

# Word Fast for the New Year Series

*Luke 6:37-38 (NIV)*

*<sup>37</sup> "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

*<sup>38</sup> Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

*Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)*

*<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

It is God's very intention for us to destroy strongholds of poor self-image, negative speculations, and every thought that is contrary to who we are in Christ. These negative words keep us chained to the past and bar us from moving into God's purposes for our future. The words that come out of our mouths heal or hurt. They bring reconciliation or division. By our words, men are called into their destiny and the life of the Lord is shared with others. By words, dreams are shattered.

These words are **Complaining, Criticism, Judgment, Sarcasm, Gossip, and Negativity.**

So let's dive into these words and see what the Lord wants to do in our hearts.

## **Part 2: Judgment, Sarcasm**

### **Judgment**

There are a small number of crucial issues in the Christian life foundational to walking in peace and fruitfulness before the Lord and with people. Rightsizing words of judgment are near the top of the list. This issue affects almost every area of our lives: friendships, marriage, children, work, and ministry. Understanding this key issue can be the difference between being a fruitful disciple of Jesus or a defeated spectator of the Christian faith. This issue encapsulates the fullness of Jesus's teachings in Luke 6:27-38 that we receive back more than we give to others, good and bad.

What does it really mean to judge someone?

Here are the two ways we judge others: when you see someone's actions and you make an estimate as to the value or worth of that person, or when you think you know why he did what he did.

Here's an example. The pastor races by you on his way to do something at church. He doesn't catch a hello or greeting sent to him as he whizzes by. What is your immediate response? Are you gracious or do you respond with a judgment that draws a conclusion about how insensitive and unfriendly he is? Do you compound it further with gossip by mentioning to someone else how unfriendly your pastor was today?

What audacity to think that we know what is on someone's mind. There is one judge, and He is altogether righteous and able to see into the hearts of men and women. We are not that judge; Christ is.

When you judge others, you are in deception. The problem with deception is, you don't realize you're being deceived. You think the sky is red, but everyone around you knows the sky is blue. You would swear on your

life the sky is red; it isn't. Could there be a minute possibility, an outside chance existing in your wildest imagination, that there may be a tiny prospect you are wrong? When you are in deception, you answer that question with a vehement *no*.

When we think, we know a person's motivation for saying or doing something, or we ascribe to a person's worth, we are judging—we are playing God—we are deceived. Of the multitude of circumstances in life we can find ourselves in, this is the one not to be found in: playing God in people's lives and judging them.

The question I am always asked about the words of judgment is, "How do I live my life free of judging others?" Judging others has become second nature to most of us. It is such a part of us it goes unnoticed and runs rampant throughout our day and lives.

First, we must stop thinking we can know the intentions of another person's heart—why he says what he says or does what he does. Only God knows the heart. Try simply being an observer instead of looking at a person's actions and thinking he or she is bad, insincere, or rude. A person may have done a bad or hurtful thing, but that doesn't make him "bad." Drawing these kinds of conclusions about people is responding to them with a worldly point of view. It is judging. Despite the person's actions, he is who God says he is, not what the world says.

Secondly, we should observe the fruit of someone's life.

***Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)***

***<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***

***<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.***

We must ask ourselves if the fruit of that person's life and actions is love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Through the discernment of the Holy Spirit we can live free of judging others.

If we don't judge others, then what are we supposed to do about making decisions? Every day we are faced with situations when we have to make decisions or draw conclusions. It is part of life. Do I want to develop a friendship with him? Should I let my children play with the neighbor's children?

Here's what I believe we should do. First, we must live in the Spirit. This means we choose daily to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts, words, and actions. If we do this, the Holy Spirit will give us the discernment we need to make decisions.

***Romans 8:5-6 (NIV)***

***<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.***

***<sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;***

We gain freedom from judging others when we look to the Word of God and decide to understand others by the Spirit and by their fruit. We just look at their fruit.

