

# Week 4: Living Counter-Culturally

## JUDGMENTALISM

### Welcome: Living Counterculture (What, Why, How)

- Today's topic is **JUDGMENTALISM**, close cousin **CRITICAL SPIRIT**
- Specifically, we want to explore the following questions
  - (1) What are the secular messages we receive?
  - (2) How do these secular messages influence us?
  - (3) How do these messages contrast with the teaching of Scripture?
  - (4) How does the believer live in a way that provides a countercultural alternative to the pervasive world view?

### Introduction – Judgmentalism

Judgmentalism, let's work on a definition.

**Suffix: ism**—belief: a belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school. **Is**m – **when this suffix is added on to the end of a word, it takes the root of the word and elevates it to a system, a philosophical way of thought**, i.e., pragmatism, humanism.

- Dictionary: You won't find "judgmentalism" in a dictionary, but you will find the word "judgmental." Making moral judgments, fault finding, having or displaying an excessively critical point of view: characterized by a tendency to judge harshly. Judgmental people form [opinions](#) of people and [situations](#) very quickly, when it would be [better](#) for them to [wait](#) until they [know](#) more about the person or situation.
- What are some of the phrases we use? Rush to judgment, pass judgment on, pronounce judgment on,

In order to clarify what we mean, let's ask how judgmentalism is different from good and helpful ways of making judgments about things. We can get confused. Judge...in a court of law, is a good thing. A judge gives an authoritative decision. They are authorized to decide/rule on questions brought before the court. We make judgments about lots of things. We discern between good and bad, right and wrong, truth and lies. Making a judgment about something is not necessarily a negative thing to do.

When we exercise our judgment, or make a judgment of discernment and it can be a good thing. We can be making a critical decision, using discernment and wisdom. As we talked about last week, there are times when we must declare a right or wrong based on an external objective standard.

When the Bible tells us not to be judgmental, it means we are not to have a spirit of condemnation towards others. We are to love them, be concerned for them, pray for them—all of that. But we are still supposed to have discernment—to be able to distinguish between what is righteous and what is unrighteous.

### Identify the secular messages we receive? – Interactive with class

**What are some of the characteristics of a critical spirit: Judgmentalism (critical spirit)**

I have the right to judge you. Acting as the authority, I am the standard

Fault finding, Putting someone on trial.

Putting someone down, thinking less of them,

Not giving someone the benefit of the doubt

Avoiding someone because their behavior or beliefs are different from yours

I am able to assess someone's worth

Drawing conclusions about someone without having all the facts. Making sweeping generalizations about people.

I am more superior, better than you

A lack of understanding of another person's entire situation. The unspoken message is that I know everything about you and am qualified to pass judgment on you. We make ethical, moral judgments about another person based on knowing only one part of their story, only based on a particular situation.

Labeling people: Equating poverty with lack of intelligence

Equating hardship with spiritual immaturity

Building ourselves up by tearing others down.

Judgmental attitudes often are aimed at a person's basic character.

We tend to compliment generally and criticize specifically

I can't believe you believe that

You get what you deserve

I don't do ...xyz....i do this..... comparative statements.

We compare ourselves with others in areas where we don't struggle.

If you don't tolerate (sin), you are therefore unloving. Christians are supposed to love.

Characteristics of Judgmental spirit	Negative	Scripture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fault finding. I am more superior than you. We do this to feel better about ourselves. We have blinders on when it comes to our own fault.</li><li>Stereotyping, Labeling people, he is a liberal, she is a feminist, she's pro-choice.</li><li>Equating poverty with lack of intelligence, equating hardship with spiritual immaturity.</li><li>Being laser focused on other people's shortcomings. We Criticizing specifically.</li><li>Comparison game, "I don't do ...."</li><li>Judging on outward appearances. Making ethical moral judgments about another person based on limited information.</li><li>You are getting what you deserve.</li><li>We are so tolerant of our own sin, and so intolerant of other's sins.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li></li></ul>

Notes from JO: (36-) Markers: What makes something a boundary marker is its being seized upon by the “group” as an opportunity to reinforce a false sense of superiority, fed by the intent to exclude others. A boundary-oriented approach to spirituality focuses on people’s position: Are you inside or outside the group? Especially in Christian communities, a great deal of energy is spent clarifying what counts as a boundary marker.

It's possible to think we are becoming more spiritual when in fact we are only becoming more smug and judgmental.

