



REBUKING vs. JUDGING

By George Lujack

Scripture is not in conflict with itself when it calls on believers to rebuke while instructing us not to judge. The meaning of the words 'rebuke' and 'judge' have become synonymous in modern times. 'Rebuke' and 'judge' are two different words with two very different meanings.

Confusion over the definitions of 'rebuke' and 'judge' have made it difficult for some believers to rebuke their fellow brethren or neighbors.

Some believers may feel intimidated into not rebuking people whom they know are engaged in sin or inappropriate behavior for fear of being branded 'judgmental.' Some believers may feel that they should speak out against sin, but get frozen, intimidated into silence and acceptance of sin while failing to rebuke it.

rebuke:

to express disapproval of; reprove.

Rebuking concerns the reproof, correction, and proper instruction of a matter.

judge:

to make up one's mind about; form an opinion about. To think; suppose; conclude; criticize; blame. To govern, impose, punish.

Judging entails prosecuting, extracting justice, or imposing some kind of punishment.

Typically, when a well-meaning believer rebukes someone engaged in sin, the response often received is, "Don't judge me!" What the sinner is actually telling the believer is that he or she wishes to be left alone in that sin.

As parents rebuke their children for bad behavior, so too should believers rebuke their brethren and neighbors for sinful behavior. Good parents who rebuke their child would outright dismiss the child's protest if that disobedient child, for the purpose of continuing in misbehavior said, "Don't judge me." Likewise, good believers who rebuke sinners should outright dismiss the protest of sinners who, for the purpose of continuing in sin say, "Don't judge me."

As righteous believers we are called to be watchmen for the wicked (Ezekiel 33). Does this mean that as believers we should go around rebuking everybody?

Answer: No.

Do not throw your pearls (of wisdom) before swine (Matthew 7:6). Rebuke those who have ears to listen so that you can guide them to a proper understanding and instruct those who are open-minded to the truth of the Scriptures.

Yeshua (Jesus) is our ultimate judge. Yeshua (Jesus) said, “Do not judge, for the measure you dole out is the measure you will reap” (Matthew 7:1-2). Judging, according to Yeshua (Jesus), includes “doling out measures,” so judging certainly encompasses more than mere verbal rebuke. The judging that Yeshua (Jesus) spoke of imposes some kind of punishment. He does not want people to stone sinners any longer, as was done when living under the law, but wants people to repent of their sinful behavior in this age of grace. Without instruction and rebuke, sinners will often go right on ignorantly sinning without any correction from the wise.

LEVITICUS 19:17:

You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

PROVERBS 24:25:

But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight and a good blessing will come upon them.

ECCLESIASTES 7:5:

**It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise
Than for a man to hear the song of fools.**

LUKE 17:3:

“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

1 TIMOTHY 5:20:

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

2 TIMOTHY 4:2:

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

TITUS 1:13:

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.

TITUS 2:15:

Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

How quickly do the unrighteous of this world point out that Yeshua (Jesus) said, “Do not judge,” while omitting the fact that Yeshua (Jesus) also instructed believers to rebuke sin (Luke 17:3). Scripture instructs believers to rebuke sin.