FINDING FREEDOM

# Finding Freedom From Judgment

## Overview

Judgment fundamentally breaks down our relationships. Instead of operating out of a heart of mercy and compassion, we become critical and condemning of others. When in judgment, we act like we've been appointed as a judge, jury, and executioner over other people and use our standards and expectations as the unequivocal measures of right and wrong behavior. Once we perceive others have messed up or done wrong, we proclaim them "guilty" and carry out our sentence of punishment upon the lives of "the offenders."

At times you may extract your punishment in direct and aggressive ways, such as yelling, scolding, or talking down to the other person. Other times you may express the punishment in more subtle and passive way, such as avoiding, not talking, withholding love, or something else the other person desires. Gossiping or "talking stink" about the other person behind their back is another form of punishment. Reacting in any of these unloving manners indicates you've fallen into the trap of "conditional love." When people meet your expectations, you praise and love them. When they don't, they suffer your wrath. This is not the way God calls us to live.

Too often, people justify their judgmental behaviors believing they are doing what is "right and just." However, keep in mind the Word of God clearly says in James, "mercy triumphs over judgment." Typically, pride is also intertwined in a judgmental response. We view ourselves as better than the other person and believe, and possibly even say, "I would never behave like that." Remember the scripture about the log and speck? Be sure to take the log out of your own eye, so you can remove the speck from the other person's eye. In our judgment, we have grabbed onto a "love of law", and have failed to live up to God's "law of love."

## Keys to Breakthrough

**Expectations**
Identifying the expectations we are holding the other person to is one of the biggest keys to praying through our judgments. Our expectations are rigid beliefs that define what is good, right, or what success looks like in a given situation. We are often unaware these rigid expectations are operating in our lives until someone fails to "measure up" to one of them. Then, in a blink of an eye, we are flooded with an onslaught of unloving emotions, and far too often some type of relationally destructive behavior ensues.

Some of our expectations of others are so petty that once we realize the price our relationships are paying for holding others to these standards, we decide to get rid of the expectations altogether. Examples of these are: not putting the toilet seat down, not putting dirty dishes in the sink, or squeezing the toothpaste from the middle. As the expectation is renounced (disowned) through prayer, God will begin to break the compelling internal force that drives you

to scold or punish the “offender.” It’s not unusual to find that some of these small, petty expectations are linked to how you desire others to meet your emotional needs.

Most of us have very clear expectations regarding how we desire others to meet our emotional needs (e.g. respect, love). However, we are often unconscious of how these expectations are running and, at times, ruining our relationships. A few examples of expectations with clear links to emotional needs are: “if you respected me, you’d pay attention when I was talking,” “if you loved and respected me you’d call / text me back right away,” or “if you loved me you would spend more time with me.”

In these situations, we have linked the person’s behavior (e.g texting back right away) to an emotional need (e.g. love and respect) we are demanding them to meet. So when the person’s behavior fails to measure up to your expectation, like not texting us back quickly, you come to the bad conclusion that they don’t love and respect you. These bad conclusions typically manifest as unspoken “devaluing messages” that come screaming into your soul along with a flood of emotions. Next thing you know, you’re thinking destructive thoughts like “They don’t respect me,” or “They don’t love me.”

When you are willing to renounce expectations, you break the link, or tie, between the behavior and emotional need. When the power of the expectation is broken, a person can do the same behavior (e.g. not texting you back right away) and not trigger a strong emotional reaction in you.

Unfortunately, our patterns of judging and coming to bad conclusions are not isolated to other people. We tend to do the same when it comes to ourselves and God. Examples of these types of bad conclusions sound like: “I am unloveable,” “I am not enough,” “God doesn’t love me,” or “God has abandoned me.” These devaluing conclusions are clearly not aligned with what the Bible says about who God is, or what God can do, as well as who we are in the eyes of our Heavenly Father, and what we’re capable of “in Christ.”