## How do these secular messages of judgmentalism influence us?

- **I think this week, more than the previous three, we will pay close attention to where we see this attitude in ourselves.**

**“You are getting what you deserve.”** We become judge/jury/executioner: “

It’s a continuum of attitudes and feelings that eventually affect how we treat others. It begins in the mind...how we think of others leads to how we treat others. It may begin with an intentional avoidance of someone because they are different from us, or drastically differ from us in the way they live. Then it moves to a subtle justification on our part of why we are avoiding them. We justify our actions by telling ourselves that they are so different from us that we can’t find common ground. Then we have to eventually make a moral or ethical judgment about them.

**We disengage:** It may begin with avoiding someone because we can’t get beyond the behavior or lifestyle that is in direct opposition to ours. Then it may slide to lumping people together, indulging in stereotyping or making sweeping generalizations about every area of that person’s life.

We can’t be salt and light if we are not in contact with people who desperately need the light of the good news. It’s flavorless and dark where there is no salt and light. John 17:15 *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.*

**We quench the Spirit:** Judgmentalism is a slippery slope like materialism. We tend to have an internal scale by which we judge others. We may judge in order to make ourselves look/feel better. We often are critical in areas where we are especially sensitive, or don’t struggle. The more I indulge in criticizing or judging people, the more I become that kind of person. It has a way of quenching the Spirit’s work in me. 1 Thes 5:19 *When we discern that other people are not growing spiritually and allow that discernment to turn to criticism, we block our fellowship with God. **God never gives us discernment so that we may criticize, but that we may intercede.*** Utmost, Nov 23

**Fault finding: We are so tolerant of our own sin and intolerant of other’s sins.** We can become consumed with fault finding. We can be so intent on rule keeping that we forget that people matter to God. And changing their hearts is his work. We can become blind to our own faults.

What’s going on in our heart when a critical spirit rises up? A critical spirit is indication that something is going on in my heart. Fear, anxiety, insecurity, legalism? Psalm 139 Bookended with “*search me*” “23-24: *O Lord you have searched me and known me....Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*”

Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”*

(EMT) We call them first responders because they are typically the first ones on the scene. They determine and assess the priority of what medical attention is needed and provide the needed medical attention. Let the Holy

Spirit be the first responder. The first one to the “scene.” The first one to diagnose a critical spirit, a judgmental spirit, and give a diagnosis and spiritual attention. Let the Holy Spirit be your first responder. Lifegiving pause.

Slippery slope to legalism: *Legalism is expecting others to conform to my conscience where God has remained silent.* J. Piper

When the Bible tells us not to be judgmental, it means we are not to have a spirit of condemnation towards others. We are to love them, be concerned for them, pray for them—all of that. But we are still supposed to have discernment—to be able to distinguish between what is righteous and what is unrighteous.

More often than not, any ethical evaluation you may make as a believer may be countered with “judge not,” from your non-believing friends. This is a misinterpretation of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:1-6. Jesus isn’t telling his followers to not to make any judgments whatsoever. But this misinterpretation is put to use by unbelievers and professing Christians alike and it contributes to the confusing culture we find ourselves in (relativism). So, these four weeks, we’ve been thinking about what it means to live counter-culturally. Does it mean we never make judgments of any kind. Does it mean we have to leave our common sense at the door? Does it mean we sink into relativism?

No, Christ is most certainly not forbidding His people from issuing judgments altogether. In fact, Jesus in this same gospel orders us to discriminate between good and evil. Exercising discernment and making sound judgments is a part of being a follower of Jesus.

Jesus is actually warning us to be fair and humble when we make our evaluations. We are naturally prone to focus on the failings of others and ignore their own sins. We always must examine ourselves first.

How do these worldly messages contrast with the teaching of Scripture?

## Observation 1: We will be Hated by the World

---

*(John 15:18-19) <sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Also, John 17*

---

- This is **strong** language (hate x3). To the point of **persecution** and **martyrdom**.
  - World **maligns** and **negates** God’s truth ...
- 

*(Isaiah 5:20) <sup>20</sup> Woe to those who call **evil good and good evil**, who put **darkness for light and light for darkness**, who put **bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!***

---

- The world **equates** (1) **belief in the God** of the Bible with **stupidity**, (2) **intolerance** with **being unloving**
- How do we respond? Do we withdraw?
- No! We continue to **ENGAGE, LOVE and REFLECT**, and let God **CONVICT**.

We thought it would be helpful to turn the tables on ourselves ...

