



Judgmentalism in Our Life Together

Life Together: Cultivating Covenant Community Series #5

Various Passages

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We are continuing our “Life Together: Cultivating Covenant Community” series where we have been focusing on different temptations and subtle things that creep into our lives, spirits and attitudes that can disrupt or divide our unity together. David preached on self-pity and cynicism, then he preached that we should be self-forgetful, not greedily consuming everything. Last week, he preached on gentleness, as opposed to treating each other harshly. Today, we are looking at judgmentalism in our life together.

Let’s pray, asking God to help us as we look at His Word.

God, we need You right now. Holy Spirit, open our eyes and help us understand. Help us hear Your Word, apply it to our lives and respond to it. I pray that as we do this, You would be faithful to Your promises. You’ve said that Your Word is alive. It is powerful and active. I pray that You would use Your Word to change us. May we become more like Jesus and respond in a way that would honor You and bring You glory. We pray all this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

One of the greatest evils in the eyes of the world today is intolerance. Basically, anything goes as long as you don’t judge others. I don’t know how new this is, but it is definitely something that is common right now. If you Google phrases like “stop judging me” or “don’t judge me,” there are many images. People have created graphics and memes with these phrases.

You may have seen one that says, “Keep calm and stop judging,” which gets used and twisted to whatever we want it to be. Another one says, “Don’t judge me if you don’t know me.” There is a desire that, if you want to say something bad about me, you had better at least know what I’m going through. You had better know who I am.

Chris Brown even joined in on the conversation with a song from a few years ago called “Don’t Judge Me.” I’m guessing references to Chris Brown don’t make it into many sermons. He is a singer, though I didn’t know about this song until I started searching for this. Some of you

are tempted to judge me for mentioning this song, and some of you are tempted to judge me for not knowing this was a song written a few years ago. But, in the words of Chris Brown, “Don’t judge me.”

Still another meme says, “Don’t judge me. I was born to be awesome, not perfect.” Finally, there is one that is a response to Santa Clause that says, “Naughty or nice, huh? Stop judging me.”

There is a cry in the world today to stop judging me and to stop being intolerant of who I am, thinking you know everything about me. About seven years ago, there was a poll taken of 16-29 year olds, and 90% of them responded by saying Christians are too judgmental. So what do we do with statistics like that? I think some of it is just a reflection of our culture that no one wants to be told what to do. However, some of it could be true. What we are going to do today is look into God’s Word, specifically in the New Testament, to see what it says about being judgmental.

Perhaps don’t regularly attend church and your impression of Christians is that they are judgmental. Let me say a word to you and then to the rest of us. This is going to be a different kind of sermon, where we are not going to one specific passage to see what it says. We are going to turn to 11 passages today. I think it would be helpful if you followed along in your Bible as we look at what the New Testament says about judging.

In English, the word “judge” or “judging” can be either good or bad. If someone says, “You have poor judgment,” they are not praising you for your lack of judgmentalism. They are saying you do not make good choices or discern things rightly. When you think of the justice system, judgment is a good thing. In the New Testament, it is the same way. The word used for “judge” is sometimes used in a positive way, and sometimes it is used to command us not to judge. We are going to look at both of those to see what the Bible teaches and when it is appropriate or inappropriate to judge.

The Command to Judge

Let’s start in 1 Corinthians 2. First, we are going to look at the command God gives us to judge. These will counter our culture’s popular idea that we should just be tolerant of everything—that there are no moral absolutes, everything goes and it doesn’t really matter. No, actually, we are told to be discerning. There are times we are told to judge.

First Corinthians 2:15 says, “*The spiritual person judges all things...*” This comes after verse 14, which says, “*The natural person [left to ourselves] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are*

spiritually discerned.” But then he says, “*The spiritual person [those who are born of God; those who have been saved and redeemed by God] judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.*”

Look just a few pages later to 1 Corinthians 5. In verse nine, Paul said, “*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*” This is not a point in our topic today, but Paul was not talking about isolating ourselves from the lost. We are to be with them and associate with them. However, Paul went on to say in verses 11-13:

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

We are not going to dive into what all that this means. Obviously, it doesn’t mean that we should disassociate ourselves with someone who sins. However, if someone continues in sin, claims to be a Christian and does not respond to confrontation, there is a call for the church to rebuke that person. The word Paul used here is “judge.” We must judge those inside the church who are living in sin.

