

# Christ Reformation Church

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## *God's Word to a Hesitating Church*

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (7:1)

*“You Cannot Certify Something as True by Comparing it With Itself”*

**February 1, 2015**

**Sermon Text:** 2 Cor 10:1-12

**Scripture Reading:** Joshua 6

**Introduction-**

2 Corinthians 10:12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by

one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

The Apostle Paul, here at chapter 10, returns to his main purpose of urging the Corinthians to stop listening to the false brethren among them, stop withholding themselves from him and the true gospel, and specifically he once again and in more detail this time admonishes them for judging “according to the flesh.” This is what the wicked among them were doing and we can be assured that the same thing happens all around us today.

This week a lady made the following comment on our blog which is very pertinent to our study this morning:

This comment is....an epiphany if you will, after studying and learning on this blog for awhile now: Dealing with abuse is like a WAR. You have to STUDY and get to know your enemy, his/her tactics, and have a strategy (a defensive one (separate?), an offensive one

(speak truth?), or sometimes, an EXIT one (LEAVE). This analogy is in NO way remotely related to what God intended when he designed marriage. Abusive "marriages" are not marriages at all. (Pat Benatar's Love is a Battlefield would be the theme song...except REAL love doesn't look or sound anything like a battle.) Do they expect soldiers to follow all the rules of a normal society in their interactions/encounters with the enemy? Of course not. That would be ridiculous and dangerous. But that is what abuse targets are expected to do. Also ridiculous and dangerous. I must stop following the "rules" of healthy relationships! They simply don't apply when abuse is present.

That is wisdom. When it comes to following Christ and being a soldier in this warfare we face every day, *we cannot follow the typical rules of evaluating someone or some doctrine.* You can judge a piece of fruit, for the most part, by outward appearance. You can tell if it is ripe, or if it has a worm-hole or is bruised or if it is actually some kind of poison fruit that is inedible. But as we have already learned, *you cannot judge a person or a teaching or a religion by outward appearance.* The "fruit" in other words that we are to judge ("You shall know

them by their fruit") is apparently more than mere outward, physical appearance. It is *rather what is produced by the thing.*

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, **not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God**, and supremely so toward you.

2 Corinthians 5:12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer **those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.**

In the remainder of this letter now, Paul returns to his urging of the Corinthians to return to him as Christ's true Apostle, and to the truth he delivered to them, rejecting the wicked wolves among them. Just look quickly at some of the things he says in this final section so that you understand this is not my own "paranoia" about false, wicked counterfeits hiding behind every tree that I am merely imagining:

2 Corinthians 10:10-12 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is

weak, and his speech of no account." (11) Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. (12) Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. (13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel

of light. (15) So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

2 Corinthians 12:11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.

2 Corinthians 13:1-2 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (2) I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them--

As I was looking at these verses, the thought occurred to me that I could easily take you through virtually every single book in the New Testament (and in the OT) and read very similar verses to you that deal with the issue of the enemy coming among us in our churches, working their deception and

evil. Think for example of the 7 letters to the 7 churches in Revelation 2-3. Five of the 7 were rebuked, and largely because there were enemy “plants” among them, and the two that were given only the Lord’s commendation were churches that were suffering the assaults of the enemy.

Now, I suggest to you that our danger is that we think this is not, has not, will not happen to us. We get into a real trap when we judge things, as Paul says, “according to the flesh.” That really is what he means in 10:12, also explained in vs 18 –

2 Corinthians 10:12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

2 Corinthians 10:18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Follow along then as I read chapter 10 and then we will zoom in for a closer look at vss 1-6 --

2 Corinthians 10:1-18 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the

meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!-- (2) I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against **some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.**

(3) For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (5) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (6) being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

(7) Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. (8) For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. (9) I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. (10) For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." (11) Let such a person

understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.

(12) Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

(13) But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. (14) For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. (15) We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, (16) so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. (17) "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

(18) For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

## False Charges Against Paul

2 Corinthians 10:1-2 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!-- (2) I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

You can see from Paul's sarcasm here (yes, sarcasm does have a proper use!), that these enemies among the Corinthians charged Paul with being "two-faced." They said that, in essence, Paul was a phony. How so? Well, they charged him with putting on airs of authority when he wrote to the Corinthians, but then when he actually came to them, it turns out he is a real wimp.

