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JUDGE ~~NOT~~

HOW A LACK OF DISCERNMENT LED TO

**DRUNKEN PASTORS,
PEANUT BUTTER ARMPITS,
& THE FALL OF A NATION**

TODD FRIEL

JUDGE ~~NOT~~



Judge Not

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INTRODUCTION



WHY THIS BOOK IS SLIGHTLY SNARKY

Have you noticed the world is going bonkers?

- **Legalized marijuana.** Apparently police officers in some states successfully eradicated all crime and had an abundance of free time on their hands, so they petitioned their legislators to pass a law that would create some havoc.
- **Gay marriage.** Bye-bye to two thousand years of cultural norms. Who knew that we had been following the beliefs of morons for two millennia?
- **Trans issues.** On M*A*S*H Corporal Klinger cross-dressed in order to be deemed section 8 (crazy) and kicked out of the army. Today, cross dressers are heralded as brave.

- **Language.** Hollywood makes a living talking like wounded pirates. Nice work, Leo; over 600 f-bombs in one movie. Impressive.
- **Pornography.** What used to be a teenaged boy's dirty little secret is now a First Amendment-protected right. Since when is porn a form of speech?
- **Baby burners.** First Great Britain, then Oregon used aborted babies as fuel to produce electricity. Paging the bottom of the barrel. Perhaps it could be worse—Planned Parenthood could be selling aborted baby body parts for cash. Oh, wait.

The list could go on and on, but then we would have to fight for ledge space on the tallest building in town in a mad rush to take our own lives. Our nation is not just on a slippery slope, America voluntarily jumped onto a toboggan and progressives shoved us down a steep and icy hill.

Virtually every societal indicator points in one direction: south.

- The CDC reports there are over two million divorces per year. That is four million trashed lives. And don't forget the kids.
- Over 40 percent of children are born to single mothers. Who needs a dad, anyway?
- According to the FBI, almost three hundred thousand girls are at risk of being exploited by the sex trade. Deplorable.
- America is the world's leader in abortions, slaughtering

over four thousand unborn children per day. We're #1!

- The SAT Report on College and Career Readiness shows that fewer than half of all high-schoolers who take the SAT are ready for college.

What happened? How did we get here? The answer is as obvious as the mullet on Joel Osteen's head.

The Root of the Problem

Societal ills such as divorce, abortion, racism, violence, ignorance, and sexually transmitted diseases are not the problem; they are the *fruits* of a much greater crisis. A little bit of math will make that plain:

- There are slightly more than 13,000 Starbucks in America.
- There are slightly fewer than 13,000 McDonald's in the US.
- Combined, there are 99,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the land of the free.

If you tally these ubiquitous institutions, you get a whopping total of 125,000. You can't drive for more than a few minutes anywhere in this country without seeing a weird green mermaid, golden arches, or government indoctrination center. They are everywhere.

As omnipresent as these establishments are, you can't swing a dead cat (never a bad idea) without hitting one of the 350,000 Protestant churches in the US.

What's the Point?

Every culture is a product of the dominant “cult.” The single largest moral influence in America is the Protestant church. If American culture is ailing morally, it is because the Protestant church is ailing.

With almost three times as many Protestant churches as Starbucks, McDonald's, and public schools *combined*, our country should not be in a moral tailspin in virtually every measurable category: morality, family, national debt, abortion, race relations, out-of-wedlock births, STDs, profanity, crime, drugs, Beyonce. With 350,000 Christian outposts, our national anthem should be “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

Clearly, something is horribly wrong with the Protestant church. Need proof?

- Pastor Rodney Howard Brown gets his audiences “drunk on the Spirit,” resulting in grown men and women falling down on the floor as they laugh demonically.
- A youth pastor in Florida put peanut butter in his armpits and had the kids lick it out in an effort to get them excited about church.

Not persuaded that evangelicalism is a wee bit out of control? Here are some of the fine retail products produced by evangelical Christianity:

- “Let My People Go” toilet seats
- Men's boxer shorts with an embroidered fish symbol
- A pig nativity set

- Christian BBQ sauce (including the “flames of hell” flavor)
- The Jesus Toaster that makes toast with Jesus’ face on it
- “Looking Good for Jesus” Cosmetic Kit
- Testamint breath mints
- Ezekiel 4:9 Bread (originally used in the Bible as a bread of judgment baked over animal manure)

How Did We Get Here?

In an effort to make Jesus more palatable to our society’s post-modern sensitivities, some clever evangelicals emerged in the 1980s to lead a revolution called the “Church Growth Movement” or “Seeker-Sensitive Movement.” This group of well-intentioned men determined that the best way to grow our churches was to survey unbelievers and ask them, “What would church have to be like in order for you to attend?”

That’s right, instead of going to the highways and byways and compelling people to come into the kingdom, we rang the doorbells of unbelievers and asked them what it would take to get them to come into a church building.