Let’s go back to Luke 17:3. Jesus said, “*Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him...*” Again, when we see someone who is living in sin, there is a call for us to lovingly come along, rebuke and confront sin.

Let’s go to one other passage on this in Philippians 1:9-11. Paul prayed for this church in Philippi, saying, “*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*” He prayed that their love would increase with knowledge and discernment, so they could approve things that are excellent. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be discerning and have good judgment. When necessary, we are called to lovingly rebuke other Christians living in sin.

The Command to Refrain from Judging

Now, let’s look at all the passages where we are commanded not to judge. Let’s see if we can begin to understand what is different. When is judging a sin? We will start with the most

famous passage, Matthew 7:1-5. Verse one is quoted by people who believe in God and by people who don't believe in God. Jesus said, "*Judge not, that you be not judged.*" I want us to go on, because, if that is all we had, it would be difficult to know what Jesus means. We have all these other passages where judging is a good thing, so what is different here? What kind of judging was Jesus talking about?

Jesus continued:

For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Jesus highlighted an absurd situation where someone has a beam or log sticking out of their eye and goes around being overly critical about what is in other people's eyes. He used this as an image to show what it is like when someone passes this kind of judgment. He was obviously speaking figuratively here, not talking about logs and specks in our eyes but about sins.

What are some things unique about this? First, Jesus said this is hypocritical judgment. This is when I am concerned about confronting your sins, but I don't judge myself with the same kind of scrutiny. The hypocrisy here is when I point out others' sin while being uncritical of my own.

Second, Jesus showed us why this happens. In verse three, He asked, "*Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*" This kind of critical spirit rises out of a self-righteous and self-justifying sense of thinking, "I am better than you." What that leads to is a blindness to the sin in our own lives. When we compare ourselves to others, thinking, "I'm a better Christian than you," it leads to us saying, "I don't sin in the way you do. I'm focusing on confronting, rebuking and pointing this out in you." But we are blind to the sin in our own lives. Jesus said, "You don't even notice this beam coming out of your eye." It is probably due to self-righteousness.

We are going to look at this more in Luke 18. The word for judge doesn't occur in this passage, but the theme is there. He uses the word "contempt" in this passage, and this word comes up in some of our other judging passages we will look at later. Luke 18:9 says, "*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt...*" So here is this word "contempt." In Paul's next passage we look at, it is the word "despise" in English. Jesus was telling a parable to people who thought they were righteous

due to their own good works, yet they looked at others and treated them with contempt. They despised other people and treated them as lesser individuals.

Again, I think Jesus highlighted the hypocrisy of self-righteousness in both of these passages. This is the idea that I am better than others and will point out their errors. So Jesus told a parable in Luke 18, beginning in verse 10:

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

I think it is interesting that Jesus told this parable about a Pharisee, a self-righteous man, who did acknowledge God. He prayed to God. This wasn't someone who thought, "This is all about me and I'm just better than everyone else." He acknowledged God. He's even thanked God. He said, "God, thank You that I'm a really good person. God, I thank You that You've kept me from being like that brother. I thank You that You have kept me from sinning like all those other people in my church. God, I thank You that I'm better than him."

Jesus said, "No, it's the man who comes humbly, crying out for God's mercy who will be exalted." It was a self-righteousness, comparative attitude that Jesus condemned. It is thinking that I'm good because of what I do and I'm good because I'm better than you.

