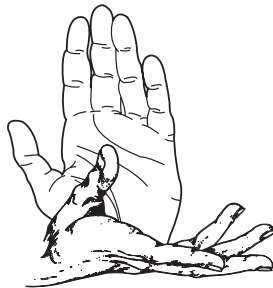


# THE NON-JUDGMENTAL CHRISTIAN



Five Lessons That Will  
***Revolutionize***  
Your Relationships

John Kuypers

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*What's Important Now*  
**Shedding the Past**  
**So You Can Live in the Present**

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# FIVE LESSONS THAT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

## Lesson 1: YOU SET THEM FREE

“Do not **judge**, or you too will be **judged**. For in the same way you **judge** others, you will be **judged**, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” *Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)*

## Lesson 2: YOU ARE REAL, NOT NICE

“Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on a stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.” *Mark 4:21-22 (NIV)*

## Lesson 3: YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE, NOT RIGHTEOUS

“You, therefore have no excuse, you who pass **judgment** on someone else, for at whatever point you **judge** the others, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass **judgment** do the same things.” *Romans 2:1 (NIV)*

## Lesson 4: YOU ARE WISE, NOT SMART

“First take the **plank** out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.” *Matthew 7:5 (NIV)*

## Lesson 5: YOU ARE PURPOSEFUL, NOT SUCCESSFUL

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not **judge** him. For I did not come to **judge** the world but to save it.” *John 12:47 (NIV)*

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## FOREWARD

**W**elcome! I greet you in the name of God our Father, Jesus His precious Son and the Holy Spirit. You are about to read a book that invites you to revolutionize your relationships—with love! Love is what we are all searching for, hoping for and aching for. Love is why we want to please our mom and impress our dad. Love is why we get married and have children. Love is the reason Jesus came to this earth—to show us the Way.

When love is missing, we hurt deeply and profoundly. With nearly one in two marriages ending in divorce, even among Christians, we have learned to abandon each other rather than face the pain. The result is broken trust, simmering anger and fragile hearts. Children grow up in one-parent homes, lifesavings are wiped out and dreams are destroyed. For those who remain committed “till death do us part,” many will endure a lifetime of shared loneliness—married in body but divorced in spirit.

Divorce is against Christian teaching. Marriage without love is a spirit-crushing alternative. The Lord has called me, a judgmental man, to speak out on one extraordinary solution: “Do not judge.” (MT 7:1 NIV) On this foundation, I humbly offer you five lessons that will feed the fire of the love of the Holy Spirit from within yourself.

These lessons are often based on my own real-life experiences because judgments are the intentions that lie buried deeply within a person’s heart, and the only heart I have full access to is my own. At times, the detail is personal and revealing, which is needed to illustrate the surgically precise nature of transforming our judgmental, sinful nature. I ask you to respect the fact that the stories that support these five lessons are not about the characters. They are people I love whom God has used to humble me for His glory.

Judgments feed on each other like a cancer. Scripture tells us that it is the Christian man who must take the lead to break this vicious cycle. St. Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy.” (EPH 5:25:26 NIV) Paul further describes this as “holy and blameless” in Ephesians 5:27. Blameless means “without judgment.” For this reason,

the lessons are often written from a man's perspective. If you are a Christian woman and do the same, then surely you will both be blessed with a joyful marriage, centered children and loving relationships throughout your lives!

Let's begin with a timeless prayer of encouragement:

*The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi*  
*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.*  
*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;*  
*Where there is injury, pardon;*  
*Where there is doubt, faith;*  
*Where there is despair, hope;*  
*Where there is darkness, light;*  
*And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master;*  
*Grant that I may not so much seek*  
*To be consoled as to console;*  
*To be understood as to understand;*  
*To be loved as to love;*  
*For it is in giving that we receive;*  
*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;*  
*And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

—John Kuypers  
September , 2004

# *Lesson 1*

## **YOU SET THEM FREE**

**J**udgments cause people to become deaf. Non-judgment opens their ears and their hearts. The effect can be quite dramatic.

I learned this simple truth the hard way. I am a forty seven year old divorced man who is remarried. I left my first wife after a ten year marriage. Two years later, I surrendered my life to Jesus. Our only son Jared was five months old when my wife and I separated. We went to court eight times over the following two years, fighting mostly over child access. She got sole custody. I got generous access. Sole custody means I have no legal rights in the areas of schooling, location, extra-curricular activities, religion, healthcare and principal residence. I lost control of my son when he was just two years old. Accepting this was a bitter pill. I swallowed it though, as fully and completely as I could in the eyes of the Lord. In turn, God has used this reality to teach me how to seek influence instead of control. A wonderful example happened to me, to the benefit of my son, four years later. He was six, and about to begin first grade.

