

Judgmentalism

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon on Judgmentalism calls for Christians to practice love and open-mindedness instead of harsh judgments toward one another.

Duration: 33:39

Scripture: Romans 14:6-12, Romans 14:22 - 15:1, Romans 15:7

Topics: "Judgmentalism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of finding balance as a Christian. He encourages believers to engage in intelligent discussions and use TV as a platform to present the gospel and communicate good and healthy messages. The speaker also cautions against judging others based on their entertainment choices and urges Christians to focus on more significant issues. Additionally, he mentions the role of government and the necessity of respecting and esteeming it. The sermon touches on the potential of TV for good and highlights the need for Christians to relax and show grace towards one another.

Transcript

Romans 14, him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things, another who is weak eateth herbs only. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him who eateth not judge him who eateth.

For God hath received him. Who art thou that judges another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yea, he shall be held up, for God is able to make him stand.

One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day to the Lord, he doth not regard it.

He that eateth eateth to the Lord, and he that giveth God thanks. For he giveth God thanks, and he that eateth not to the Lord eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be

Lord both of the dead and the living.

But why dost thou judge thy brother? Why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

I'd like to read more even of that chapter and other chapters, but we're a little bit short on time. I of course have strongly touched on this kind of thing in various messages, but again as last week I've never had a message when I went into more detail, but I believe more detail is essential, and I'm speaking of this whole area of judging others and judgmentalism. Probably one of the most difficult areas we face in O.M. Even through the financial crisis, our great crisis has not been the lack of money, brothers and sisters, our great crisis has been the lack of love, and sometimes the lack of courage that Howard has just touched on.

Other times the lack of wisdom and discernment. Other times the lack of spiritual balance. Other times just the lack of facts so that we base our conclusion on wrong information.

Surely in your own contact with people, even witnessing to people, again and again people have based their conclusions especially against receiving Christ as their Savior on wrong information. Muslims all believe, generally, some of them I'm sure don't even know about it, that the New Testament documents have been changed, so they're making their conclusions about the cross of Christ and the death of Christ and a lot of other things on wrong information. As Christians today, I don't know about the rest of you, but I know for myself, I feel unbelievably bombarded.

So many books, so many tapes, so many messages. In America it's worse than England. In England at least most of your television programs are secular.

You may feel bombarded by some of those, but as a Christian you probably have enough discernment to be able to write off a lot that comes through the TV. The young Christian not so. He's bombarded by television.

Secularism, atheism, humanism, the greatest films can make certain sins look like almost a game. And we are a bombarded people and I think of those of us who are in the world of literature, I'm still working on that message, the danger of books. When I release it, I'm sure it's going to be published because it's hot and a lot of people haven't written or thought through the whole problem of books.

Extremist books, books with false doctrines, books that make 2 plus 2 equals 8. You know the great problem we face in OM today isn't firstly lack of commitment or lack of vision. We need more of that. The great problem we face often in OM today is false doctrine, false thinking, extremism, and I'll tell you the top of the ladder, emotional problems.

Because we are the emotionally wounded generation. And there are people in OM who we are not going to be able to reach. They need actually psychiatric help.

That's the last thing a Christian ever wants to face, is that he needs psychiatric help. Praise God for Lane Adams in his book, Why Is It Taking So Long To Get Better. Happy to send you a free copy.

Brilliant pastor just with him. Going on for God, who in his ministry is an outstanding Christian leader, realized he needed psychiatric help. In reading recently on the subject of schizophrenia from Mr. Bacchus' book, I'm convinced that some of the problems we thought people had that were spiritual were in fact

emotional and mental illnesses.

And I tell you, following some people over a long term have proven that. I don't know if you saw on television last night during the news, for the first time I think in my life I've been trying to watch the news. It's lasted about a week.

Because life is busy and I've not been able to watch the news much. But I've been watching the six o'clock news. I don't know if you saw that program last night about deaf, people who are both deaf and blind.

Deaf and blind. And it's interesting that what's been done among some of these people, and yet in Britain very little is being done. There's no program to train people in Britain, according to this report, on how to handle these people.

You have to go to the States or I think to Holland and the government has decided it's not cost effective. I love these little words they throw around when they're in the budget squeeze. It's not cost effective.

And one British girl on her own finance, ten thousand dollars, went to America, was trained and through her expertise in working with these little children their little lives are completely changed. Unbelievable! I haven't even thought of such people in years. I thought of deaf people, thought of blind people, but I didn't realize or I hadn't thought in years there are people who are deaf and blind.