Let's turn to Romans 14. This is the most extensive passage on our topic. I may have missed some, but we are looking at what I think are the key places where this kind of attitude is addressed. There is a difference here in Romans 14. We have seen hypocrisy; we've seen self-righteousness. Now, the scenario we are looking at in Romans 14 is in a church with a group of people who disagreed on the way to apply truth. Sometimes, we call those gray areas, doubtful or questionable things, or just areas of application. So Paul gave some background in the first couple of verses. He said, "*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.*"

Before we jump in, let me say this won't be a full treatment of Romans 14. In January, we will start a series alternating between Genesis and Romans, a few chapters at a time, going back

and forth. So, in three years or so, I think we'll be in Romans 14. There will be a fuller explanation at that time.

There is much here about how to deal with these kinds of questionable things and about causing others to stumble and things like that. What I want us to focus on specifically are the several times in this passage where Paul dealt with our attitudes toward each other when these things come up. His scenario was someone who thinks it is okay to eat anything versus someone who thinks it's okay to only eat vegetables. Some of this may have been coming out of the Jewish customs of what foods were acceptable and what foods weren't, and some of it may have come out of what he was also dealing with in 1 Corinthians 8-10, talking about meat that is offered to idols. Whatever it is here, he said one person thinks it is okay to eat anything; another thinks it is only okay to eat vegetables.

In verse three, Paul continued, *"Let not the one who eats [whatever they want] despise the one who abstains..."* That word "despise" is the same word Jesus used in Luke when He talked about the self-righteous people thinking they were good in themselves and treating others with contempt. So if you think it's okay to eat whatever you want, don't despise someone who thinks it's only okay to eat vegetables. He said, *"... [A]nd let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats..."*

Paul then began to give theological reasons that we should be more flexible with one another. He ended verse three saying, *"...for God has welcomed him."* Reason number one is to remember those who are in Christ have been welcomed by God.

Then in verse four, Paul said, *"Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand."* This was a reminder for us that God has welcomed him, and that person stands before God Who is his Judge and Master. So do not despise the one who chooses to abstain and do not pass judgment on the one who thinks it's okay to eat anything.

Look at verse five. He raised a different scenario, saying, *"One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike."* This may have been referring to a Sabbath day or a festival day that someone thinks we need to honor and treat as holy and special, while another person thinks, "No, every day is alike." Paul said, *"Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord."*

Then he came back to this other scenario in verse seven, saying, *"The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord..."* Again, Paul brought in this truth that God is our

Master. What we do and what we don't do is to our God as our Master. He said in verse eight, *"For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."*

He asked the question again in verse ten, *"Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."*

Look down at verse 13. He said, *"Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother."* This is where he got into some other things to consider during all this, such as not causing others to sin. But what he said right before that is, *"Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer..."*

Jump down to verse 17. He said, *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."* Again, there is more in here that he talks about like our consciences. If there is something that you believe is sin, he said, "Don't go and do that thing and sin against your own conscience."

We must also realize that our consciences aren't always right. Our conscience isn't the same as the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, there is something we believe is a sin and, as long as we are believing it, we shouldn't do that. The more we read God's Word and realize, "You know, this isn't a sin," our conscience is changed. We are lined up with more Scripture. But what he said here was that we should not do things that cause each other to sin. The part of this passage we're focusing on is where he continually talks about our attitudes toward each other when these kinds of differences exist. And they do.

Potential Areas Where We Are Tempted to Pass Judgment on Others

My goal in the next five minutes is not to make everyone mad at me. I'm not going to give any wisdom into any of these things. We are to be discerning people. We are to seek God's will in these things. I just want to list some potential areas where we are tempted to pass judgment on one another and despise one another. We all approach these questionable things believing our position is right. It is balanced. And everyone who is stricter than me on this—everyone who chooses to abstain or has some sort of stricter way of living—is a legalistic doofus. Everyone who is looser than me on this is licentious. Anyone who thinks it is okay to eat anything or that every

day is alike is a licentious, unholy person who doesn't even care what God thinks about the way he lives. But my stand right here is the right stand, the balanced stand. It's okay if you think that, but we need to realize how we treat people on either side of the issues. More often than we realize, I think we are tempted to pass judgment and despise. That's what Paul confronted.

