyer*

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If you judge people you have no time to love them.—*Mother Teresa*

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One night Rick [a pastor] showed up sort of beaten-looking. He had been to some sort of pastors' reception where a guy spoke about how the church has lost touch with people who didn't know about Jesus. Rick said he was really convicted about this and asked us if we thought we needed to repent and start loving people who were very different from us. We all told him yes, we did, but I don't think any of us knew what that meant. Rick said he thought it meant we should live missional lives, that we should intentionally befriend people who are different from us. I didn't like the sound of that, to be honest. I didn't want to befriend somebody just to trick them into going to my church. Rick said that was not what he was talking about. He said he was talking about loving people just because they exist—homeless people and Gothic people and gays and fruit nuts. And then I liked the sound of it. I liked the idea of loving people just to love them, not to get them to come to church. ... So we started praying every week that God would teach us to live missional lives, to notice people who needed to be loved.—*Donald Miller*[7](#)

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We don't have to embrace everything about a person in order to appreciate the good that they do. We don't have to agree with all their lifestyle choices, or everything that they believe, in order to recognize and appreciate and even use one aspect of something they have done or said that is good or beautiful or the truth. We can choose the good, appreciate it, use it, be edified by it, and also recognize at the same time that we probably wouldn't want to embrace absolutely everything about the person.

We accept the good and beautiful and inspiring things that many people do or have given us, even though some of them may also do things that we don't agree with or support, or may have even committed very great sins. If we judged on the basis of some of these specific sins that we abhor or can't accept or agree with, then we wouldn't accept the Psalms, because David was a murderer.[8](#) And we couldn't appreciate Moses or his example of leadership, or the first five books of the Bible that were authored by him, for that matter, because he killed a man in anger.[9](#) We wouldn't appreciate and benefit from a good deal of the New Testament, because Peter denied Jesus, and Paul was previously Saul, and he caused terrible trouble for the early church.[10](#)

We would have little to no inspired music if we started to dissect the lives of those who wrote or produced each song. For that matter, we'd have very little in life that we could appreciate or benefit from, because no one is perfect!—*Maria Fontaine*[11](#)

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Whoever in prayer can say, “Our Father,” acknowledges and should feel the brotherhood of the whole race of mankind.—*Tryon Edwards*

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The opportunity for brotherhood presents itself every time you meet a human being.—*Jane Wyman*

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In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.—*Jesus, Matthew 7:12*[12](#)

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Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.—*Philippians 2:3*[13](#)

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As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.—*Romans 14:1–4*[14](#)

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But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.—*1 Peter 3:15*[15](#)

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People come to Jesus in all sorts of ways. Sometimes people bump into Jesus, they trip on the mystery, they stumble past the word, they drink from the rock, without knowing what or who it was. This happened in the Exodus, and it happens today.

The last thing we should do is discourage or disregard an honest, authentic encounter with the living Christ. He is the rock, and there is water for the thirsty there, wherever *there* is.

We are not threatened by this, surprised by this, or offended by this.

Sometimes people use his name; other times they don't.

Some people have so much baggage with regard to the name “Jesus” that when they encounter the mystery present in all of creation—grace, peace, love, acceptance, healing, forgiveness—the last thing they are inclined to name it is “Jesus.”

Second, none of us have cornered the market on Jesus, and none of us ever will.

What we see Jesus doing again and again—in the midst of constant reminders about the seriousness of following him, living like him, and trusting him—is widening the scope and expanse of his saving work.

His disciples want to shut down a man healing in his name in Luke 9, but he says sharply, “Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you.” He praises the faith of a Roman centurion, a “sinful woman” wastes a ton of money on perfume and he calls it worship, and when he encounters a despised tax collector, he wants to have dinner with him.

Whatever categories have been created, whatever biases are hanging like a mist in the air, whatever labels and assumptions have gone unchecked and untested, he continually defies, destroys, and disregards.

Third, it is our responsibility to be extremely careful about making negative, decisive, lasting judgments about people’s eternal destinies. As Jesus says, he “did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”[\[16\]](#) We can name Jesus, orient our lives around him, and celebrate him as the way, the truth, and the life, and at the same time respect the vast, expansive, generous mystery that he is.

Heaven is, after all, full of surprises. This world is being redeemed, the tomb is empty, and a new creation is bursting forth right here in the midst of this one.—*Rob Bell*[17](#)

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Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—*Jesus, Matthew 5:3–10*[18](#)

1 NIV.

2 ESV.

3 NIV.

4 ESV.

5 ESV.

6 ESV.

7 *Blue Like Jazz* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003).

8 See 2 Samuel 11.

9 Exodus 2:11–12.

10 Matthew 26:69–75; Acts 8:1–3.

11 <http://anchor.tfionline.com/post/appreciate-good>.

12 NIV.

13 NKJV.

14 ESV.

15 ESV.

16 John 12:47.

17 *Love Wins* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011).

18 NIV.