## Observation 2: It's God's Prerogative to Judge, not Ours

- God's JUDGEMENT is right.
  - Our ability to JUDGE is flawed by sin.
- 

*(Psalm 7:11) <sup>11</sup> God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation (displeasure) every day.*

---

- Judgment is God's business, not ours.
  - God has the **exclusive right** to judge.
- 

*(James 4:12) <sup>12</sup> God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So, what right do you have to judge your neighbor?*

---

- Ultimately, when people **sin against us**, they are **sinning against God**.
- We **defer** to God to **exercise justice** because he is the **only one** that is **just and righteous**

## Observation 3: By Labeling People, We Devalue Them

- E.g. "He's liberal", "She's pro-choice", "He's gay".
- Labels are stereotypes.
  - Definition: "A **fixed** and **over generalized belief** about a particular group of people."
  - Disadvantage is we **presuppose** things about people that **aren't always true**.
- Biblical labels:

### The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

---

*(Luke 18:9-14) <sup>9</sup> He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup> 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!' <sup>14</sup> 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."*

---

- (v11) Notice the labels ... **extortioners, unjust, adulterers, tax collectors**
  - (v9) **Contempt** – disrespect/degrade/devalue another
  - E.g. Women at the well, woman caught in adultery, woman who anointed Jesus.
- 

*(Romans 2:1-5) <sup>2</sup> Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. <sup>2</sup> We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such*

things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

(Matt. 7:2) Jesus: <sup>2</sup>For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the **measure you use it will be measured to you.**

---

- Bible teaches, we are **hypocrites** if we judge others for a **same sin** that **we have committed** (or will commit).
- E.g. Picketing at an abortion clinic with a sign “Abortion is Murder” (which is judgmental) -> “Can We Help You?” (which is love)

#### Observation 4: Judgmentalism is Ultimately the Sin of Self-Righteousness

- “I don’t do that”, “I’m holier than you”
  - Game of Comparisons:
    - We **compare ourselves with others**, rather than to **God’s standard of perfection**.
    - Relativism – duplicitous.
  - Why do we do this? It makes us **feel good about ourselves**.
- 

(Matthew 7:3-5) <sup>3</sup> 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**? <sup>4</sup> 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? <sup>5</sup> 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.

(Luke 18:9-14) <sup>9</sup> He also told this parable to some **who trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and treated others with contempt:

---

- It’s **God the HS** that is responsible for the hard work of **convicting** a person, **not us**.
- We just **live the truth** for all to observe, and **speak the truth** when appropriate.

#### Observation 5: Respond Reflexively with LOVE

- Your **first, reflexive response** should be LOVE, not judgment.
  - God’s **first response** is to love
- 

(John 3:16-17) <sup>16</sup> “For this is how **God loved the world**: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

---

- “God loved the world **so much**, that He came to save us from the judgement we deserved.

The Rich Young Ruler

---

(Mark 10:17-27) <sup>20</sup> And he said to him, “Teacher, **all these I have kept from my youth.**” <sup>21</sup> And Jesus, looking at him, **loved him**, ...

---

- After the Rich Young Ruler makes a fool out of himself by claiming he's kept the entire Law, Jesus **loved him**.
- Judgement, resentment, critical spirit, etc. **damages our hearts**.
- Over time, we become **uncaring, unloving people**.
- Don't **disengage** and **avoid** people you're **uncomfortable** being around.

## Conclusion

- Just go into the world,
- be obedient to God's truth,
- let God shine through you,
- ... and let the HS do the hard work of conviction.

**Luke 6:45** A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

- End game of judgmentalism (critical spirit) is to tear another person down, to make them look smaller in order to make ourselves look better. When we exercise good sound judgment and discernment, the end game is to lift up truth, honor for God, respect for people.
- We can't ever know another person's heart or motives for why they do what they do. We leave the convicting part to God.

John Ortberg (The Life You've Always Wanted): (p39) Warning signs that I am becoming more judgmental and spiritually inauthentic:

1. Am I preoccupied with appearing to be spiritual? Do I work hard at making people think I'm loving, spiritual, wise? (Matt 23:25) "Woe to you, you clean the outside of the cup."
2. Am I becoming judgmental or exclusive or proud? Pride is a potential problem for anyone who takes spiritual growth seriously. As soon as we begin to pursue virtue, we begin to wonder why others aren't as virtuous as we are. Why do we find ourselves rating people as if they were Olympic contestants and some appointed me judge? Why do I so often compare myself with them as if we were in some kind of competition? This tendency is one reason why God sometimes graciously hides our own growth from our eyes. (Luke 20:46) "They love to have the place of honor."
3. Am I becoming more approachable, or less? (Matt 23:7) "They love to be called Rabbi." Does our differentness push people away or draw people to us? Jesus had a kind of differentness that drew people to him. True spirituality is that way. The rabbis had the mistaken notion that their spirituality required them to distance themselves from people.
4. Am I growing weary of pursuing spiritual growth? (Matt 23:4) "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others." Conforming to a religious subculture doesn't captivate anyone. It can be intimidating and unchallenging at the same time.
5. Am I measuring my spiritual life in superficial ways? (JO 43) (Matt 23:16) "You blind guides. You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." Spir Practices are important, not because they prove how spiritual we are, but because God can use them to transform us. The real issue is what kind of people are we becoming? Am I growing in love for God and people?