What a shock—the pagans informed us they don’t want a God of righteousness, judgment, rules, or demands! They spoke, we listened. Voilà! Joel Osteen.

- Out with high church, in with hipster church.
- Out with sanctuaries, in with multipurpose facilities.
- Out with theologically robust hymns, in with mind-numbingly repetitious contemporary praise songs.

- Out with verse-by-verse preaching, in with self-help sermons.
- Out with theology, in with life-enhancement.
- Out with formal clothes, in with casual attire.
- Out with church discipline, in with church growth.
- Out with repentance, in with, “Ask Jesus into your heart.”
- Out with transcendent, in with immanent.
- Out with a God of wrath, in with Jesus the nice guy.

Based on the input of heathens, we refashioned our faith to accommodate their anti-God animosity. The church became Burger King, telling the world they can have God their way. Needless to say, God is not a hamburger.

Contemporary evangelical Christianity has remade God into an image that would be unrecognizable to the early Christian church. The fruit of this error is self-evident:

- Pure Life Ministries conducted a five-year study and determined that 68 percent of evangelical men view pornography regularly. No wonder we lost the marriage war; how can we proclaim purity when Christian men are busy with their own perversion?
- The same study concluded that 50 percent of evangelical pastors regularly view filth on the computer. No wonder we don't hear many sermons on the subject.
- A LifeWay study discovered that 55 percent of evangelicals

believe we must contribute something to our salvation. Note: these are Protestants, not Catholics. If you listen carefully, you can hear the Reformers spinning in their graves like a lathe.

- 34 percent of professing Protestants have been divorced.¹
- Protestant Christian women account for 37 percent of America's abortions.²

The Greatest Tragedy

A toaster that makes bread with the face of “hippy Jesus” is bad enough; the real tragedy is that we have turned Jesus into Barney. Jesus is no longer thought of as the King of kings and Lord of lords; Jesus has been turned into a purple dinosaur who longs for us to be His buddy.

Jesus made it clear that He has indeed made His enemies His friends (John 15:15), but Jesus never intended to be a knock-around chum who exists to be our bestie. Consider the apostle Paul's description of the world's “nicest” teacher:

The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in **flaming fire**, dealing out **retribution** to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of **eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

If that isn't scary enough, here is the apostle John's description of Jesus when He returns to judge the world in righteousness.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and **wages war**. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe **dipped in blood**, and His name is called The Word of God.

And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a **sharp sword**, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a **rod of iron**; and He treads the wine press of the **fierce wrath** of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:11-16)

Paul and John were not the only politically incorrect preachers in the New Testament. Here are the words of Jesus Christ Himself:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the **sheep** on His right, and the **goats** on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Then He will also say to those on His left, “**Depart** from Me, **accursed ones**, into the **eternal fire** which has been prepared for the devil and his angels... These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-33,34,41,46)

Clearly, Jesus is not a hippy-dippy peacenik. When the King returns, He is going to war. What would cause the God of love to do battle with little ol’ us?

Because God loves righteousness, He must hate sin. Because the foundation of God’s throne is righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14), He must and will punish all lawbreakers.

A judge who refuses to uphold the law is a corrupt and wicked judge. God is neither of those things. Because God is good, He will see to it that every criminal is brought to justice for every crime ever committed.

When He punishes sin, no stone will be left unturned. The One who made the eye also sees; the One who made the ear also hears (Psalm 94:9).

- Every lie has been written in God’s books.
- Every act of fornication has been noted.
- Every pornographic perusal has been recorded.
- Every angry word has been heard.

- Every failure to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength has been archived.
- Every sinful thought has been transcribed in God's record book.

When God's gavel is slammed, He will proclaim every criminal "guilty as charged," and Jesus will thunder, "Depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23) as He casts millions into hell. Jesus Himself will sentence guilty criminals to eternal conscious torment.

Eternal, conscious, torment.

No relief. No naps. No daydreams. No reprieve. No acquittals. No happy memories. No water. No light. No comfort. No joy. No hope. Nothing but the relentless wrath of God poured out on every sinner for every sin ever committed. Jesus Himself said that He is going to grind lawbreakers to powder (Matthew 21:44).

Why must God treat sinners so severely? Because God is not nice, nice, nice; He is *holy, holy, holy* (Isaiah 6:3).

A crime committed against the state is one thing; a crime committed against the Creator of the universe is another thing altogether. Every willful act of disobedience is not just an "oops," it is a high-handed crime against our Sovereign. Our offenses demand eternal, conscious torment because our offenses have been committed against Moral Perfection and Goodness. How dare we?

Unlike OJ's jury, a clever lawyer will not deceive God on Judgment Day. God Himself will be the prosecuting attorney who is the eyewitness to every crime that has ever been committed. There will be no escaping the sentence of the Just

Judge of all the earth who will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). We are doomed. Rightly doomed.