You just think of the complications on that. And I don't want to get down a sidetrack, but how important it is that as we're in OM and we get all these books and all these challenges, we get some very strong convictions about so many things that somehow we don't get tripped into becoming judgmental. You might survive OM being judgmental, but I tell you when you get out in the world, if you're legalistic and judgmental, they often go together.

If you're narrow-minded and opinionated and all of that kind of thing, you know, it's unlikely you're going to win too many people to Jesus Christ. I remember a book years ago called *Winsome Witnessing*. Mick Moody Press published it and there are many other books.

There's one out. I'd love to give every one of you a free copy by a man named Dick Innes who I was with last week. I hate witnessing.

What a title! And you know, he's taken surveys among Christians and he's asked how many of you really like witnessing? You really like to go out and share and talk to people about Jesus Christ? And in some cases only one hand went up. It's an area where we in OM have run away at times from reality and that's why some of the witnessing that people have done when they're on OM, though it was with much noise and much flash, within two weeks after leaving us it was all over. That's why there's often a difference between where I am in life and where some of you are in life.

Not that I'm better, but I tell you when you've seen what I've seen you're just happy that you're not in a nut house or at least in the University of Cynics because you see so many people who seem to have so much zeal and so much commitment and they're even telling you what to do and how you need to get more vision and more fire and get this in order and then you watch them for a few years and you see them so quickly run out of steam and throw the whole thing in the river, especially the witnessing side. But let's just move into this thing of judgmentalism and let's try to just focus very quickly on some of the areas where we easily judge one another and where I am just giving a plea for open-mindedness. How can this be among Bible-believing, evangelical, dynamic, dedicated, fundamental, spirit-filled, whatever Christians? A

plea for open-mindedness.

Surely this is dangerous, right? I mean surely our badge is narrow-mindedness, right? In every area of life to be as narrow as possible, as stubborn as possible, they often go together. Don't listen to anybody else. Decide that your mind is made up on these issues and don't be persuaded, especially by truth.

Ever met any Christian to sort of go along that road? I've met a few, a few too many. I am not asking you to agree 100% with what I'm saying. I'm just asking you to consider these areas and to realize, we've got a lot of history behind us on this lesson, how different Christians have believed differently in these areas.

Very committed Christians. Some of the men you may even idolize who you don't really know that much about, you haven't got to their biographies yet. And a lot of the biographies of 20 years ago and more weren't always giving the total picture.

What are some of the areas where in OM we easily judge one another? Let's start with food, since that one's mentioned here. It is impossible to tell you how much confusion, especially in the early days of OM, we had over food. It's just, you could write a book on it.

Almost to the point where if you ate less, you were spiritual. If you ate only plain, ordinary blah food, that was a mark of discipleship. I don't know whether I taught this.

Certainly some of the things I wrote in the original leadership manual are just wild. There's not time to go into this. In the very early days, you know, there's a difference between the first couple of years of OM and from 64 onward.

Already from 64 onward, after the first two big summers, there was far more balance. You know, we were already producing memos on getting a proper diet. But those two big summer campaigns were somewhat, in some ways, out of control.

How sad it is when someone is afraid in OM to buy a chocolate bar or an ice cream cone or spend a little extra money without someone judging him or her. I tell you, that is a sad state of affairs. I don't think it happens much anymore, but it does.

And it gets, you know, people in Christian world bring heavy theology into the smallest things. Have you ever noticed that? Some little subject, you know, and the guy's bringing, you know, major passages out of the Old Testament, whole chapters out of the New Testament to try to, you know, put you where he wants to get you. And the Word of God, I believe, is clear that we do not have, on most of these issues, we do not have simple, clear, little answers that are going to enable all of us to easily agree on these subjects.

We're never going to. We're never going to agree. But the area of food perhaps is not so important, though it is sad if people who are a little heavier have insinuations that they eat too much.

In fact, it could be a metabolism program. They may be eating less than Joe Skinny. I can burn up anything I can shovel in within a couple hours, told my doctor told me.

And just to avoid judgmentalism in that area would be a beautiful step forward in the Christian life. It has many subdivisions. Those who are pro-vitamins and those who anti-vitamins.

But let's move on. Judgmentalism in the area of clothing. This became a big thing in O.M. I remember a man speaking to me on the Bromley South train platform years ago, really amazing, really laying heavy on

me about the people in the O.M. bookshop, the dress, the kind of dress he's been wearing on.

