



Three Things to Remember **before You Judge**

Life is difficult enough without this crazy cycle of judgment we often find ourselves in.



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I was exhausted. I had just finished shopping, I had college exams to study for, and I just wanted to go home. I was in such a hurry that I didn't even think twice when I opened my car door, set my bag of groceries in the front seat, and buckled my seat belt. But as soon as I went to put my keys in the ignition, I knew something was wrong. I looked around me. And then I froze in terror when reality hit me:

This isn't my car.

I don't remember much after that—probably because I was freaking out and silently praying that nobody watched me frantically grab my bag of groceries, throw

open the car door, and all but sprint across the parking lot to my actual car and speed away.

To this day, I hope no one saw me.

Have you ever accidentally stepped into the wrong car? If you haven't, I don't recommend it. It's been a few years, and my friends and family *still* bring that embarrassing moment up! But that mistake, along with other moments in my life where I have made mistakes, has taught me a few things about people. I've realized that we all have struggles, and I hope that I and all of us can be patient with each other's imperfections.

The Toxic Cycle of Judgment

Guess what. I'm not perfect. None of us are. Surprise! The more I experience in my life, the more I realize we all have imperfections. I realize how truly narrow the strait and narrow path is and how easily worldly distractions can take us off the path. I realize that I don't, in any way, have the right to judge someone else for their past, current, or even future mistakes, sins, or transgressions. And even though my friends and I still wipe away tears of laughter when we talk about our embarrassing moments, sometimes we judge those who have made other kinds of mistakes or bad decisions—we keep bringing up the bad decisions, and we keep judging the people who made them. And in those moments, nobody laughs.

Judging is important for us as humans, and we need to make wise judgments. But we need to be careful that we don't judge or criticize people for their mistakes. It's so very easy to look at someone's lifestyle, appearance, or even their opinions and make assumptions about their entire character, especially if their actions or words differ from our own. I'm guilty of this in so many ways. But it's

not OK. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"This topic of judging others could actually be taught in a two-word sermon. When it comes to hating, gossiping, ignoring, ridiculing, holding grudges, or wanting to cause harm, please apply the following:

"Stop it!"¹

Ironically, as much as we may unfairly judge others, most of us fear other people's opinions about us! (Honestly, I even hesitated to include my story about getting into the wrong car out of fear of embarrassment!) Judging each other is all just one big cycle that goes around and around without benefiting anybody. We have all been through (or are currently in) the refiner's fire, whether because of our own mistakes, another's actions, or circumstances beyond our control. And as God's children, we all deserve love, understanding, and empathy, not unrighteous judgment, condemnation, and isolation.

So what can we do? How can we break this cycle of judgment when it's so easy to get wrapped into it? Well, there are a few things I've learned that might help.

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1. Confidence is key

When you aren't confident in a particular area of your life, it can make you prone to judge others unfairly in that same area out of shame.²

I've definitely seen this play a factor in my life. I've often caught myself judging someone else, or even myself, because I'm feeling insecure or because I'm comparing myself with them, especially regarding things on the path of discipleship. For example, when someone says they make time to read their scriptures every single morning before work, I feel ashamed and judge myself for reading only a verse before bed the night before, all while trying not to fall asleep!

We are taught in Doctrine and Covenants 121:45, "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God."

And it's true! The fact of the matter is, when we are confident in who we are, in God's love for us, and in our own place on the path of discipleship, we are more able to see ourselves and others as He does. And we're less worried about what other people think. His view is the only one that truly matters.

2. Remember that judgment ultimately belongs to the Lord

Have you ever seen someone do something you completely disagree with or something that upsets you? maybe even a member of the Church who isn't living the way a disciple of Christ is taught to live? I have. And during those moments I have to catch myself before I make assumptions about

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their entire character. Sometimes I don't catch myself in time. It takes *a lot* of effort and practice to withhold judgment.

When I'm upset because of someone else, I try my best to remind myself that nobody is perfect and that truly everybody is probably doing the best they can in life, even if it doesn't always seem like it. As Sister Becky Craven, Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, has said: "I invite each of us to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know what adjustments we need to make in our lives to be more carefully aligned with our covenants. I also plead with you not to be critical of others making this same journey. 'Judgment is mine, saith the Lord' [Mormon 8:20]. We are each in the process of growth and change."³

3. Jesus Christ's Atonement is for everyone

All in all, Jesus Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us imperfect people. I can't fully comprehend every single thing He suffered in our behalf, no. But just thinking about the fact that my Savior was willing to take upon Him the seemingly unbearable challenges we face—challenges that



are the consequences of our own mistakes or that arise from things out of our control—fills me with gratitude and brings tears to my eyes.

Wherever you are on the path of discipleship—whether you are holding tightly to the iron rod while in the mists of darkness, or you have wandered off the strait and narrow and are trying to find your way back—know that the healing and redeeming power of the Savior is real. Not a single person on this earth has led a perfect life, apart from Him. And because of that, we will all fall short at times. But just like Peter, who began to sink after walking on the sea and cried out to Jesus for help, we can rely on the Savior to lift us up again (see Matthew 14:28–31).

We all need each other's compassion and understanding more than each other's judgment. Life is already difficult enough without such judgment! And when we love others as they are, just as the Savior does, it can change our hearts and theirs for the better. And ultimately, it can help

bring each of us closer to and keep us firmly on that strait and narrow path. ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Merciful Obtain Mercy," *Ensign*, May 2012, 75.
2. See Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (2015), 99.
3. Becky Craven, "Careful versus Casual," *Ensign*, May 2019, 10.



Chakell Wardleigh is a writer for the *Ensign*. You can usually find her smelling flowers, taking a long time to tell stories because she keeps getting sidetracked, getting sucked into books and podcasts, or being distracted by cute dogs. In fact, she's just easily distracted by the beautiful things in life.