

Judge me

By [David Williams](#)

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There's a saying that's come to have popular acceptance in American faith discourse: my faith is between me and God.

We've been hearing a bunch of that lately, particularly from those seeking power, who bristle at the idea that anyone has a right to call their assertions of faith into question.

What right does anyone have to judge the faith of anyone else? Faith is spiritual, this one-on-one relationship between you and The Cosmic Kahuna, and no-one has a right to critique what is an entirely private matter. Faith, and Christian faith in particular, is just a "personal relationship." It is separate from every other relationship we have.

To which I say, as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, [bovine excrement].

My Teacher/Lord/Savior/Friend makes it abundantly, inescapably, inarguably clear. If you're claiming to be a Christian, what matters is not a binary relationship between you and God. That is not the whole of the One Law. Neither is it dogmatic adherence to orthodoxy, or being rooted in your own beliefs about your worthiness/specialness.

There's only one measure of Christian faith: do you love God with all your heart, your mind, and your strength, and your neighbor as yourself? If you do, then you're doing what Jesus asked. If you don't? Then you can't accurately call yourself a Christian.

Period.

Everything else is subordinate, because that is the fundamental ground of what Jesus taught.

Can you assess the first part of that relation? No, because you are neither God nor are you me.

But if I claim to be a disciple of Jesus, you can and should judge me relative to the second part of that command, because you are my neighbor.

You are my neighbor. If you're an immigrant or a lesbian or a tea-party activist, you are my neighbor. If you are a meth addict or a prisoner, you are my neighbor. If you're from Manhattan, New York, or Manhattan, Kansas, you are my neighbor. If you are an atheist, you are my neighbor. If you are a Muslim, you are my neighbor.

If you are my enemy? My duty remains unchanged.

Do I bully you? Do I mock and belittle you? Then you are permitted to judge me as failing against the heart of my professed faith. Do I treat you as a means to an end, or as an object to be used for my own power or pleasure? Then you have a right to judge me as a hypocrite, huckster, or charlatan. Do I care only for my own greed, my own hunger, my own ego, to the point where you may as well not exist for me? Then you can call me a liar.

Because you are my neighbor, and if I fail to show you grace, mercy, and love, then any talk of Jesus coming out of my mouth is just noise.

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