

Cultivate Reflection Guide

Pivot: How to Change When You Don't Want To Week of August 23, 2020 – How to be Less Judgmental

If you missed this weekend's messages, watch at cultivate.sc/discussion

Whether we want it or not, change happens. The more we cling to the way things have always been, the more miserable we can be. What if God wants to use change to change YOU? Use our weekly reflection guide, along with the weekend message, to respond in community and/or through daily personal study. *Your goal is not to get through the content, but to get the content through you SO THAT you grow as you cultivate God's word into your life.*

1. A Closer Look: Re-read John 8:1-11 and engage with the story as if you're an onlooker. Consider what you know and what you don't. What stands out to you? If you could, what questions would you ask? Imagine what this moment felt like for the woman. How do you feel about her? How do you feel about the way Jesus' responds to her? To her accusers? Linger here and take note of what you're asking, thinking and feeling.

2. Cultivate Wholeness: The story of the woman caught in adultery is a case study in the art of compassion. We know sin happened, but we don't know the story behind it – for the woman, the man she was caught with or the folks holding the stones. Jesus however knew the whole messy deal and in the face of sin, He chose compassion, not condemnation. A whole life is one where we practice compassion – both toward self and others.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me...Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?...The answer is in Jesus Christ...So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

Romans 7:21-25 – 8:1-2 NLT

Sin will always be a battle and Jesus doesn't offer a free pass, but He does offer freedom. Are you living in that freedom? Are you daily releasing the lies of condemnation and receiving Jesus' compassion SO THAT you can walk forward in freedom becoming your most whole self? If not, ask God to meet you right now and remind you – to keep reminding you – that His grace, compassion, freedom and forgiveness are REAL and they are for you.

If we belong to Jesus, we not only receive compassion, we offer it to others. In the face of sin, are you practicing compassion or condemnation? Do your words/actions/choices toward others reflect the power of the life-giving Spirit at work in you? Kindness does not excuse sin, but rather invites others to know the One who can forgive it. Who needs your compassion and kindness today SO THAT they can experience the freedom Jesus offers?

3. The REAL question: Pastor Matt challenged us that the question is never “do you judge others?” but “by what standard do you judge others?” God wants the bible to be our standard for judgement – which means we should care **less** about political position and social affiliation and **more** about spiritual condition. Reflect on how you see others, as well as your expectations of them. Do you pray and use God's word as your standard or do you quickly judge others by your own set of expectations – morally, culturally or personally? Pray, asking God to right your expectations so they are healthy, reasonable and biblical.

4. Judgement like Jesus. The key to growing in wisdom is to understand where our judgement begins. We might judge those who sin, hurt us or oppose us. We can judge others based on our perception, rather than facts. We even put ourselves in the judgement seat because we think we're better than others. What are your triggers? What brings judgement out of you? Pray, asking God to show you where you're being judgmental rather than using wise judgement, like Jesus.

Dig Deeper: Our judgement can reflect our spirit. If you're struggling with a judgmental spirit that is critical, bitter and prideful, do the work of getting REAL with God. Ask Him what needs to change in you so that you can cultivate a considerate, wise and humble spirit.

5. Cultivate Community. We've admitted we're all judgmental and asked God to show us where change begins in us. Take the brave step of being REAL with others – your community or someone you trust – and ask them how they experience you? Do they see any areas of your life where your judgement is compromised – physically, emotionally, relationally or spiritually? Invite them to speak truth and be willing to listen with a heart to grow and change so that you can become who God is calling you to be.