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Introduction

God designed us with amazing attributes that transcend the animal kingdom. For example, we have the ability to:

- **Communicate in various ways.** We can speak verbally, non-verbally, via sign language, via technology, in more than one language, and by prayer.
- **Analyze things based upon different viewpoints.** We can look at things from multiple angles—including identification of weighted benefits and costs.
- **Recognize right from wrong.** Interesting point...reflect upon your “right from wrong list” before and after you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.
- **Make free-will decisions.** We are self-directed individuals who make choices in life.
- **Experience wide range of emotions**—from anger to love, and everything in-between.
- **Respond with gratitude.** Let’s say someone recognizes you have a need and fills your need without a request by you and without any expectation of reimbursement. Do you have a desire to say thank you, with the hope of returning the favor in some way?
- **Reflect with remorse / guilt.** When looking in the past, we sometimes experience regret or guilt for what we failed to do or did do.
- **Forgive.** Forgiveness is more powerful than we realize. It can break the chains that bind us to sin and can open our heart to experience God’s love when we forgive others (including ourselves).
- **Express faith.** We have an ability to have faith in those whom we love and trust. But more important, having faith in God is foundational component of Christianity. [“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6](#)
- **Self-awareness and self-analysis:**
 - Self-awareness is the conscious knowledge of our behavior, character, feelings, and desires.
 - Self-analysis is an effort to understand who we are and the reasons why we do what we do.

Our ability to “look inside ourselves” and reflect upon our past and present thoughts and behavior—including the consequential impact upon ourselves and others—plays an important role in growing and maturing in Christ. But more important, cognition of self foundationally supports the other attributes of our design. To reinforce this point, imagine what we would be like if we lacked self-awareness and self-analysis: if we were not aware of our behavior, character, emotions, and desires; and if we lacked the ability to analyze who we are, and identify motives that drive what we do.

- Would we know right from wrong?
- Would we feel guilt, shame, or remorse when we sin?
- What impact would this have on our ability to:
 - Pray?
 - Have and express faith?
 - Forgive others?
 - Express thankfulness/gratitude?
 - Love someone (including God)?

Here is a question for those who believe in evolution...please explain the evolutionary/transitional process for the above attributes between the animal kingdom and man. The answer becomes even more difficult when you realize all our design attributes are not physical, but spiritual.

[“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:24](#)

Because of our design attributes of self-awareness and self-analysis, we have a propensity (tendency, inclination) to use these capabilities to judge (form opinions of) other persons.

When we judge someone, we receive information via our eyes and/or ears. We then evaluate the information; compare the information against ourselves, what we have been told, what we know from experience and/or have formally learned; segment the information into what we like/dislike; form an opinion; and make a conclusion...sometime within seconds. What's interesting, we execute judgments many times throughout our day—often without awareness.



Unfortunately, many times we develop an incorrect opinion due to a variety of undesirable factors, such as a hardened self-centered heart, a tainted soul, and a distorted perception of the world. Our misguided conclusions are compounded by the fact that:

1. Many do not seek understanding beyond initial impressions.
2. It is difficult to:
 - a. See through a mask someone may be wearing, and persona they may be projecting.
 - b. Look directly into their heart...for this is where God evaluates the true nature of a person.

“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”
1 Samuel 16:7

Why do we incorrectly judge others?

Too often our judgments are driven by our flesh. A flesh-driven judgment includes inappropriate thoughts, negative emotions, caustic words you'd like to say (or did say), and visualized (or actualized) behavior that is intended to “educate” whom we are judging. We can all relate to (and struggle with) these occurrences. For example, consider your thoughts, emotions, words, and behavior when you encountered:

- An overly aggressive driver.
- A bad-tempered employee (at work/shopping).
- Someone who has said/done something to you that was inappropriate.
- Someone who stands for/promotes something you strongly disagree with.
- Think about it...you will identify additional scenarios.