You see it again down in verse 10-

2 Corinthians 10:10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

It may well be that these enemies were using a Greek concept of oratory greatness to judge Paul. At least we do know that they were using worldly,

outward, fleshly measures to claim that Paul was no Apostle of Christ. In some ways it is proper to say that this is the very theme of 2 Corinthians. You remember that the letter began this way –

2 Corinthians 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (4) **who comforts us in all our affliction**, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) **For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.** (6) If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. (7) Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. (8) For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. **For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.** (9) **Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of**

**death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.**

This is entirely against the “greatness” thinking of the world – which Paul calls “according to the flesh.” Remember that he warned us against this wrong evaluation again in chapter 5 –

2 Corinthians 5:16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

So here then is this accusation against Paul – his humility is used against him. According to the world, if anyone wrote letters with God’s authority, then in person they should be “great.” Paul rebukes the Corinthians for being so foolish as to get drawn into this-

2 Corinthians 11:20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

**When We Evaluate According to the Flesh, We Fail to Test the Spirits, and We Will Embrace a False Spirit**

Paul, a true Apostle, was characterized by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (vs 1). He loved these somewhat unlovable Corinthians. Listen to him –

2 Corinthians 6:4-13 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, (5) beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; (6) by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; (7) by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; (8) through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. **We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;** (9) as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; (10) as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. (11) We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. (12) You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. (13) In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

We have noted this before, but we repeat it –

*If the Apostle Paul filled out and submitted a pastor resume to most churches today, he would not even make the first cut. The person hired by the search committee would most likely be one who passed their ‘according to the flesh’ filter.*

YOU must not fall into this same trap. What are some common tenets of “according to the flesh” evaluation?

- Meekness and gentleness = weakness
- Popularity = greatness
- Suffering/persecution = a troublemaker, punished by God
- Truthful speech = lacking in tact

And let’s put it down where we can all get hold of it. I will give you an example. My father-in-law was a hard-working farmer. Came through the era of the depression. You would have liked him if you met him. I remember once that he said, after visiting us in Montana and listening to my sermon at church one Sunday – “Jeff, you know there are a lot of good people in this world.” He was an unsaved man, and he measured (as Paul will say in vs 12) according to the flesh; according to himself. As a result, he came to tragically wrong conclusions. His idea, for example, of a real Christian or a

true Christian pastor, would not square with the Apostle Paul's conclusions.

Are you going through your life clinging to the notion "there are lots of good people in this world," refusing to regard people according to Christ's Spirit and Christ's truth and instead insisting that "he's a good guy. He works hard and is honest in his business dealings and has a fine family" and therefore the spirit behind him MUST be of God? Then you are making the very same mistake Paul is warning us against here. Largely, that is how this church became overrun with such people in its history.

This world persecuted, rejected, and killed the Son of God. That is where judging according to the flesh leads. It kills truth and embraces the lie. It rejects Christ, rejects His apostles and prophets, rejects His people, and embraces the devil. Listen to it again as this very thing happened at Corinth –

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of **those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.** (13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles

of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

In verse 2, Paul is calling upon the Corinthians and any of us who embrace "according to the flesh" thinking to – *repent*. Yes, that's the word. Repent! Because it is sin and it is dangerous.

This last week I have been reading an excellent book called Willful Blindness. The author, Margaret Heffernan, warns us that *love is blind*, and that we can fall in love with "an idea as well as with a person." Listen to some of the things she says:

*"Our brains treat differently any information that might challenge our closely held beliefs....when we find the thoughts we agree with, or are able to eliminate the ones that make us uncomfortable, we feel that same kind of euphoria and reassurance that an addict feels when reunited with his drug of choice: all is right with the world."*

As an example, Heffernan points to a medical researcher named Alice Steward who worked in the 1940's and



beyond in England. She did research on child mortality, particularly from leukemia. She notice that leukemia was affecting children ages 2-4 and the incidence was sharply increasing. What was odd is that normally children of these ages, having survived the dangers of infancy, were normally healthy. So Stewart set out to her research, interviewing the mothers of leukemia victims who had died from 1953-1955. It was like a needle in a haystack search, as Heffernan notes.

