

## Leviticus 19:15

'You shall do no injustice in judgment.  
You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person  
of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor...

How to Judge Righteously  
By Don Haney

If as a true Christian or as a king in the Millennium, you were asked to resolve a conflict, would you know how to do it in a Godly and just manner? What does justice mean? Do you know that justice is the application of God's Statutes? How can we learn to discern right from wrong? Is judging merely deciding as we see fair? If you were involved in a Matthew 18 conflict, would you simply tell the parties to "work it out?" What if they tried, but were not able to "work it out. How can we know how to judge in justice? Answer: Follow God's written Statutes and Judgments, like Jesus, James, Paul and all the apostles did!

### **STORY PROBLEM:**

As part of a Matthew 18 matter, you are asked to mediate and if necessary act as a judge to help two people resolve a heated dispute. As you approach them, a picture begins quickly to emerge. You notice the two men arguing. One is well dressed in designer name clothes, sporting a nice rock on his finger and a Rolex watch. He's leaning up against his sporty European car, with his perfect hair, and exotic boots. At first glance, he seems like he is used to getting his way, and probably has a rich daddy.

The other man obviously has less wealth. His clothing is badly worn, his hair unkempt. He is driving an old primer gray pickup truck with unmatched tires, that looks like it's been around quite a while. Life has been much harder on this man – but he seems to be a decent person. He is known as a hard worker. As a matter of fact, you recognize him as someone you went to school with, back in your youth. In some ways, he kind of reminds you of yourself and of your many struggles in life – not being of a wealthy background yourself.

By way of inheritance and his family's wealth, the wealthy young man is already a landowner and a prominent businessman. His father, still living, has done very well and is very influential in the community. You get the impression upon first appearance, that the wealthy young man is taking advantage of his working class neighbor.

Since you have been asked by the poor man to intervene and resolve this conflict and make a judgment if necessary and, as Paul said, we ought to be able to do judge between one another when necessary (1 Cor.6:1-7), you begin to ask a few questions. Since this is part of the calling of the saints, you accept this task and take it seriously.

The dispute has to do with a fence that separates their common property. It's not even clear at first whose fence it is, as it is right on the property line. It seems the poor man's cattle had broken free and treaded through the wealthy man's standing oat field just before harvest time, when the oats are fragile. To be harvested, they must remain standing, but now they've been eaten and trampled down. The fence had been allowed to deteriorate, so the cattle broke through at night.

Once on their neighbor's property they were spooked by a dog and ran around a bit. As a result, they also ran into and broke down a portion of the wealthy man's fencing around his prize horses, letting a prized stallion loose.

The disagreement is regarding who was responsible to maintain the common fence to keep the livestock in their place – and who would be responsible for the wealthy man's loss of crops and the resulting vet bills to his prized stallion, which was cut up as it ran through the downed wire fencing.

What do you do? Clearly the wealthy man has the easier ability to absorb the loss, and it is a common fence. Since the wealthy man ought to be better able to afford to mend the fences, do you judge for the poor man? If a man wants to have a crop or orchard, is it not solely his responsibility? Is it time to put a stop to the “rich oppressing the poor” here? Initially, as you consider James' comments about not showing respect to the rich, do you tend toward judging quickly for the poor man?

Did not James say in James 2:1-10, not to be a respecter of persons by showing respect to the wealthy who are well dressed, over the poor? But as you re-read that passage you are struck by verse 10, where the Lord's brother taught us to keep the WHOLE law. As a judge, should you look into the law further before reaching a conclusion? Or would you have seen enough? The Statutes give us the answers!

*Deut 1:17 “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's.”*

Here the Statutes and Judgments of God teach us to hear both the small (weaker) people as well as the more influential or powerful, and not to fear men in judgment, or to judge by appearance. So you know you should not let the wealth or powerful influence of the rich man's family at all influence your words or any judgments you may have to make. That is helpful, but we still need more guidance from God's Statutes to know what to do. A little further study will provide the answers.