Our ability to accurately view someone (from God's perspective) may be distorted by a multitude of influencing variables, including:

- Prejudices: Prejudices are preconceived opinions (often negative) which are not based upon reason and/or actual experience.
- Family: Much of how we perceive the world around us was initially formed during our childhood by our parents and family members.
- Friends: We may incorporate the perceptions of others to be “accepted” or because of an association with a group.
- Cultural norms: Small and large social groups have shared expectations and rules that define “acceptable” behavior.
- The media. Television, movies, and news significantly influence our perception of the world.

Combine the above influences with the scars from our past painful experiences, ongoing challenges in life, and our sinful flesh...and it becomes easier to understand why we should avoid judging others.

In addition, judging someone via our flesh often results in internal conflict because we know our judgmental thoughts do not align with the desires of God. What's more, we will often judge someone for something we are (or have been) guilty of. This is why God warns us against judging others.

*"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So, then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way."*
Romans 14:10-13

Jesus said "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5

Here is an insightful video that reveals pitfalls in judging others. (Use approved by www.OpenTheMeeting.com.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEugMlv02aw>

External Indicators and Internal Influencers

Unfortunately, the idiom "You'll never get a second chance to make a first impression" is accurate. Most persons will form a lasting opinion of someone during the initial moments of the first interaction—based upon external indicators, such as:

- Our behavior.
- What we say and how we say it.
- How we are dressed.
- Our physical mannerisms (including facial expressions)
- The degree of our eye contact.

However, external indicators often do not reveal the true nature of a person. Many times, external indicators are used to conceal who we really are. Sometimes a person will wear a "mask" (e.g. a happy face when they are sad), or project a persona (façade, personality) to hide the truth that underlies the surface.

Internal influencers are factors in our lives that drive our behavior and perception from within. Internal influencers indwell within the core of our heart and soul—and can influence all aspects of our life. Internal influencers include:

- Scars from traumatic experiences we may have had (or are presently experiencing) in our life. A traumatic life experience may include something we:
 - Should not have experienced, such as:
 - Physical / mental abuse.
 - A broken home (separated parents, etc.).
 - Should have experienced (but did not), such as:
 - Loving and supportive parents/family.
 - Realization and reinforcement of self-worth and capabilities.
- Our ongoing emotional responses to life's stresses, fears, anxiety, and so forth.
- Sin and its consequences, such as:
 - Bondage to a sin.
 - An inability to see or understand spiritual truths because of darkness.

While it is fairly easy to see, understand and interpret external indicators; it is very difficult to see, understand and interpret internal influencers. Identification of internal influencers requires time, prayer, a trusted relationship and spiritual discernment. As we gain understanding of what's going on under the surface of a person is when our initial opinions will change...as we realize the one whom I am harboring judgmental thoughts towards is like me...for I am also dealing (or have dealt) with traumatic experiences. He/she is like me in that I also express negative behavioral and verbal responses to stress, fears, and anxiety. And, he/she is like me in that I was also in darkness—unable to see truth because of sin that once controlled me from within. Everything I based my judgment upon...I have also experienced at various times in my life. As such, *“Lord forgive me...for I was wrong in how I judged this person.”*

Spiritual Discernment

A true and accurate understanding of what's going on inside a person's heart and soul can only occur spiritually by the Holy Spirit. When this revelation occurs, the experience is accompanied by agape love: a deep compassion and empathy for the heart and soul of the person who is revealed. This is when you can feel their pain. This is when you no longer have control over your emotions as tears begin to rise from deep within your soul as you cry for their condition. This is when you are spiritually influenced by the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit.

- This is only a “taste” of the compassion Jesus had for the multitudes, and the love God has towards us.
- Those who have had this experience find it difficult to describe from a physical perspective, because it is spiritual.
- When the Holy Spirit moves through you:
 - The control and influence of your sinful flesh vanishes.
 - Earthly factors that seemed important just a short time ago disappear.
 - As you wipe away your tears you realize you are enveloped in a degree of peace that passes all understanding. Philippians 4:7
 - This is when you begin to truly worship God from the depths of your heart and soul for who He is, for His holiness, for His love, and for His Son who died for us.
 - This is when God's perfect love can flow through you.



