

# TOXIC

## DAY 1

**What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about judgmentalism? Which side of judgmentalism do you most easily identify with, being judged or judging?** Most of us are very sensitive to being judged while underestimating our own ability to judge others. READ Luke 18:9-14. **Where do you see signs of toxicity (hypocrisy, legalism, judgmentalism) in this story? Do you see all three? Where do these attitudes come from? What are they rooted in?**

THINK about when we began this journey last fall - following our Rabbi and digging into His ethical teachings. We began learning about contempt -- uncovering that "self certain, self superior disdain for anything or anyone we consider beneath us and thus worthy of disrespect, criticism, scorn or ridicule." **How does contempt fit into this picture of toxic religion?** Jesus warns that this type of person - full of contempt, judgment, hypocrisy, and legalism - isn't fit for the kingdom of God. In fact he/she is better fit for hell! Jesus tells us to ruthlessly drive contempt from our lives. **How are we doing?** PRAY: Father, again I am reminded of the wisdom of your teaching. Help me to give you my attention this week. Help me to be open to your spirit as you shine light on dark places in my heart. Guard my heart, my mind and my attitude from moving this away from myself and on to others. Keep me mindful that, in this case, it's all about me.

## DAY 2

In our tolerant culture, being called or seen as judgmental is quite offensive. However, in our hyper-competitive, materialistic culture it's also easy to fall into the trap of comparing, evaluating and looking down on others. We may hesitate to put words to them, but our thoughts and attitudes reveal the truth within our hearts. READ Luke 7:36-39. **Where does this Pharisee's judgmentalism take place? Isn't that the easiest place to judge others, in our own thoughts?** Recently I was seated on a crowded plane and as the flight was underway, I overheard the person seated behind me talking with someone across the aisle about religion. As I caught bits and pieces of the conversation, it became clear this person's beliefs were radically different than my own. As the flight continued, I began to form judgments in my mind about this person - what he looks like, what kind of person he is, how misinformed and arrogant he must be, etc. THINK about a time when you made judgments about someone. **Did you know him/her? Were your judgments based on something he/she said? Something you heard about him/her? What was he/she wearing? Who was he/she with?** Judgmentalism and condemnation almost always involve some degree of self-righteousness and distancing ourselves from the one we're judging. Judgment flows from our own sense of self-certainty, thereby justifying our attitudes of judgmentalism. PRAY: Father, teach me to humble myself. Protect me from the delusion of believing I can see more clearly than others see.

## DAY 3

As toxic as judgmentalism can be in our own thoughts and hearts, it doesn't simply stay there. Remember, it's like yeast. READ Luke 15:1-2. Judgmentalism seeks out others who judge, aligning and reinforcing its own certainty. What begins in our minds, gains momentum when we put words to it, especially when those words are spoken to or in front of others who have similar judgments. THINK back to a time you've been with someone or a group of people and someone verbalized a judgment about someone else. **What happened to the conversation? Was a floodgate of gossip, bias, and/or stereotypical language released?** READ yesterday's story (Luke 7:36-50) in its entirety. In verse 40 Jesus says he has something to tell Simon. **What is he telling us?**

## DAY 4

READ Matthew 7:1-6. **When was the last time someone pointed out to you that you weren't seeing something clearly? How did you respond? What kind of a heart do you want from a person who points out something you need to see differently?** Jesus teaches us that hearts filled with condemnation and judgment are the planks in our own eyes. In The Divine Conspiracy, Dallas Willard writes, "The mere fact that we are condemning shows our heart does not have the kingdom rightness that Jesus is talking about... We cannot see clearly how to assist our brother, because we cannot see our brother. And we will never know how to truly help him until we have grown into the kind of person who does not condemn." PRAY: Father, give me the heart and attitude to be the kind of person who can help other people see things more clearly. Give me humility to receive from those who can help me see things more clearly.

## DAY 5

We may be tempted to combat judgmentalism with an attitude of "live and let live." However, that's not what Jesus says. That kind of attitude leads to apathy, isolation, and will disintegrate community. Once again we need to return to the heart. If we do this, we'll create the type of community where light is valued in the dark parts of our hearts. Then we'll be able to speak into each other's lives with wisdom, love and understanding. Listening will replace telling or preaching. Journeying together will help us replace quick easy answers to complex struggles. Becoming the kind of people who can be part of such a community is a challenge. **Have you ever had something in your eye, literally? Something you couldn't get out by yourself? Whom would you trust to help you get it out?** THINK of the vulnerability of holding your eye open and letting someone come close enough to touch it. Whom would you trust? READ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. The answer to overcoming judgmentalism and toxic religion is COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIP EMPOWERED BY LOVE. **What steps are you taking toward becoming a more loving person? How are you doing with loving the people in your own home? Your classroom? Your neighborhood? Are you a part of a small group? If not, what's holding you back? If so, how can you make your small group more like the community described above?** "...and yet I will show you the most excellent way." 1 Corinthians 12:31b

PRAY: Father, take my heart and fill it with your love. Help me to love and be loved; to give and receive clarity. Help me to choose the most excellent way.

April 9/10, 2011