And somebody walked into his assembly without a tie, in the house of God, without a tie. And these things are very big with some people. I often carry my tie in my pocket.

And just the other day, I was in a meeting and I could tell when I got out of the car, the guy was looking right at my Adam's apple. And I could tell he was nervous that I didn't have a tie. And I said, don't worry, and I waved it in my hand.

And of course, when the Jesus revolution took place, and a lot of the people were following Christ, were dressing like hippies. You remember the flower people? I thought it was great. You know, really, I lean a little bit the other way.

But all the heavy judgmentalism, far more in the States than here. And linked with the clothing was the hair. You couldn't even get in, certain Bible colleges, if your sideburns were a certain length.

They still have a lot of hair regulations. And they get Bible verses. Look, a heavy, gifted communicator can get people excited about anything.

Anything. He can find verses. He can make 2 plus 2 equals 4. And I will tell you, in one church in the United States, they more or less insinuated that all the hippies back in those days, it needed to be imprisoned.

And there were some thoughts even liquidated. That even came out of pulpits. And this area is something that's still going on.

You know, in OM, we are basically conservative. We're not out preaching clothing. You know, we're sharing this kind of message as an internal thing.

We don't speak about these things. Generally, when we go out to meetings, we may touch on something where it's especially linked with the whole message of love. But I think we have to realize that sometimes the way we dress is really an offense to people.

And I don't know what the simple answer is. I guess part of it is to know what church, what group you belong to. And if, you know, they have somewhat of a dress code that you don't agree with, don't join them.

When you go to that local church, find out if they have a dress code. If they want you there dressed properly on Sunday morning and you're not into that, go to, you know, there's surely another church down the road where you can probably even wear your pajamas. Seems everything goes these days.

But beware of making too much of little things. No, I know sometimes little things grow big. I think of the judgmentalism that comes in the area of music.

Nothing is hotter in the Christian scene of judgmentalism right now than music. Had another letter this week. Someone asking me, why am I crusading in favor of contemporary and Christian rock music? I'm not crusading, you know, this is not a major thing with me, but I am crusading against judgmentalism, against writing people off because of their music.

I don't even like a lot of this Christian heavy metal music. In fact, I don't like a lot of musics of different varieties. I'm not sure how I decide what I like or don't like.

But I know one thing that a lot of these people into these different kinds of music love the Lord. What an amazing thing that Sheila Walsh and her group, who's ever helping her with this, are back on British television again. We know probably some people are turned off by that kind of music.

All they have to do is switch the channel. Why would they continue to watch it if they don't like that kind of music? It is supposedly all aimed at reaching the lost. It's not aimed at trying to just bring controversy.

This controversy will be with us a long time. Do you realize in OM we don't have any heavy Christian rock music going on anywhere within OM? So if someone starts going after us because they think, you know, we're promoting this kind of music, they don't know what they're talking about. We have a higher calling, we have so much to do.

We are trying in OM to choose a road that will be least offensive, but at the same time we don't want to judge other people. And some of you probably were converted to Christ through some of these different kinds of music. It's interesting when we get uptight about somebody, we turn the binoculars on that person and try to get them on something.

Amy Grant overnight became incredibly famous. Got on the secular stations across the world. Christians all thought it was great for a while.

Then they turned the binoculars on her. She said something a little bit way out, I don't know, about sex. That's the last thing you want to mention anything about if you want to stay out of trouble.

Whatever you do, don't mention anything about sex or don't ever use the word sexy. I mean, imagine using the word sexy among Christians. Get accused of being sexy.

I don't have an easy answer. I'm not justifying something that Amy Grant maybe shouldn't have said. I haven't researched it.

I haven't had the privilege of meeting her. I only listened to her tapes. Now I can't even find them.

I must have sold them. But it is interesting when you're in the music ministry, how people will come down on you. And you know, most of those people never talk to the person first.

And the Word of God says, if you have something against the brother or sister, why don't you go? And you know, you can pick up the phone and even get through these people. Don't think. You can.

Or you could write them a letter. I write letters to Christian leaders when I sometimes see something that I feel I can't agree with. But you know, most of the time these people aren't confronted, especially by the people who write these articles.

The articles are just written. And I tell you, you never hear the end of it. And I personally feel that history shows that God has used a wide range of music.

And I know that even in O.M. there's division on this issue. And I give a plea for patience, for open-mindedness, for avoiding being judgmental, and for not making two plus two equal four. I think it is ridiculous to think that the greatest, the greatest tool of the enemy today is rock music.