*“Her study compared 500 leukemia deaths, plus 500 deaths from other forms of cancer, with 1,000 live children of the same age, sex, and region. When the surveys started to come back, the results leapt out. The common denominator wasn’t the colored sweets, the pets, or even the fish and chips. ‘Yes’ was turning up three times for every dead child to one for every live child, for the question, ‘Had you had an obstetric X-ray?’ Yes was running 3 to 1. It was a shocker. They were as like as two peas in a pod, the living and the dead. They were alike in all respects except on that one score. And the dose was very small, very brief, a single diagnostic X-ray, a tiny fraction of the radiation exposure considered safe. And it was enough to almost double risk of an early cancer death.”*

Now, what do you suppose happened? Stewart was a highly respected researcher. Her data was verified and re-verified. Re-applying her research in Scotland and then continuing research in England for 3 years until they had collected the data from 80% of ALL childhood cancer deaths between 1953-55, *“they were able to conclude definitively that a fetus exposed to an X-ray was twice as likely to develop cancer within the next 10 years as was a fetus that had not been exposed.”*

Now, what do you suppose happened when her results were published and all the medical community knew about them? Stewart herself provides us with the answer:

*“We reckoned that a child a week was dying from this practice. We thought that doctors would stop X-raying on the mere suspicion that we were right and we felt that we must hurry to cover all the deaths that occurred in the next 10 years, because once they stopped X-raying there would be no further cases.”* So she thought. Hannerman goes on:

*“To the contrary, doctors carried on X-raying pregnant mothers for the next 25 years. Not until 1980 did major American medical organizations finally recommend that the practice be*

*abandoned. The UK followed suit a year later.”*

*“Why did it take so long? How could so many doctors, the world over, have been so blind? Stewart’s findings were clear, her data voluminous, and initially was greeted with acclaim.”*

*“In part, the mystic of X-rays was to blame. Ever since their discovery in 1895, X-rays had developed an aura of mastery and mystique...Shoe stores boasted of X-ray machines that ensured a perfect fit. With this apparatus in his shop, a shoe merchant can positively assure his customers that they need never wear ill-fitting boots and shoes....With so much investment in it, neither shoe salesmen nor doctors wanted to hear that there might be any risks associated with the new technology. They were wedded to it. ‘No one likes to be told they’ve been doing something wrong all their lives!’ That is how Anne Marshall explains the reaction to her mother’s findings. ‘That’s what the radiologists and obstetricians took from Mum’s work – that they’d been doing something wrong. There were lots of them and they liked what they were doing and wanted to keep on doing it.’*

*“‘Doctors’ enthusiasm about radiology was so enormous that medical centers had invested in all*

*kinds of X-ray equipment,’ explains Gayle Greene. ‘They didn’t like being told that they were not only NOT helping their patients—but they were actually killing them! People are very resistant to changing what they know how to do, what they have expertise in and certainly what they have economic investment in.’”*

*“What Alice Steward had provoked in her scientific colleagues was cognitive dissonance: the mental turmoil that is evoked when the mind tries to hold two entirely incompatible views....The dissonance produced by mutually exclusive beliefs is tremendously painful, even unbearable. The easiest way to reduce the pain –the dissonance—is to eliminate one of the beliefs, re-establishing apparent cognitive consonance. Harmony...Dissonance is eliminated when we blind ourselves to contradictory propositions. And we are prepared to pay a very high price to preserve our most cherished ideas.”*

Do you see why the Bible talks about the necessity of having our sin-damaged minds renewed? Do you see that the ability to love the truth is something that only God can create in fallen man?

Here is the point then at Corinth, and then here in our own lives and church.

The Corinthians were choosing to be willfully blind to the irrefutable evidences that Paul was a true Apostle:

2 Corinthians 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

Willful blindness. Paul was meek and humble and gentle like Christ. The false teachers were abusive. And yet this new way of thinking, of judging according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh, according to the world's way of thinking, was just too painful. Cognitive dissonance. They had to re-establish harmony in their thinking – so they were willfully choosing to be blind to truth and embrace the false teachers' lies.

