



Judging

Righteous Judgment (Even on Social Media)

With the Savior's help, we can learn to judge in ways He would want us to.

By Young Women general board members and
Ensign staff

“Don’t judge.”

We hear this a lot in the world today, along with messages telling us it's not our right to judge others. Just the word *judgment* has a lot of negativity attached to it. But as members of the Savior's Church, we know that judging is something He has counseled us to do—as long as we do it in His way.

When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, He was harshly judged because the law of Moses set restrictions on what you could do on the Sabbath—and people didn't think He was acting within those guidelines. But the Savior rebuked them for being quick to find fault in others. Then He counseled them to “judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1–2).

How often do we, like those who judged the Savior, judge others in unrighteous ways? Perhaps more than we might think! Because judging others is so easy, especially in the realm of social media, we may need to

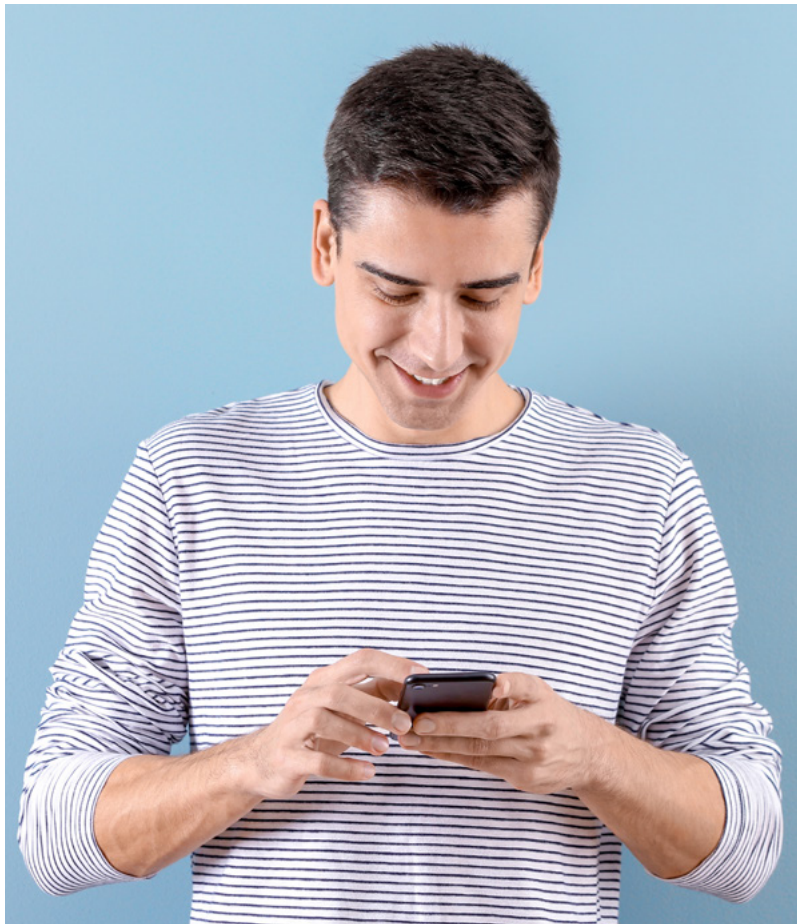
learn how to apply the Savior's counsel to judge righteous judgment to the world today.

Distinguishing Righteous vs. Unrighteous Judgments

Judging is part of our agency. There are many things over which we have to exercise judgment in life: things like choosing a career, deciding who to spend time with and *how* to spend our time, choosing what media to consume, and so on. But how can we make these judgments—and ultimately *all* judgments—righteously?

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, gave six guidelines for how to judge correctly. We can know our judgments are righteous if:

1. They “refrain from declaring that a person [is] assured of exaltation or . . . irrevocably bound for hellfire.”
2. They are “guided by the Spirit . . . , not by anger, revenge, jealousy, or self-interest.”



3. They are “within our stewardship.”
4. They include “an adequate knowledge of the facts.”
5. They are not about people but rather about situations.
6. They “apply righteous standards.”¹

The prophet Moroni also gave a guideline for judging righteously: “All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil . . . inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually” (Moroni 7:12).