I wanted to send Jared to a French immersion school rather than the regular English school. I had my reasons. I speak French. My second wife is French Canadian. My three stepchildren all attend French immersion schools. Learning a second language is much easier at a young age, and is a gift for life. In our school system, he was required to enter the program in the first grade or not at all, and he would have been allowed to switch back to the mainstream English school at any time.

I suggested the idea to my ex-wife, all too aware that she had final decision-making authority. She didn't like the idea very much. Still, she didn't say no right away. She said she preferred that he went to the neighborhood school. She said he would have more friends living nearby. She also didn't feel comfortable not being able to help him with his French homework, since she didn't speak French herself. I quietly wondered if she felt threatened by this move "closer" to Dad.

I invited her to attend the school information night. She declined. I gave her the name of another parent who already had a son in the French immersion school, and was about to send her daughter who had been in Jared's kindergarten class. This mother also spoke no French herself. Two weeks later, she admitted she hadn't called this mother. She simply wasn't interested. She had already made up her mind.

I reluctantly and immediately gave up.

That in itself must have shocked her. The man she was once married to would have persisted, pressuring her with logical facts and arguments, ending with a plea like, "C'mon. What have you got to lose?" Perhaps the old me would have gotten a friend or her parents to speak to her too. Maybe I would have tossed in a couple of digs along the way, just out of frustration. You know, "It's always got to be your way," or "You are so-o stubborn!"

Not this time.

Two months later, the new school year loomed. I called her. I felt totally at peace about Jared missing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I thought, "*I was twelve before I took a single class and I learned the language! If the Lord wants him to speak French, he'll speak French.*" Still, I felt the Spirit prompting me to have one last conversation with her.

The phone call lasted forty-five minutes. I was frank. This was his last chance. "Is it worth a brief chat?" I asked. "Yes," she said. Then I listened, empathized and listened more. I acknowledged the validity of her concerns. I made no effort to "sell" her. She began asking me questions, which I answered as best as I could. Suddenly and without warning, she said, "What the heck, let's give it a try. I can always pull him out if I don't like it."

I nearly fell off my chair. Praise God!

A few moments later, I asked her, "That was a pretty big shift. What made you change your mind?"

She thought for a moment. "To be honest," she said, "I think it was the way you didn't pressure me like you have so often before."

I am not making this up. Honest. She really said that.

---

In this story, five leadership lessons were in action:

1. **You Set Them Free.** I accepted and supported her freedom to make her own decision. I would have failed before I even began if I felt judgmental about her even having that legal right in the first place. (It's a pre-emptive law in our jurisdiction.)
2. **You Are Real, not Nice.** I spoke my truth from the heart without any criticisms. If I was judgmental in my heart, I would have had to either hide my real thoughts and feelings, or expose my judgmental disapproval, triggering a similar response from her.
3. **You Are Compassionate, not Righteous.** I listened to her actively and with empathy. I could not have done so if I felt judgmental about "flaws" in her thinking or her rejection of my reasoning. I would have jumped in or been defensive.
4. **You Are Wise, not Smart.** I invited her to reconsider her decision. At no time did I pressure her to do it my way. Instead, I acted like a coach, helping her to see all of her choices including how to change her mind if she later preferred.
5. **You Are Purposeful, not Successful.** I persisted in God's will and timing. I could not have done so if I felt paralyzed with unhappy judgments about her decision and about my failure to get what I wanted the first time around.

Judgments cause hardening of the heart. When asked why Moses gave permission to divorce, Jesus said, "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law." (MK 10:5 NIV) Non-judgment softens the heart and opens the ears. When you are non-judgmental, you are letting God participate in the decision. The Lord works miracles when you give Him space to reveal His power and glory. You become His instrument, not His replacement.

The evidence of judgments comes in one word: **Disapproval**. People fear your disapproval of them. You fear the same from them. People also cherish your approval, as do you from them. The desire to gain approval and to avoid disapproval is the judgmental undercurrent in the river of life, constantly dragging you in one direction—blame and shame. To not judge is like leaping out of the river of "this world" and onto the banks of the river. Suddenly, the river becomes clear. Relationships that were foggy, ugly and painful reveal themselves for what they