Nine days ago was October 31st. Every year, Christians differ on how we treat Halloween. Do I give out candy? Do I not give out candy? Do I dress up? Do I not dress up? Do I have my own church gathering? Do I not have my own church gathering? There are Christians who think deeply about these kinds of things and, if we polled our church, there would be different opinions on how we approach holidays like Halloween.

What about entertainment, such as movies and television? There are probably quite a few different opinions on how much to watch, what to watch or where to watch? Is it okay to watch anything in my own home but not out in public? Is it okay to watch some stuff as long as it's a cartoon or produced before 1960? Is it okay to watch this if it only has this many bad things in it? Or can I watch programs that don't tempt me to sin and look for the way God redeems all those things? There are a number of ways to approach our entertainment. It is very easy for us to say, "You are so weird. You think you can't watch," or, "You're so terrible that you would dare to watch that."

Modesty is another one of these difficult things. We believe in the truth of modesty and not trying to draw attention to ourselves, especially in summer months and times when we go swimming. Christians differ on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. Maybe even beyond how much or how little is okay to wear is how much attention we give to what we look like. Is it okay to make ourselves look good? Is it okay to wear nice things? How much makeup is too much makeup? How much jewelry is too flashy? Christians throughout history have differed on these kinds of things. It's easy to laugh at those who think it is a big deal and pass judgment on those who seem to be applying it in a way that we would not.

What about health issues, like gluten, dairy, Paleo diets, sugar, proteins and how much to eat? What about smoking? As we mention different things, what responsibility does a Christian have to take care of his body? Even on some of these things, some of us would probably say, "It's okay to treat your body badly in that area but not in this area." We despise those who care too much and pass judgment on those who seem to give no thought to it.

In our church, there are different beliefs on the use of alcohol. Some say it is best to abstain in today's culture. Others say the Bible forbids drunkenness but, in moderation, it is a gift of God that can be used. We pass judgment on and despise those who think differently.

What about school choices, whether it is public school, homeschool, Christian school, other private or classical schools? It's easy to say, "Oh, you keep your kids at home? You must not love the world or reach out to them." Or you might say, "You put your kids in a classical school, so you must think you're better than everyone else." Or, "You put your kids in a public school, so you must not even care about them." It is okay for you to think about these things and make wise decisions about your family and the way you believe God is leading your family. However, growing out of that is this idea that my belief is what God wants and everyone else doing something differently must be sinning.

There are other issues, like how many children we should have. Is birth control okay? Do you have too many kids or too few kids? What about materialism? Some people think, "Your stuff is too nice. Your house is too nice. Your car is too nice." Or they may think the way you handle debt is "obviously a sin."

There are musical disagreements, whether the music is for personal use or for church worship use. We can quickly pass judgments and despise. Even in the way we, as a church, view other churches can be tempting for us to think we are the only good church around here doing what is right. We either think, "Your church sings too new of songs, with only a few words they have you repeat too much," or, "Your church sings words that are too old and we don't know what they mean." Or we criticize the church whose pastor preaches for 55 minutes, saying it is way too long; or the church whose pastor preaches for 20 minutes, saying it is way too short.

We get so critical, and it grows out of a self-righteousness that believes, "Because of these things I am doing, I am right with God and everyone else isn't."

We talked quite a bit about how people suffer in our series on Job. We either say, "You are suffering because of your sin," or we say, "The way you are responding to your suffering, you either don't care about it enough or you care about it too much or you're depressed." The way we look at people, we can make judgments about things, despising and passing judgments on one another.

There are certainly parenting pressures. I haven't lived in other generations, obviously, but it seems like this generation is opinionated on parenting and puts a lot of pressure on moms in the following ways:

- Whether or not to breastfeed
- Whether or not to use cloth diapers
- Whether or not to give your children immunizations
- Whether you should have a natural birth or have an epidural
- Whether you should work at home or work outside the home
- Whether you love your kids too much and even idolize them or you love them too little

- Whether or not you should give them medicine

There are many things we should think through when we make decisions for our families, but they can lead to despising, divisions and judgmentalism.