What to Do

As you go about your day, in the “background” of your mind, take time to consider if you judge others and ask yourself...are my judgments based upon my flesh, or are my perceptions influenced by the workings of the Holy Spirit? If you discover you are led by your flesh, then this is an area in which you can improve. By the way, this is an area in which all of us can improve.

The comparative table below will assist in identifying your position in judging others. Please note that it is not intended to be a “hammer,” or a list of thou shall and shall nots. In addition, it is not intended to be used to judge someone else. It is intended to assist your continued growth in righteousness, as you become less like yourself and more like Jesus.

Fleshly Judgment	Spiritual Discernment
Question why they act this way	Able to gain insight into possible reasons for behavior
No prayer	Yielding to and seeking guidance by the Holy Spirit
Not scripturally based	Foundationally supported by scripture
Based upon external indicators	Based upon internal influencers
Disdain (considered unworthy / inferior)	Sympathy
Contempt (despise who they are or do)	Compassion
Condescension (patronizing / haughtiness)	Humility
Arrogance (self-important / superiority)	Servant
Anger	Agape

When we encounter someone who is lost and living in darkness...the best thing we can do is not allow our flesh to judge...but let the light of Jesus shine through us in what we say and do. His light is magnified by extending the same grace God extends to us; and expressing the same love God expresses toward us.

The life of Jesus Christ reflected the heart of God. But what’s more, Jesus Christ exposed the errors in human judgment; turned religious leader’s perceptions inside out; confounded their darkened minds with spiritual truth; revealed the influence and importance of our heart; exemplified judgment and grace; and declared His divine purpose.

“Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’ Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” John 8:2-12

The world is living in darkness and sin—which is illuminated by truth and light of Jesus Christ. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:4

They do not know. They do not understand. Yet they continue to make a choice to fill the void within their heart and soul by following the desires of their flesh.

Jesus said (of Himself) “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:18-21

Think back in time. Does this describe you? Were you bound by sin and lost in darkness? Consider the different ways you attempted to fill the void in your heart and soul via the darkened desires of your flesh. But praise God in that He provided a means to turn our direction from the destructive path we were headed—when we opened the door for Jesus Christ to enter our lives.

Jesus said “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20

All Christians who have given their lives to Jesus Christ will testify to this truth. Therefore, for the glory of our Savior and Lord...it is beneficial to consider the detrimental effects of fleshly-driven judgment, and actively enhance our spiritual discernment via prayer, biblical understanding, and Holy Spirit-directed spiritual discernment—all with the underlying intent of sharing God’s agape love.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” 1 Cor 13:1-3

What do I do if someone has hurt me (physically/emotionally)?

If you are in judgment of someone who has hurt you:

- Yes, what they did was absolutely wrong...and God will judge.
- Realize the futility of pride and retribution.
- Reflect upon the greatest example of non-judgment and agape love throughout all of time—demonstrated by Jesus after He had been mocked, beaten, and nailed to a cross when He said “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Luke 23:34
- Let go of the pain from the memories and scars—for these only hinder your freedom and spiritual growth.
- Forgive as you have been forgiven and **do this for your healing and recovery**. Forgiveness is more powerful than we realize. Forgiveness can:
 - Break the power that sin has in our lives.
 - Dissolve hatred, anger, rage, bitterness, and judgment.
 - Overcome depression and anxiety.
 - Renew personal and relational conflicts.
- Pray! The Holy Spirit is the only One who knows how to cleanse, soften, rejuvenate, redirect, and make a person’s heart alive again...all by the supernatural power of God’s grace in Jesus.

Growing in Christ is a day-to-day learning process. As we learn more about Him...we learn more about ourselves...for He truly is the light of man.

I pray you grow in grace and peace as you learn more about yourself...and our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

All for His Glory,
Harold D. Thomas