I want to tell you the devil had plenty of tools even before the New Testament was written, much less before television came. The heart of man is deceitful. Evil and wickedness abounded in the England of Charles Dickens.

And I don't think they were watching television. I don't think you could prove that London was worse today than it was back in some of those days. I don't think you could really prove that.

You get some history scholars and talk to them rather than some little evangelical who's had, you know, a Mickey Mouse course in ethics at Joe Blow's Bible School down the road. Another area where we so easily judge one another is the area of sports. It's interesting, however, that in general sports are considered quite healthy among the, you know, the more traditional middle-class suburban Christians.

Sports are clean. Another boxer was killed last week, but you know, I mean, sports, good, clean fun for the kids. But other areas of culture are written off completely.

I don't know. I'm still a learner. I don't think we have much of a problem in judging people over sports here in the West.

But I can tell you in India, leaders have been judged for playing games on their lawn and gossip. The more powerful force that Satan uses, to me, far beyond any wrongs or extremes in these areas. And wrongs and extremes are possible in these areas.

Anything can go into an immoderate situation and be harmful. Another area where we, of course, so easily judge one another is when it comes to possessions, finance, and materialism. We need a whole message on that, and maybe I should give that later on.

But oh my, how OM has suffered at times from people judging one another's lifestyles. People judging because someone's car was a few years newer than someone else's car. I have to confess that at times some subtle twitch in me has almost revealed in driving the greatest piece of junk I could find.

And I tell you, it was not easy when some years ago I got that Ford Landliner, that little motor caravan, which was a lot better than the stuff I had been driving previously. Even though it was very old, it was still... For OM, I will tell you, I had comments between here and the Middle East. And now, of course, I have my own luxury coach, right? I tell you, it's been a great experience.

Step out of that motor home in America and somebody thinks I'm a rock star. Skinniest one in the world. But I want to tell you, if we get caught up in all these things, always wondering what people are thinking, always wondering what people are saying, trying to avoid all of the judgments of people, we will function.

You'll eventually end up paralyzed. We all believe differently, and we change. I've changed.

I'm still changing. If you think I've got beyond the borders of biblical doctrine, please write me very, very soon. Different people live in different size houses.

You know, if we judge one another within OM on these things, we're basically, we're all living fairly close. Really. There may be a few exceptions that I don't know about.

What are we gonna do when we leave? And we have people in our church who are living in homes maybe worth a million dollars. How are we gonna relate to that? How are we gonna walk in the home? What kind of, what group of consistence, inconsistencies will we create in our thinking in which we do engage in

double think in order to survive society and where it is today? Do you know one of the reasons people have trouble re-entering normal society when they leave OM? It's this. They're constantly judging people.

They can't go through one day without judging someone. And you know, I just wouldn't want to function that way. And so when it comes to finance, materialism, possessions, we know it's a difficult area.

There are Christian books absolutely contradicting one another in this area. And it's just a problem area where we need a lot of patience, a lot of wisdom, and a lot of love. Keep reading, keep studying, keep listening.

That's so important. And keep getting to know different kinds of people. And you'll discover that there's something far more important than the house that a man lives in, a car that he drives, the kind of suit he has on, the music he's listening to.

You'll discover his heart. Such a danger in OM that we judge by exterior. We live in a world of exteriors rather than getting through to the heart.

Maybe that man is still working for a beer company. For some people that would be unthinkable. How could a Christian? We all have testimonies of how different Christians get delivered from these different things, right? And so when we hear these testimonies of how a guy got delivered from this or that, and then we meet another Christian who's still practicing that and believes that he's a dedicated Christian, we just freak out, right? And we fail to realize God is working in different people in different ways.

And there seem to be some areas, this one's gonna shake you, get ready. There seem to be some areas where God doesn't care. God doesn't care.

You attack me on that. Whether you eat Weetabix or you eat cornflakes, you think that's a big thing with God this morning. Now there's another sense where God cares about everything.

So, you know, read what's on a package and see whether the cornflakes are better than the Weetabix. You know, I don't know, maybe that's one more paradox. I'll have to study it more.

The whole area of the arts and culture has, can't we acknowledge as a church, that we have been weak in the area of culture, the arts. Dr. Schaefer, when he hit us on this, we, you know, we're still shaking. That this man's so dedicated, so on fire, so committed, believing the Bible is the Word of God, much more than anybody, was so much into the arts and some of the things he was doing and some of the things they did at LaBrie.