And this is why the wicked can so often hide among us in our churches, as Paul and the other biblical writers and Christ Himself warn us. Over and over and over we are warned. Wolves in sheep wool. Roaring lion prowling around. False shepherds. Religious hypocrites we are to beware of. And yet, when one who has been among us, who we thought we knew but didn't, is exposed, we have a choice to make. Will we yield to cognitive dissonance, which pains us, by choosing willful blindness to the truth OR by

embracing the truth? Will we give up our old concepts of worldly greatness and replace them with the truth of greatness in the Kingdom of God?

To follow Christ, you see, we cannot choose willful blindness. The Lord Jesus Christ presents us with God's wisdom constantly and that wisdom is foolishness to this world and to our old ways of thinking. We must pick up our cross and die to those old presuppositions, letting the Spirit of Christ renew our minds with His truth.

Let me close with a final illustration to drive this thing home. We know that the emissaries of the enemy can appear among us disguised as sheep, having even the appearance of "sons of righteousness." This has happened many times in the history of this church. And each time one of these apparent "angels of light" has been exposed for the evil that they are, there has been a battle. We all had to face the pain of this "cognitive dissonance." We had grown comfortable with their disguise. We thought we knew them. But we didn't.

Now what happened? You know the too common outcome. In spite of overwhelming, plain, obvious evidence that showed us "here is a wolf in sheep's clothing," there almost always have been some who chose this willful

blindness to truth in order to preserve their most cherished ideas and avoid the pain of cognitive dissonance that threatened to rock their world and tell them that they had been wrong all along. This choice of willful blindness is a choice of whether to follow Christ in His light or go into the darkness of the enemy. It is no less than that.

That was the very thing Paul faced at Corinth. He urged the Corinthians to embrace the truth, to reject the false brethren, and to let Christ renew their minds about what is true greatness in God's kingdom. As we will see in coming weeks, He prayed that they would make the right choice, but he also issued severe and ominous warnings to any who refused.

Welcome! My name is David Orrison. Let's see, what might you like to know about me? Well, I have been a pastor for 32 years, serving in two denominational churches (different denominations) and now in a decidedly non-denominational church. (Guess which I like more.)



Currently, I am the pastor of the Chapel in Drake, Colorado, a small congregation that worships in the beauty of the Big Thompson Canyon.

For the past six years I have been the director of an online ministry called "Grace for the Heart." We have reached around the world with the good news of God's love. Over the years of church ministry I have met many people who claim to belong to Jesus but know little or nothing of forgiveness, acceptance, and grace. They pass their insecurity and rejection on to others and live miserable Christian lives.



Grace  
for the  
Heart

That's not the way it is supposed to be! Jesus does love us and there is a great

message in the good news. Be sure to check out our website

at:<http://www.gracefortheheart.org>.

People from 167 different countries have visited our site to learn more about God's grace in Jesus.

Oh, about me: I am happily married and the father of eight sons. I love to write, read, carve wood, and walk in the forests of northern Minnesota. Oh yeah, and Starbucks bold coffees!

## **Everyone's Guilty?**

### **It's Narcissist Friday!**

We have been taught to feel guilty. We have been told that we are bad people and we do bad things. We accept guilt and shame as we do old friends. They are familiar and comfortable to us.

This is one of the reasons I put out this blog, to show that so much of the

condemnation Christians carry around does not come from the heart of God.

For narcissists and legalists, guilt and shame are effective tools to keep others quiet and in line. The condemnation we bring with us into the relationship or the church gives them the opening they need to begin to manipulate us. They build on the foundation we already have and further weaken us by their insinuations and accusations. The best follower is a quiet one, one who won't challenge the teacher. Guilt, intimidation, uncertainty—these are all tools in the narcissist's toolbox.

So we had some fun last week (wonderful comments, btw!) and along comes a reminder that we are all guilty of these things, that we are not better than others. Now, please understand, I am not scolding or judging whoever made the comments. I just want to point out why that happens. And I want to show why it is an error.

