Respectable Sins

Session Eleven

Judgmentalism

***HOOK***

REVIEW

* Since the last session, when have impatience or anger surfaced in your life? In the lives of people around you? How did you respond?
* What is at the root of irritability, and what impact does it have on those around us? Have you been more aware of it this week then before? Why or why not?
* Together, review ways in which each of us can deal more effectively with such sins through the power of the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCING NEW TOPIC

* Jerry Bridges comments in his book, RESPECTABLE SINS, “If I’m correct, then the seriousness of the sin of judgmentalism is not so much that I judge my brother as that in so doing, I assume the role of God”

***BOOK***

1. What is judgmentalism?
2. “Judgmentalism begins,” writes the author, “when we equate our opinions with the truth.”
   1. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
   2. What’s the difference between a preference for something (a certain kind of food, for example) and a bible based conviction? What can happen when we elevate personal convictions concerning an issue to the level of biblical truth – even when the bible is not clear on that particular issue?
3. “It is easy,” the author writes, “to become judgmental toward anyone whose opinions are different from ours.” Think of a time when you’ve seen this happen. What consequences occurred?
4. Paul faced judgmentalism head-on (See Romans 14). One group in the church at Rome ate only vegetables and thought they had the moral high ground (see 14:3); another group ate “anything” (presumably meat) and thought they had superior knowledge because what they ate made no difference to God if it was received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4). And each group judged the other. In addition, some believers observed certain days as holy days, and other believers did not.
   1. Read Romans 14:4-5. How would you describe Paul’s response?
   2. How does Christ’s teaching in Matthew 7:1-5 handle this?
   3. According to Romans 14, what position did Paul take concerning the personal convictions of what people ate or special days they observed?
5. Is there a place, biblically, for judging another? Explain.
   1. Romans 1:24-32
   2. Galatians 5:19-21
   3. 2 Timothy 3:1-5
   4. Look at Galatians 6:1-2. What does this passage reveal about our right and responsibility to confront sin?
   5. Even though we are expected to confront sins in others, and draw them to repentance, is it possible to sin while doing so? Explain.
6. “Because we do believe so strongly in the importance of sound doctrine,” Jerry writes, “we can easily become hypercritical of those with whom we disagree.”
   1. What is doctrine?
   2. Why is doctrine so important?
   3. What do you think is the proper balance between (a) standing up for key biblical doctrine, and (b) expressing disagreement with advocates of unsound doctrine in ways that do not degenerate into character assassination?
7. Biblically, when should we pass judgment on the practices and beliefs of other believers? What criteria must we use? (Read Romans 1:24-32; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) Give a concise and summarized statement describing how we should approach them.
8. How is the perspective of bible-based confrontation different from much of our societies emphasis on “tolerance?”
9. What dangers do we face when we judge others whose preferences and practices are different from ours?
10. What are the consequences others experience if they are the constant focus of a critical person?
11. When do we need to pass bible-based judgment on practices and beliefs of a believer whose lifestyle or conduct is clearly not in line with scripture?
12. How have Christian’s judgmentalism affected their churches? Their witness in the local community?
13. How can we strongly disagree with people who undermine key biblical doctrine, such as Jesus’ substitutionary atonement for our sins, while not committing judgmentalism?

***LOOK***

1. How do you feel when you are with someone who continually practices judgmentalism – having a critical spirit and finding fault with everyone and everything? Why do you think a critical spirit is so damaging?
2. “The tongue” writes the author, “is only the instrument that reveals what’s in our hearts.” Based on your speech, what is in your heart? What might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to do about it?

***TOOK***

1. For the next two days, ask yourself, will what I’m about to say tend to tear down or built up the person to whom I speak (or about whom I speak)?
2. Confess any sins of judgmentalism or sins of the tongue. Talk honestly with God about how you’d like to improve and invite Him to help you.