

# Luke 6:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

## Analysis

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**Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.** This verse contains three parallel prohibitions and promises regarding judgment, condemnation, and forgiveness. The command "Judge not" (*mē krinete*, μὴ κρίνετε) uses the present imperative with *mē* (μή), meaning "stop judging" or "do not make a habit of judging." The verb *krinō* (κρίνω) means to judge, condemn, or pass sentence. Jesus prohibits the judgmental, critical spirit that delights in finding fault and pronouncing condemnation on others.

The promise "and ye shall not be judged" (*kai ou mē krithēte*, καὶ οὐ μὴ κριθῆτε) uses the emphatic double negative construction in Greek, meaning "you absolutely shall not be judged." This promise operates both horizontally (others will not judge you as harshly) and vertically (God's judgment will be merciful). The second prohibition, "condemn not" (*mē katadikázete*, μὴ καταδικάζετε), intensifies the warning—*katadikazō* (καταδικάζω) means to pronounce guilty, condemn to punishment, or declare worthy of death. This is judicial condemnation, more severe than mere criticism.

The third command shifts to positive action: "forgive" (*apolýete*, ἀπολύετε) means release, liberate, or cancel a debt. The promise "ye shall be forgiven" (*apolythēsesthe*, ἀπολυθήσεσθε) uses divine passive—God will forgive. These principles establish reciprocal ethics: the measure we use for others determines the measure used for us (verse 38). Jesus doesn't prohibit all moral discernment

(John 7:24 commands "righteous judgment") but condemns the hypocritical, harsh, unmerciful spirit that judges others by a stricter standard than we apply to ourselves (Luke 6:41-42).

## Historical Context

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This teaching appears in Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49), addressed to disciples but overheard by crowds (Luke 6:17-19). The first-century Jewish religious context featured intense legalism among some Pharisaic groups, who meticulously judged others' adherence to oral tradition and ceremonial law. Jesus frequently confronted this judgmental spirit (Matthew 23, Luke 11:37-54), which created hierarchies of righteousness and excluded "sinners" from community and worship.

The principle of reciprocal judgment reflects Old Testament wisdom: "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:2). Jewish teaching recognized this principle—the Mishnah states, "Do not judge your fellow until you have stood in his place" (Pirke Avot 2:4). However, Jesus radicalizes the teaching by connecting human forgiveness to divine forgiveness, most clearly in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Early church application of this principle appears throughout apostolic teaching. Paul warns, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest" (Romans 2:1). James writes, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13). The early Christian community, comprising Jews and Gentiles, former enemies and social unequals, required this merciful, non-judgmental spirit to maintain unity.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How can believers exercise necessary discernment and maintain doctrinal boundaries without falling into the judgmental spirit Jesus condemns?
2. What is the relationship between our forgiveness of others and God's forgiveness of us?
3. How does our treatment of others reflect our understanding of how much God has forgiven us?
4. In what ways does judgmentalism reveal self-righteousness and spiritual pride?
5. How should this verse shape Christian responses to the sins and failures of fellow believers?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ μὴ κριθῆτε· καὶ οὐ μὴ κριθῆτε· μὴ  
and not Judge and G3756 not Judge not  
G2532 G3361 G2919 G2532 G3361 G2919 G3361

καταδικασθῆτε καὶ οὐ μὴ καταδικασθῆτε ἀπολυθήσεσθε·  
be condemned and G3756 not be condemned forgive  
G2613 G2532 G3361 G2613 G630

καὶ ἀπολυθήσεσθε·  
and forgive  
G2532 G630

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ephesians 4:32** (Parallel theme): And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

**James 5:9** (Judgment): Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

**Mark 11:25** (Parallel theme): And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

**Colossians 3:13** (Parallel theme): Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

**Matthew 5:7** (Parallel theme): Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

**Isaiah 65:5** (Parallel theme): Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

**Matthew 18:30** (Parallel theme): And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.