Let's start by establishing the fact that we simply do not do what some people do. When you hear about a murder or a

rape, do you stop to remind yourself that you are a sinner also? Probably not. You want the person to be caught and brought to justice. You have no hesitation in thinking that the perpetrator is accountable—and that he is different from you. You could be with children all day and not molest any of them. You could look at a pretty girl in a secluded place and not attempt to rape her. You could probably be in charge of a friend's finances and not steal anything. Many of you have told your stories here and I know that you have lived in relationship with some of the most difficult people in the world—and you have not committed murder. The truth is that there is a difference between you and many others.

Now, just what is that difference? You see, most of us were taught in church that all sin is the same and that any of us could do anything. I agree with that to a point. I believe any of us could commit any sin—but we don't. I believe all sin is the same when the need for a Savior is proclaimed—but not all sin is the same in the practice of daily life.

Some sin hurts others more seriously than other sin. Some is more cruel, more insidious, and, perhaps, more evil. Yes, there is sin on all our accounts and we all need the Savior's love, but there are distinctions that are real and important. Otherwise, we can't ever judge any cruel act.

When Jesus said that lust was the same as adultery and depersonalization was the same as murder, He meant that guilt was guilt in the eyes of God, and all sin creates a need for forgiveness and salvation. He was chastising the self-righteous leaders for judging some people as less valuable in the eyes of God. The sins of the leaders, while acceptable within the community perhaps, were still not acceptable to God. Jesus is not saying that the person who calls his brother a fool should be treated like a murderer. He is simply saying that we all sin.

We all agree that there are things on the list from last week that could apply to our behavior and attitudes at times. There is no question that I can be

argumentative and critical and belligerent sometimes (I will spare you the rest of me that's on that list). But that doesn't make me a narcissist. When we list adjectives like that, we are just describing characteristics. For example, I could say that an apple is red, round, hard, sweet, edible, and falls from a tree. That doesn't mean that every red thing is an apple. Nor does it mean that every hard thing that falls from a tree is an apple. These are just a list of an apple's attributes. If all of them are true, I will begin to think of an apple, of course. And if many or all of the things on our lists from last week are true of a certain person, I will begin to wonder if that person is a narcissist.

There is another notable difference between most of us and the narcissist. When I do these things and I realize that I have done them, I experience regret. Not just regret for getting caught, but genuine regret for hurting someone and for being less than I could be. I often remember those things long after I did them because I wish I had never done them. Now, I

believe there is no guilt on my account with God for those things because of what Jesus did for me and I have, when appropriate, apologized to the person, but I still remember and feel bad. I know I am not guilty, but I still beat myself with those things. Almost everyone reading this will understand... except for the narcissist.

You see, the narcissist only regrets getting caught or burning a useful bridge, he/she does not regret saying what was said. If he called you a name that cut deep, he has probably forgotten it, or he did it purposely to manipulate you in some way. For example, narcissists attack when they feel threatened. That's when they use your secrets against you. Do they regret doing it? Of course not, no more than they would regret picking up a stick to chase away a threatening dog. You are not a person and your secrets are tools to be used.

But you don't think that way and it is just fine for you to acknowledge that. You are different from the narcissist.

Many have noted the existence of a kind of narcissistic spectrum. This concept may or may not be helpful. If we say that anyone on the spectrum is a narcissist, then it isn't helpful. If we say that there is a point at which this behavior defines a person, that the person consistently acts in these negative ways, and is therefore a narcissist; then the spectrum is being used correctly. Not all vain people are narcissists, but vain people who also use others and have no empathy and regularly say and do inappropriate things might be.

My point is that the guilt we bring into these relationships is a weapon they will use against us. The narcissist and the legalist will heap more guilt on you and use that guilt to beat you into submission. The moment you try to defend yourself, they will pounce and accuse you of the same thing. They will gaslight you into thinking that it is really all your problem as they project their own behavior on you. As long as you let them present the axioms, set

the agenda, provide the criteria—you will lose.

So, don't bring the guilt for them to use. No, you are not perfect. No one is. Yes, you sometimes do wrong things. We all do. But you are not like the narcissist. And listen: you can disagree. When the narcissist begins to say that you are the one with the problem and that you do the same thing you are accusing him/her of doing, you can stop and say no.

“No, I am not like you.” If you can't say it, at least let yourself think it.