***Matthew 7:16-17 (NIV)***

***<sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?***

***<sup>17</sup> Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.***

The result of freeing ourselves from speaking damaging words of judgment is that we no longer receive the pressed-down, multiplied-back judgments of others, and we find new freedom to stop judging the person to whom our judgments are most damaging: ourselves.

## Sarcasm

We live in a toxic verbal culture today. And it is no more clearly seen than in our use of sarcasm. It is challenging for us as Christians because we are influenced by what is happening around us and the words being spoken. Perhaps the greatest behavioral principle of life is that people repeat the behavior they see others do and repeat the words they hear. Oh, does this apply with sarcasm.

Today's culture is out of control and has no moral compass or protective boundaries around it when it comes to the spoken word. The F-bomb is common in everyday language and rampant in all venues of life. At the heart of much of these nasty, negative words is the use of sarcasm.

Let's look deeper at sarcasm. The word *sarcasm* is derived from the Greek verb *sarkazein*. It literally means "to tear flesh like a dog." Could there be a clearer, viler picture of sarcasm? Sarcasm has been labeled the lowest form of humor. Its prominence in social interaction and communication today demonstrates the depths to which we have fallen in our humor, and it is unfortunately alive and well in Christian circles too.

Contemporary culture glorifies sarcasm as the pinnacle of humor. The more sarcastic you are, the cleverer you're understood to be in your quips and comebacks. For some, sarcasm has become a ritual. The one-upmanship in sarcastic bantering resembles two fencers thrusting swords and wounding each other with emotional, cutting jabs until one submits or succumbs. Brutal, sarcastic humor dominates the entertainment industry, from movies to television, and it influences our culture markedly. Look at the most popular comedians, talk show hosts, and highest-rated comedies on television and you will see people vastly skilled in the art of raunchy, biting sarcasm.

Many Christians have lost their way on the issue of respect for our authorities and have fallen in line with the world in its sarcasm, disrespect, and lack of honor for those whom God has placed over us. Sadly, some of the sharpest, most mean-spirited sarcasm takes place in the political realm—or, for that matter, toward anyone in authority—and pastors are not excluded. What should be our response to those placed by God over us? We should pray earnestly for those in authority. Simply put, there is little room for the use of sarcasm in the words we speak. Our words are to be words of encouragement and edification.

When you listen to a person speak, you almost immediately know their country of origin. Our words reveal which kingdom we live in – the world or Christ's kingdom. What are the words of His language and kingdom? Compassionate words, kind words, encouraging words, and words of praise and worship—this is the vocabulary of heaven.

In the kingdom of heaven there will be no negative words, no critical or hurtful words like sarcasm. Our Lord has come to give us freedom from the negative words that tie us to the past and this world.

Here is the danger of sarcasm. It is perpetuated in those who hear the words. And if it couldn't get worse, our children emulate the sarcastic exchanges that have come to be the most popular vehicle for humor. The more gross and vulgar the sarcasm of the world, the more wildly it is applauded and imitated by many young people. Sarcastic bantering has become a staple with our teens.

Because sarcasm is so widely accepted, many have become desensitized to its rudeness and offense. It is accepted as normal; it's just another form of humor. Well, it's not just another form of humor, and it brings dishonor to the name of Christ for those who follow Him to use it. We are called to edify, not tear down.

*Sarcasm is more like scarcasm.* We need to understand the emotional wounding that sarcasm produces. If sarcasm is so wounding, why is it employed by so many? I believe Christians who use sarcasm do not understand who they are in Christ. They have a poor self-image, are insecure, or live with a victim mentality

and get their need for power by demeaning others. If we walked in the fullness of who we are in Christ, there would be a freedom in our lives that would obliterate the need to put others down and promote ourselves.

As we embrace fasting sarcastic words, we will starve these negative words into oblivion, and there will be no fertile soil in our life for them. We will create a spiritual immune system that is strong and vibrant and that insulates us from the negative words of the world. We will be on guard, always vigilant to hear God's words of instruction and direction about every situation that challenges us to trust Him more.