**Devaluing Labels**

When a person fails to measure up to our expectations or standards, we will typically place negative or devaluing labels on them. The offenders quickly become jerks, idiots, losers, liars, stupid, evil, or worse! If these labels are not renounced, you will continue to relate to the offender through these destructive perspectives. Of course, you may find some not-so-helpful labels on yourself and/or God if that’s where your judgment is focused.

**Expectations Rooted in Past Emotionally Hurtful Event**

While renouncing an expectation is beneficial, if the expectation is strongly rooted in an emotionally-charged hurtful past event, identifying where the expectation originated may be an important step to experience a full breakthrough. Repeatedly praying for an expectation to be broken in your life without much progress is often an indication that it may be rooted in a past emotionally hurtful event, which is typically locked up in fear.

Fear is a common emotional and spiritual driver behind the destructive reactions we exhibit when people fail to meet up to our expectations. Out of fear of being rejected or hurt again, we often create relational rules and expectations in an attempt to protect ourselves. When a fear-based expectation has been consciously or unconsciously developed from a past hurtful event or events, you may find it critical for the Holy Spirit to reveal the past event so the grip of fear that powerfully holds the expectation in place can be broken.

Fear unconsciously compels us to try and control other people's behaviors to keep us safe. By scolding or punishing others when they fail to meet our expectations, we are simply protecting ourselves from being hurt again. This explains why we all have such strong reactions when people fail to meet our expectations. While fear of rejection is the likely culprit, you need to turn to God to understand where is the fear, or fears, holding your expectations in place. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what you are afraid might happen if the person you judged continues to behave like they were. Once you can clearly see what you are fearing, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the underlying lie that is empowering the fear.

In addition, it's not uncommon to find that unconsciously you have believed the lie that this fear-based expectations can, or will, protect you. If you feel this lie has been active in your heart, you may find that it is liked to the lie that God won't, or can't, protect you. Being sure to renounce those lies are important as well.

While each situation is unique and different, below is a scripted prayer to help lead you through repenting from judgment. I want you to pray the following prayer out loud. I don't want you just to read it. I want you to do your best to make these words a heartfelt prayer to God. To do this, I suggest you first read over a section of the prayer silently to familiarize yourself with what the prayer says. Then pause, still your heart before God, and pray the words out loud to Him from your heart. Where you see "*(name)*" in the prayer, insert the name of the person you have judged as you pray.

## Judgment Prayer

**Confess** Dear Heavenly Father, please forgive me for judging *(name)*. I have been critical, condemning, and wrongfully held *(name)* to my standard of behavior. Forgive me for the mean and hurtful things I said and did to control and punish him/her. Specifically, I ask you to forgive me for…(*state all the hurtful, devaluing things you said and did to them, including things said "behind their back")*. Lord, forgive me for holding onto unforgiveness. Forgive me for my pride, my self-righteous attitude, and my lack of mercy toward *(name)*. Forgive me for thinking less of them and believing that I would never behave like they did. I relinquish my position upon the judgement-seat and humbly take my place on the mercy seat.

**Renounce** Father, I renounce the labels that I have placed upon *(name)*. I renounce the lie that he/she is *(include all the devaluing labels you place on them)* and break the lie that (*state any other bad conclusions or devaluing messages you believed)*. Father, I renounce and break the expectation *(state specific expectation)*. Forgive me for any way I have used this

expectation to protect myself. I renounce the lie that I can protect myself and break the lie that You will not and cannot protect me.

**Forgive** I choose today to forgive *(name)* for *(state what they did)*.

**Rebuke** I rebuke every critical and condemning spirit in the name of Jesus and ask that You fill me with your mercy and peace. The truth is, *(name)* is (state specific loving truths). Father, I ask You to break and remove every spiritual barrier in my relationship with *(name)* in the name of Jesus.

**Declare** Father, I ask You to pour out the blessings that have been stored up in Your vast storehouse over *(name)* life. I pray that your hand of blessing would be fully extended to *(name)* in the name of Jesus. I thank You for *(name)*. Let him/her be a blessing to all who are around them. *(add specific blessings as Spirit leads)*.

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