When scrolling social media, considering friendships, or deciding how to spend our time, before making a judgment, we can ask ourselves, Does this post/person/activity:

- make me feel peaceful and good?
- invite me to do good?
- help me to love God and serve Him?

When we realize that all good things come from God, we can use our agency to make wise and righteous judgments about others, about ourselves, and about what we fill our life with.

Getting Out of the Cycle of Unrighteous Judging

Now that we have determined what righteous judgment is, what can we do when we find ourselves stuck in a negative spiral of judging? Here are a few ideas:

- Take a social media fast. This can give you an opportunity to slow down, regroup, and reconnect with others in real ways. When you see people more outside of social media, you realize that they are real people with real struggles, and you are less inclined to judge them.
- Instead of posting about yourself, post about someone you love who has inspired you. Tell others why you admire this person. This gives you a chance to look outside of yourself and to bless instead of impress.
- Choose to give one genuine, heartfelt response each day on social media, whether it’s a birthday wish, a congratulations, or even just a kind message.

- There are always going to be people on social media who share too much, only share their incredible vacations, have seemingly perfect families, or are often contentious. Before we judge, we can ask ourselves, “What does the Lord know about this person, and what can I learn about them?” Pray for help to see them as He does. And if their posts are constantly giving you negative feelings, you can always unfollow them.

Seeing everyone as they truly are—children of heavenly parents—changes our shallow impressions of them into an eternal perspective. There is power in realizing everyone’s true identity and purpose. As Sister Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, reminded us:

“You have a divine nature and purpose uniquely suited to *you*. . . .

“It’s easy to compare ourselves with others. There will always be someone who looks like they have everything together or are more important than we are. But we often forget that their purpose is different from our purpose. When we try to live true to who we really are—when we understand and appreciate God’s gifts and talents that are unique to us as individuals—then we can truly experience joy.”²



Ultimately, escaping from the cycle of judgment on social media takes action on our part. It takes looking outside ourselves to touch somebody else's life. It takes lifting others and sharing the Light of Christ. In doing so, not only do we serve others, but we are able to feel better about ourselves too.

Overcoming Self-Judgment and Toxic Comparisons

One of Satan's powerful tools is trying to prevent us from having a real understanding of our true identity. When we lose sight of our true identity, judgmental thoughts and self-criticism can replace feelings of self-compassion and love. We disconnect with others, ourselves, and even the Holy Ghost.

In truth, comparison isn't always about those we are comparing ourselves to; it's often about ourselves and our own insecurities. Comparison can actually be an unrighteous judgment of ourselves.

And while comparison may be the *thief of joy*,³ knowing our worth, our strengths and talents, and Heavenly Father's purpose for us and who we can become is a *key* to joy.

The Savior spent His life doing good (see Acts 10:38). He lived His life for others, without a single flaw. And yet He was

still rebuked and judged. But because He knew who He truly was and what His purpose was, He was able to handle judgment with grace, without letting it get in the way of what He was meant to do.

As we follow His example, we can do the same! The world makes it easy for us to lose ourselves in comparison and judgment and forget who we are, but we can learn from Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, who taught: "If the love we feel for the Savior and what He did for us is greater than the energy we give to weaknesses, self-doubts, or bad habits, then He will help us overcome the things which cause suffering in our lives. He saves us from ourselves."⁴

As we know, "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10). Now replace the word *souls* with your own name. Let that sink in for a moment. Heavenly Father knows your name, He knows your worth, and His Only Begotten Son died for you because you are worth *that* much to Him.

So when the world feels heavy and the comparison is setting in, draw near unto Them and you will feel self-doubt and self-judgment melt away and feel the true confidence that comes from knowing your priceless value.

Looking to the Savior

We can always look to the Savior for guidance in all we do. Part of what He offers us through His Atonement is the enabling power to change and figure out how to do everything He has asked us to do. And when we choose to follow and draw near unto Him, He helps us learn to let go of unrighteous judgments and see others—and ourselves—through His eyes. ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 9–12.
2. Michelle Craig, "How Do You Feel Joy in the Lord?" Nov. 22, 2019, blog.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
3. "Comparison is the thief of joy" is attributed to Theodore Roosevelt.
4. Joy D. Jones, "Value beyond Measure," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 15.