When we got into that, you know, it was one of the best things that ever happened to us. And when we started circulating Mr. Taylor's book on discipline and on culture, and my first reading of that book, *The Cult of the Slob*, really, really upset me. He changed the title.

You know, I sometimes didn't know what was what, but I know one thing, that Christians, Christians can be involved in culture, in the arts, and mine is a plea for a little more broad-mindedness, sensitivity. We are in a city of tremendous culture, tremendous museums, a lot of them are free. Maybe we ought to take a little more time to expand our horizons in this area.

Of course, a great area where people are now judging one another is the area of films, television. Some believe TV is completely of the devil, and I saw that little program on the news last night. I thought, that is

one of the most powerful pieces of communication people in Britain will get this week, and surely people will be stirred through that, and some people will do something.

Do not think it's just Christians who do good things. I will tell you, if it were just for Christians, the world would just not function. Somehow, in God's sovereign purposes, it's not that way.

Our government, and a lot of the things that have had to take place in the world, not all done by Christians. That's why there are basic laws of order and government, and we're told to esteem government in the Word of God. I think that TV can be used mightily for good.

We have no choice anymore. Nobody blowing their little horn on the hill is going to stop the fact that TV is a major factor in our society. You can now carry it in your pocket.

You can put it on your wrist. It's crazy to try to... No, I don't think they have the TVs on the wrist yet, do they? But to me, the Christian must find balance. He must be able to turn it off.

He must be able to engage in intelligent discussion, and he should be getting into TV, presenting the gospel and communicating that which is good and that which is healthy. Beware of judging one another over what film a person goes through or doesn't go to. Don't be afraid to have your opinion on any of these areas.

That's no problem. Have your opinion, but be able to keep it as an opinion or as a conviction. Have your conviction.

We need convictions on these areas. But don't judge unlovingly people who believe different, who practice different, who in their study and reading have gone down a different road, and have, as I've tried to emphasize over past weeks, have the ability to compassionately disagree. You may hear sometime around here, Oh, Verwer doesn't agree with that.

You may be doing something and someone lays a Verwer trip on you. Don't worry about that, because though I may disagree with something, generally, it's not a big thing. If it were a big thing, probably, you know, I might write you a note or come and talk to you.

And how can I possibly do that with so many people that I relate to? Let's learn to relax more with one another. Isn't that a great need around Brahman? Maybe I won't. Let's relax.

Somebody said something wild, or you've heard he's just gone and watched Rocky IV, or you've heard that instead of an evangelism, the guy was building a tree hut to watch birds flying tight. Let's just relax with one another a little more. Let's not shoot mice.

Let's shoot elephants. Let's save our energy for the big things. There are many other areas where we get into judgmentalism.

All strategy in Christian work. Doctrine, which I'd like to touch on at some other time, which is one of the toughest, because that's where, of course, we do believe that we have a very clear set of biblical principles in the Word of God that are not movable, not negotiable. And I'm working on a message, seven, yay, eight things that O.M. cannot, must not change.

We're in that age of change. Believe me, there are plenty of things in O.M. that are not going to change. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you have called us into spiritual warfare. And it's going to be intense. It's going to be rough.

It's going to be tough. And we thank you that this means living life at its fullest. And it means thinking through a lot of issues rather than making just sweeping generalizations about those issues.

And Father, when we think of so many difficult areas, we sometimes can be overwhelmed. But Lord, as we take 1 Corinthians 13, as we take the message of love, and we get that as the priority in our life, in practice, in deed, in truth, in what we say, we believe these other things will fall into place. We know, Lord, as a movement, whole teams could come apart, come right apart on some of these issues and related issues.

Especially as we get upset with one another, and then we overreact, and then we read things into the particular situation that may have nothing to do with it. And soon we go away hurt, unforgiving, headed towards the road of bitterness and cynicism. And Father, just enable us to be in the world but not of the world.

And to be able to discern the difference between things that are part of our culture, part of life, part of the human factor that we can be involved in, to varying degrees of moderation, and things that are clearly sin and evil. And that we must flee from, with all the spiritual running energy we can muster up. Lord, we need a whole week for this subject.

We just had these 45 minutes. So help us not to bathe too much, even on what we've heard this morning. But enable us to continue to study, to continue to read, to continue to listen to people, and to continue to search our own hearts, that each one of us would be persuaded in our own hearts on these many, many different issues.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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