*Lev 19:15 “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: you shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”*

You cannot let the state of wealth or fear of reprisal affect your judgment in any way. More than that, you cannot assume the wealthy man is wrong because you feel sorry for

the poor hard working man. CLASS has NOTHING to do with it. You must NOT show partiality – PERIOD – for the wealthy OR the poor.

The issue is WHO is responsible to keep the fence! The issue is WHO does God's word say is responsible to keep their stock in their own territory – NOT WHO IS RICH AND WHO IS POOR, or who we think can afford the loss. RESPONSIBILITY is the question!

Often we can fall into the "CLASS" mentality – judging for whomever is in our class. Or we can judge based upon ASSUMPTIONS. It would be easy to assume the wealthy is taking advantage of the poor, just trying to get a new common fence out of his neighbor. It would also be easy to assume the poor man is being irresponsible.

Aren't most poor people irresponsible, some may say? Assumptions are not accurate. As you investigate what God's Judgments and Statutes tell you to do, you continue to find His answers.

Lev 24:18 *"Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal. 19 'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—20 'fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. 21 'And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death. 22 'You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the LORD your God."*(NKJ)

By applying the spirit of this law, it is clear that you must judge fairly with equality. The real issue is to determine who is responsible for the disfigurement of the wealthy mans field and stallion. Was it happenstance? Was it the poor mans decaying fence? Shouldn't the wealthy man have been better able to protect his field? You look further into God's Statutes, and based upon **Deut.19:14-21**, find that as a judge you are to make "DILIGENT INQUIRY" before reaching any conclusions. So you do so, not allowing your personal ideas or preferences to influence you. It must not be our will but GOD'S WILL be done. God's Statues and Judgments are His will in various situations revealed!

Even Jesus said He would judge us by the things already written in the holy books...

Rev 20:12 *"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."* (KJV)

So we too are to learn to be like Christ – who will judge all the weightier matters – but will pass much responsibility on to us who will also be kings and priests, applying God's written Laws, Statutes, Judgments! (Ps.149 & Rev.1:6)

In order to apply God's Laws, Statutes and Judgments – we've first got to learn them well!

Good judges use God's Statutes to discern and they use God's Judgments to bring justice, just like righteous king Jehoshaphat did. God's word teaches us that **true justice, is the proper application of God's laws! (2 Cron.19:4-11)**

Suddenly, you remember when Jesus and His disciples were traveling away from home, how they walked through the fields and picked some grain and ate it, and of how Ruth was also able to walk into the fields of Boaz, and pick up the dropped gleanings in harvest time.

This not only reminds you of the loving nature of God's laws – but it makes it clear that these fields must have been open so that the stranger could have access to them. So it must not be a Biblical requirement for a man to keep his field fenced in for the protection of his crops.

Deut 23:24 "When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. 25 "When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain. (NKJ)

In further studying the Statutes, you see that a man was responsible to keep his livestock out of another man's field! Now you're getting to the mind of God in this matter, as His Statutes are His mind revealed, and His Judgments are altogether just.

Exod 22:5 "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution." (KJV)

Upon further investigation you find that the poor mans now dead father had purchased this land some years ago from the wealthy man's father with the restrictive covenant that the purchaser and owner of the new parcel be responsible to maintain a common fence to keep in any livestock out of the sellers farm land, if he choose to put livestock on his new land. This had later become a contention between the sons, as the son was not keeping the fence as his father had agreed. He felt it should be free-range country and did not wish to honor his father's covenant any longer. Since the Bible makes a man responsible for HIS OWN animals and what they do – not his neighbor, you judge for the wealthy man righteously – **by simply applying God's word!** The wealthy man is to be repaid fairly and equally for his losses, and the other man is required to bring the fence back up to standards.

God says, "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor (Lev.19:15). God's Statutes teach us how this is done. When we keep them, they make us wiser, they show us our errors and help cleanse us making us pure. They convert our soul as they are the teachings of our Father, and in keeping them there is great reward! (Ps.19:7-12) Let's do it!