

Judgement

If you have been following news from Hong Kong, you would be familiar with the name Joshua Wong. For the uninitiated, he is an activist who is internationally known for his prominent role during the 2014 Umbrella Movement, a political movement that emerged during the Hong Kong democracy protests of 2014. In August, he was sentenced to six months in prison for his involvement in leading the demonstrations.

While most news focused on Joshua Wong, one article stood out to me. It was an interview of his father, a devout Christian, who shared his heartbreak and pride of watching his child come of age as one of the leaders of a protest movement for free elections and also, the pressures he faced from fellow believers. One of the things his father said was that the worst kind of attention he received came from fellow believers or friends, who would, out of nowhere, offer to pray for his son to 'repent of his sin'.

The first thought I had after reading this was, "*This guy is going to leave the church.*" I mean that is what most would do upon encountering judgemental Christians. Instead of praying for his pain, for God to grant him the wisdom to handle his predicament, people prayed for his son to *repent*? My heart ached for the father, the conflicting feelings he must have had.

Throughout the bible, there are many passages about judging with Luke 6:37 being the most commonly quoted ones.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

We have been told many times not to judge. Yet everywhere judgement exists. In the form of opinions, jokes, facebook/whatsapp banter and conversations, we race to make sure others know our thoughts, defending our views and condemning those who disagree with our views. We launch toxic, crippling words on those we believe should know better.

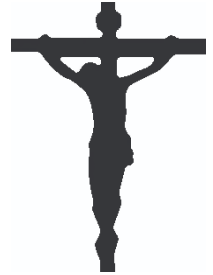
Why are we so eager to judge?

We must realise that when we stand as judge, jury and executioner over another, it gives us the feeling of being superior and righteous. Judgment is never grounded in humility.

It is grounded in arrogance (I will never get into this kind of situation myself...you should be as good as I am) or a sense of pity (poor, stupid you).

Are Christians known for how deeply we judge or how deeply we love? I am certainly not in favour of the view that love and judgement go hand in hand. Sure, Christians are to discern between good or evil but is the discernment we use helping us to redeem people or to condemn them? Are we reconciling people who are hurt and broken, renewing, redeeming, restoring them or are we lost in our bloodlust, spilling more blood that was already shed on the cross?

The cross was the single greatest act of love in human history and it was, at the same time, extremely violent. The difference is Jesus took the violence on Himself. He did not strike out at those who mocked Him or fight against those who nailed Him in place; He forgave them. In the midst of punishment at the hands of humans, Jesus loved.



Do not mistake this love is the kind that give others a pass or pretend everyone is okay and that it is cool to be messed up. The love I am talking about here recognizes the brokenness, fear, anger, shame, sin and hate in others and agrees to take all of that onto itself. In this, love causes the spiral of violence to cease.



If we are willing to imitate this kind of love, we will find it hard to spend our time judging others. If we love others enough to serve them, to not return an insult and let their pain be ours, we will find judgment and punishment no longer fit. Too often, we miss this first step and fail to love.

The invitation for each of us here is to abandon judgment, to abstain from condemnation, to forego punishment and pursue the love of Christ. It demands that we feed others rather than feed ourselves. Perhaps if we, through the power of the Spirit, can do this, we just might find less judgment and condemnation, more reconciliation and redemption.

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