Reconciled Rebels

Unless God Himself intervenes and rescues us, we are without hope.

Unless God Himself pays our debt, we must pay the price for our sins.

Unless someone takes our punishment for us, we must receive the just dues for our sinful labors.

Enter the God-man, Jesus Christ!

Before the universe was created, the Son of God volunteered to come to this wicked world and take on human flesh, live a perfect life, and die a violent death. Jesus Christ volunteered to receive the wrath of God that you and I deserve.

Jesus Christ, God Himself, became our representative when He took on human flesh. Jesus Christ, God Himself, satisfies the wrath of God the Father because He sacrificed Himself on our behalf.

When Jesus hung on the cross, God saw us hanging there and poured out His wrath on our representative. For those who are in Christ Jesus, when God now looks at us, He sees His perfect Son. Talk about a great exchange!

Jesus, who never sinned, became our sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because of His sacrifice on our behalf, God can be just and the justifier of those who repent and trust Jesus (Romans 3:26).

Every epic tale pales in comparison to the true narrative of

the life, death, and resurrection of King Jesus. He who is a King became a pauper to die for beggars to make them kings.

Wretched, vile, wicked, hateful, fist-shaking rebels can be reconciled to this gracious King if they will repent and place their trust in Him. That is amazing grace. That is astonishing love.

Even Better Than That

The sinner who repents and trusts Jesus is not only forgiven for his sin debt, but is also credited with every good deed that Jesus performed.

- Jesus passively received the punishment for your sin when He was scourged, beaten, and crucified. His suffering is the satisfactory payment for our crimes against God.
- Jesus actively kept every law and performed every good deed possible and thus fulfilled all righteousness. When a person repents, the righteousness of Jesus is credited to the sinner's account.

Think of it like this: you, a vile, guilty criminal, stands before the just Judge who not only proclaims you are forgiven for your crimes, but

He hails you as “Citizen of the Century” because of the work of Jesus Christ. That is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what do we see in the evangelical church in America?

- Sex sermons teaching people how to have Song of Solomon sex
- Movie-themed sermon series

- Back to the '80s sermon series (featuring the contemporary tunes of AC/DC and Duran Duran)
- Prosperity preachers who grow rich as the sheep grow poor
- Worship music that is not quite as profound as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”

We have taken the greatest true story ever told and reduced it to trivial silliness. In our effort to woo people to Jesus, we have turned Him into a first-century Tony Robbins.

The Result of Unbiblical Efforts

When sin is reduced to mere mistakes, the redemptive work of Jesus makes no sense.

When God's laws are forsaken, the suffering of Jesus is diminished to a mere example.

When rebellion is turned into “problems,” redemption is replaced with life-enhancement skills.

When hell is cast aside, heaven is not very desirable.

When God is presented as a mere life-improvement coach, He is robbed of His glory.

When our view of the cross is not high, our appreciation for God is low.

But our Almighty God is not low. God is glorious, magnificent, beyond comparison. When we misrepresent God, calamity after calamity ensues. The chief disasters are:

- Unbelievers never hear the true, glorious gospel.
- False converts go to hell thinking they know Jesus.

- God is robbed of His glory.

Do we really love God when we reduce Him to a beggar? Do we really love people when we encourage them to sing vapid Christian music on their way to hell?

Judge Not is not intended to be an overcorrection that creates a stale, dusty, fire-and-brimstone, curmudgeonly Christianity. Nor is this book written to tell churches and Christians exactly what to do.

Judge Not offers a biblical examination of the contemporary evangelical church to see what is ailing her. This book is not written in anger toward the church; this is a loving call for the church to judge rightly. We must return to our biblical roots and get back to the original charter of the Captain of our Salvation. Through this book, my hope is that:

- The Lamb might receive the full reward for His suffering
- Sinners can be saved from the wrath of God
- God might be known and enjoyed forever
- The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9)
- Straying churches will right their courses and be salt and light to a lost, confused and damned culture

It is almost certain that your toes will get stepped on as you read this. Are you kidding? I stepped on my own toes as I wrote this. The intention of *Judge Not* is not to annoy you; at least, not on purpose. Nor is it written to make the world more moral.

This book is written so that souls will get saved and God

will be glorified. The bonus? The morality of our nation will change because the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has changed hearts.

Judge Not is a loving, biblical critique of the modern evangelical church, of which I am a part, that Jesus might be seen as the amazing Savior He is that God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

If my critiques are not biblical, then carry on. If, however, any of these criticisms are Scriptural, then I beg you to join me in repenting and returning to God's original intention for His bride, the Christian church.

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- 1 "New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released," Barna Group, March 31, 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/ph9xom4>>.
 - 2 "An Overview of Abortion in the United States," Guttmacher Institute, January 2014, p. 31 <www.guttmacher.org/presentations/abort_slides.pdf>.