

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Although pretty much everybody agrees that it’s bad to be judgmental, it comes natural to a lot of people. Why is it especially easy for religious people to be judgmental?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!” **Luke 7:36-39 NLT**

You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God’s law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

Well then, if you teach others, why don’t you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. No wonder the Scriptures say, “The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you.”

**Romans 2:19-24 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

Although the Bible says that God is our Judge (Psalm 50:6), people still try to be judge over other people. We do it all the time. In fact, it might even be the case that we judge basically every person we encounter. We make silent assessments and render our verdict literally dozens of times every day. Don’t believe me? Go to Walmart. And yet being the judge of the rest of humanity was never meant to be our job.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

In the story above from Luke 7, the Pharisee is so busy judging the sinful of the woman that he forgets about his own sin. What sin of his own is he unaware of?

Is there a group of people you feel judged by?

Is there a group of people whom you tend to be judgmental toward?

It is good to recognize when something is a sin. We need to know what’s good and what’s evil. But it’s *not* good to be judgmental toward the sinner. What are some indicators that you have crossed the line from recognizing sin (which is good) to being judgmental toward the person (which is bad)?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, it is easy for us to be judgmental toward other people. Yet when we are busy looking down our noses at other people, it’s easy to forget about our own sins. And it’s easy to forget that You are the Judge. Please remind me today of when I am being judgmental and give me the strength to show grace.

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you were asked to make a list of the most destructive sins on the planet, what sins would make your top 3?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. They know God’s justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. **Romans 1:28-32 NLT**

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God’s judgment when you do the same things? Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. **Romans 2:1-5 NLT**

For God does not show favoritism. **Romans 2:11**

**Sermon Insights:**

Think about those bad people in Romans 1. What does Paul say? They don’t glorify God. Their hearts are dark. They worship all the sensual experiences. They have a depraved mind. They celebrate when others do bad stuff. And yet, Romans 2 also has bad news for those of us who would consider ourselves “good people.” We are *all* sinners who desperately need God’s mercy.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Think back to your answer to the “Conversation Starter” question above. Based on what you’ve read in the Gospels, what are some of the sins Jesus saw as the most destructive?

What are some sins committed by the religious leaders in Jesus’ day which they were least aware of?

What are some of your sinful attitudes and actions which you tend to be least aware of?

There’s a saying that goes like this: “The ground is level at the foot of the cross.” Can you think of some times in your life when you needed to be reminded that we are *all* sinners in need of God’s mercy?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I am a sinner, and I need your mercy. When I am tempted to be judgmental toward other people, please remind me how much I need your mercy. Thank you for your kindness, and I pray that your kindness toward me would soften my heart and lead me to repentance.

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

“God is judge.” What is frightening about this truth? What is comforting about this truth?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

For no one on earth—from east or west, or even from the wilderness—should raise a defiant fist. It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall. **Psalm 75:6-7 NLT**

From heaven you sentenced your enemies; the earth trembled and stood silent before you. You stand up to judge those who do evil, O God, and to rescue the oppressed of the earth. **Psalm 76:8-9 NLT**

And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone’s secret life. **Romans 2:16 NLT**

...Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom. **2 Timothy 4:1 NLT**

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? **James 4:12 NLT**

“You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” **Luke 6:36-38 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

As we go through life navigating the path of judgment, we run the risk of driving into one of two ditches: on one side of the road there is the trap of constant judgment on others for their perceived failures. On the other side, we find fear of ever saying anything judgmental at all about anything. But when God assumes His rightful place as our King on the throne, then the mantle of judgment moves from *us* to *Him*. Because God is the Judge of us all, we are able to avoid being judgmental—even as we gently encourage people to turn away from their sins (James 5:20).

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

What are some of the reasons that God is a more qualified Judge of humanity than you are?

Sometimes we take on the job of judging other people because we don’t fully believe that God is the perfect Judge who will make everything right in the end. If you fully trust God as Judge, how will that affect your attitude toward other people? Your attitude toward God?

Complete the sentence with 2-3 points of personal application: Since God is the righteous Judge, I can...

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I thank You that You care about righteousness and justice. You care enough about humanity that you will see that sin is punished, the repentant are forgiven, and the oppressed will receive justice. Help me to trust you as Judge.

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Why do people on trial sometimes plead “not guilty” when they really are guilty?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

*Background: The southern kingdom of Ancient Israel (Judah) was defeated by Babylon and carried into exile. This was after they repeatedly ignored God’s prophets and refused to listen to God’s commands. In exile, the prophet Daniel prayed this prayer of repentance for his nation:*

“O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unflinching love to those who love you and obey your commands. But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations. We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke on your authority to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land

Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you. O Lord, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him. We have not obeyed the Lord our God, for we have not followed the instructions he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has disobeyed your instruction and turned away, refusing to listen to your voice. . . .

O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name.” **Daniel 9:4-11, 18-19 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

In his prayer for his nation, Daniel doesn’t plead “not guilty.” *He pleads for mercy.* What should we do when we stand as sinners before the holy Judge who knows all? We plead for mercy.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

When is the last time you pleaded with God for mercy over something you or someone else did which was sinful?

Why is it foolish to try to hide our sin from God?

Daniel prayed, “We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy.” How does it feel knowing that God’s kindness is based, not on our character, but on His great mercy?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, we thank You that, even when we have done evil things, we can approach You knowing that You are a God of mercy. Your justice and Your mercy were both on display in Christ’s cross, where Jesus took our punishment for sins on Himself, while cleansing us of our sins. Praise You for Your great mercy!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

When sinful people came to Jesus, broken because of their sin, how did Jesus treat them?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:** *Background: When King David had committed murder and adultery, he went for a while without confessing his sin. After he was confronted by a prophet whom God sent to him, David finally confessed his sin and felt completely broken. Then he wrote this psalm:*

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just....

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. Don’t keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. **Psalm 51:1-4, 7-14**

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. **Hebrews 4:16 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:** Jesus is the “visible image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). So, when we are curious what God is like, we look at Jesus. So, what kind of Judge is God? Well, when sinners hung around Jesus, they didn’t feel judgmentalism; rather, they felt His kindness. And it was Jesus’ kindness that made people want to live differently. As Romans 2:4 puts it, “Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?”

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Rather than being harsh with them, Jesus treated sinful people with astounding gentleness. They realized they could trust Him. Can you think of a time when God treated you very gently when He could have been harsh toward you?

God is our Judge, but let us not forget that He is also our Father. When we willfully sin against God, we are not just violating a law; we are wounding a relationship with a Father who desires to reconcile with us. Do you tend to see God more as an intimidating Judge or as a loving heavenly Father?

Read Hebrews 4:16 again. When you “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God,” what two things will you receive?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank You so much that I can approach you boldly, knowing that You are a God who gives grace and mercy when we confess our sins. You are our righteous Judge, and You are our loving heavenly Father. Give me the strength and humility to come to You when I sin, rather than to try to hide my sin and avoid You. Open my eyes to Your goodness; praise You that Your arms are open to us.