**Key ideas for all four weeks:**



## **Engage:**

### **How do we engage with people who matter to God?**

- It begins with intentionally interacting with people who are far from God because they matter to God. How do we fulfill the Great Commission if we stay safe, comfortable, and isolated? Visible, available.
- **Engage:** People have lots of questions. We need to take their questions and objections seriously. God will meet them in their question. It can give God a clear path to speak to their heart. Jesus can find his way into conversation if we can get beyond surface conversation. If we see questions as an open door to present something about who God really is, then we can be presenting people with the person of Jesus. People are looking for meaning.
- Don't let the issues polarize us. We can't expect those who are far from God to believe the same things we do about God. We can stand for what we believe in a way that respects others.

Realize that people are searching for meaning and value. Be alert for opportunities to speak hope and truth into their life. God is continually bringing opportunities into our lives to engage with people, often people who we have no affinity for, who we are very different from.

- People are afraid to be faced with the truth. By virtue of the fact that we are searching for meaning in life and truth that we can securely hold on to, people are looking for God. But, people can keep themselves distracted for a lifetime avoiding coming face to face with God. One thing we can share with people is that we don't practice a "religion" but we are in a relationship with a person.
- We can exercise good judgment and discernment without being judgmental.

**Love:** Over and over in the NT we read that it is real love that speaks volumes to people. Jesus said people even far from God recognize real love. It has hands and feet and expresses itself in action. (John 3:16, **God so loved the world that he gave...**) As followers of Jesus, our marching orders are extraordinarily clear. (John 13:34, **A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**) We are to love others in the same way as He loves us. *Let your light so shine (Matt 5:16) before men that they see (they connect the dots) and glorify your father in heaven.*

We honestly have no idea the impact real love has on people when we engage with people with a gentle and humble spirit. God knows the specific needs of every human being and he places us in places where He can work through us to draw them to himself. The drawing is God's work.

---

Jesus came to serve, not be served (Mark 10:45), and the same goes for us. We are in this world to serve, not be pampered. To love, not be applauded. To bless, not be notarized. The aim of our charge is love, not popularity (1 Timothy 1:5).

**Reflect God's character:** God "in you" (Col 1:27) is the hope of the world. What does it look like in your life to reflect the character of God?

Things are feeling unstable. People are losing hope. We have a chance to be people who live as people with hope, who's hope is rooted in something stable.

We can be salt and light by just being present, being available and doing life with people. If you are available, God will use you. Remember, most people do not respond to the Gospel the first time they hear it. The things of the Spirit require the Spirit. Let God work, we don't save anyone. (Luther-get the words from our mouth to their ears, God takes it from their ears to their hearts.)



Our job is to let God shine through us.

Just like he greeted children that others thought were a nuisance, he welcomed sinners that others didn't (Matthew 19:14; Luke 7:37-39). He looked at them, as Mark says he did with the rich young man, and he loved them (Mark 10:21). He had compassion on them.

### **Our story:**

When we retired, we had no idea how we would be put into play. It's not about us, but about how God can use us right where we are. We are finding that it is as simple as being visible, being available, being friendly, neighborly. We are just showing up, setting the table and attempting to build community. It's slow work. It's an opportunity for us to engage with our neighbors, who are all over the map religiously. We don't necessarily know where each one of them are at. It gives us an opportunity to engage with people and let God do his work as he sees fit. Our job is not to change hearts, but to be salt and light. Whatever happens is not up to us. Engaging with people is slow work.

- ENGAGE
  - Weekly Sunset Social to
    - **connect people** in the community and
    - **get connected with people** in the community
  - Average attendance over past two years = 28 people/week
  - Opportunity to get **closer** to people and **build trust**
  - **One-on-one** with people over lunch/coffee/beer
- LOVE
  - Being **available** to **listen** and **serve** people ...
  - ... as a way to **show** them we **value** them
- REFLECT
  - **Acknowledge God** (mention "church", "God's blessings", ...)
  - Let them see us (be **transparent**)
  - Let God do the work of **conviction**

### **Scriptures for Week 3**

Psalm 7:11

Psalm 139:23-24

Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 7:2-5

Matthew 10:17-27

Matthew 18:21-35

Luke 18:9-14

John 3:16-17

Romans 2:1-5

Hebrews 4:12

**James 4:12**