Finally, there are many political views and this issue can be touchy. We might say, “How dare you not vote for the guy I voted for! Don’t you care about the poor? Don’t you care about what the Bible says about this issue?” We can quickly despise and pass judgment on others.

Moving forward, let’s look at 1 Corinthians 4. We will quickly go through these final verses, but we need to see them, read them and hear what themes keep arising. Before we move on, because of our sin nature, when we listen to these lists, we are probably tempted to respond in a couple different ways. In some of these, we are tempted to respond by saying, “That’s not one of those gray areas. That’s clearly wrong.” Or we might say, “That’s clearly right.” You may have even had angst welling up inside as I read those things.

Another common response is to think, “Good, I’m glad he said that one. I know that person over there is really judgmental about that and I’m glad they’re hearing this.” In our first service, Ross prayed about the irony of listening to a sermon on judgmentalism when we are thinking about who needs to hear this. It is humorous, but it is true and sinful. Even just thinking about the topic, it is also easy for me to feel like I am the only one here not struggling with this.

Let’s continue on with 1 Corinthians 4:5. Paul said, *“Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”* This is another instance of Paul saying, “Don’t pronounce judgment.” He rooted this in the fact that we will all stand before God; He is our Judge.

Move forward to 1 Corinthians 10:29. Paul said, *“I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else’s conscience?”* I’m not going to get into all the details of this passage, but Paul was saying, “Don’t do something if you are going to cause someone to sin against his conscience.” That doesn’t mean we have to try to live a life where no one will disagree with us, but we must care for others and not cause them to sin against their conscience. Paul said, *“I do not mean your conscience, but his,”* because your liberty isn’t determined by someone else’s conscience. However, it is determined by whether or not you are going to cause that person to sin.

Look at Colossians 2:16. This is a unique passage where Paul was not telling us to not judge others. Here he says, “Don’t let anyone judge you.” He was speaking about their liberty in Christ and not being bound to a works mentality, thinking you can earn your way to God. He

said, “God has set you free. He has cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside. He nailed it to the cross.” Then, in verse 16, he said, *“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”*

Let’s jump forward to James 4:10 says, *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”* Isn’t our pride, self-righteousness, arrogance and feeling of superiority at the root of all this? James said, *“Humble yourselves before the Lord...”* He went on in verse 11 to say, *“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.”* There are times when our judgmentalism may be toward a person. More often, it is about that person. We get with people and want to speak evil against one another, spreading divisions. James said, *“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.”* James was saying, “You are putting yourself in God’s place of authority as a judge, but you are not a judge.” He said, *“There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

As we have gone through this study, we have looked through what the Bible says about judging. We are called to be discerning. We are called to make good judgments about things and to take God’s Word and apply it to our lives today. We are also called to confront (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). There are other verses that talk about times we need to rebuke Christians who are living in unrepentant sin.

However, there is a wrong kind of judging. It is when we feel superior. It is when we despise people who differ from us. It is when we are hypocritical and point out things in others when all the while self-righteousness is growing within us. It is a condemning attitude, overly critical. It is where we have no flexibility. We don’t make room for people in our church to differ with us. We are not called to pursue peace through unanimity—by being exactly the same as each other. We are called to pursue peace through unity by realizing there is something that unites us and it is bigger than all these issues.

What unites us is the blood of Jesus Christ. He came and lived perfectly for us for all of these times we are going to mess up. He lived perfectly for us and died in our place. He died not just for you; He died for us, and not just us but for the sins of people all over this world. We are all brought into His family. We are all adopted into God’s family and there is a unity there that goes much further than agreeing on all these specific things. That is what we need to be striving

for; that is what we need to be pursuing—a humble difference toward one another, showing grace as a people who have been shown much grace.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the blood of Jesus Christ that washes away our sins—our sins of judgmentalism, spiritual arrogance, pride, being overly critical, looking down on others, passing judgment on others and being divided. God, we thank You that You died for those sins, too, and that You welcome us into Your family. I pray that as we continue in this service that our eyes would be fixed on Christ. Open our eyes with love, peace, grace and mercy toward one another. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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