

# Fruitful # 5

## BUNDLE

### HOW TO DEAL WITH JUDGY ADVICE

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## What does the Bible's teach about relationships?

Read Colossians 3:10-17 (below) and answer the questions on p.2-4.

*<sup>10</sup> Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.*

*<sup>12</sup> Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

*<sup>16</sup> Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

1. "Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him." (v.10)

Remember what we looked at in Fruitful #4? God loves us because of who *he* is, not because of who *we* are. Despite our faults, he never stops doing good to us. God's grace is completely different to karma's give-them-what-they-deserve way of thinking.

Match each of the statements below with the corresponding verses.

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. Matt 5:43-47 | c. Rom 5:8     |
| b. 1 John 4:10  | d. 1 John 4:16 |

- b   God's love takes the first step towards reconciliation, even though he's not at fault.
- God gives his love freely and generously. He reaches out to people who don't deserve it.
- God's love flows from who he is. It doesn't depend on who *we* are.
- God even shows loving kindness to his enemies!

2. Read verse 12 again. These attitudes don't come naturally to me!! Do they come naturally to you?

In each circle, write the opposites from the **What Comes Naturally** list below.

tenderhearted, merciful

kind

humble

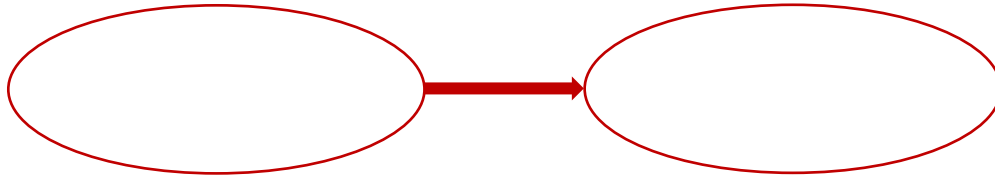
gentle

patient

**What Comes Naturally:**

proud      stubborn      bitter  
self-focused      gruff      cynical  
hard-hearted      pushy      abrupt  
forceful      self-righteous      harsh  
quick to give up on someone  
intolerant of others' mistakes

3. *“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” (v.12)*



- a. Which comes first? Fill in the ovals, above, to remind yourself!
    - Live a good life, full of mercy and kindness.
    - God chooses you, God loves you
  - b. Why is it important to have these in the correct order? What can happen when we get the order mixed up?
4. *“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” (v.13)*
- a. We know Jesus died for everybody. But is everybody *reconciled* to God through Jesus’ sacrifice? Why/why not? (John 3:16, 2 Cor 5:14-21)
  - b. Thinking of our relationships: Can reconciliation happen unilaterally, or does it need to come from both sides? (Rom 12:17-21)
  - c. How about forgiveness: Can it be unilateral or does it have to come from both sides? [This short article will help, if you’re not sure.](#) (If the hyperlink doesn’t work, do a Google search for: *Grace to You forgive or confront.*)
5. a. According to our Colossians 3 passage, what types of things fuel us as we seek to live at peace with others, to be thankful and to forgive others? (v.15-16)
- b. Who is affected when don’t live at peace with others, when we’re not thankful, and we refuse to forgive others? (v.17)

## You're not alone in your struggle!

Read the scenarios on p.5-8 and tick  the ones that you can relate to.

I think for me, the most painful comments from family, friends and doctors were in my early years of interstitial cystitis, before they knew how to diagnose it. All standard tests were normal, I looked fine on the surface and was told:

1. It's all in your head. Maybe you should see a counselor (which is good advice for working through stuff, but not because you have an invisible illness that they can't diagnose).
2. It can't possibly be as bad as you say it is. You look fine.

It was hard not being believed. I was so happy to finally have a diagnosis, after 6 years of suffering... still had the same pain, but could finally confirm to others that I wasn't making it up, wasn't overreacting.

Nowadays people offer advice re food or beverages that might help, treatments that they heard or read about on the radio or online, the "if you'd just try this, I am sure it would benefit or cure you", etc. I just smile, thank them for their concern, and go on my way, knowing what is best for me. People feel like they have to do something about it, rather than just be there to support you. — Kathy



I struggle with different health issues, but I try to live a normal life. My pain is invisible, so when I start sharing about my struggles with chronic pain and fatigue, people avoid the subject of conversation, talking about their more tangible problems instead. In addition to that, I'm a missionary and a pastor's wife. People assume we have all the answers, all our needs met, and faith enough to face any trouble, which of course is not true. I'm very thankful because my husband is so understanding! God shows me His love through him but many times I feel guilty because of my limitations and people's expectations and indifference. 😞 — Liliana



An extended family member tries to comfort you, "You will get better, you just need to be patient. You need to get out more." This upsets you, as your multiple chronic illnesses are incurable. — Larry



A friend says, "You're just liking the meds. I've heard pain meds are bad for you. Will changing your diet or losing weight help your pain go away?" — Tonya



Someone at church says, "You're not praying hard enough." Another says, "This 'disease' is all in your head." — Ian



One friend says, "It's from stress." Another concludes, "It's psychosomatic." Another total stranger tells your husband it's all from a root canal you had 20 years ago... — Anon



A friend advises, "You need to do the gluten free diet. It will cure you!" — Anon



Your two kids have chronic health issues. One friend suggests, "If you just put them on a whole food diet, that will heal them!" Another friend says, "If you pray hard enough, your kids will get better!" — Melissa



An acquaintance says, "You just need to get out and get some exercise." But exercise makes your symptoms worse! — Joanne



A friend asks, "Have you tried...?" You switch off before she even finishes the sentence. Regardless of whether it is well meant, it always comes off as: *If you did something different, you wouldn't feel this way, therefore it is your fault.* — Délice



After your diagnosis, your parents flood you with everything they've read and everything their friends are telling them about how to "fix" you. — Melissa



A colleague tells you, "Herbs, roots and powders will heal you. All the meds you take are keeping you sick and making you worse." This irritates you, as the products they're pushing just happen to be ones they sell as part of a MLM company. You think to yourself: *As if I haven't already tried everything under the sun that might help!* — Melissa



A good friend from church comments, "You're looking good today. You must be getting better." This frustrates you as you've tried repeatedly to explain that there's no relationship between how you look on the outside and how you feel on the inside. — Carole



A very close friend tells you, "You are just lazy. You could get better if you really wanted to." — Ellyn



After telling a friend you are in pain, she replies, "Well, I have a very high pain threshold." This irritates you, as it implies that you are just not strong enough and that the pain you are feeling is so little. — Sue Ellen



A friend from church asks, "How are you doing?" and you answer truthfully. Their response: "Awh come on, it's not that bad. You're doing fine." Just when you need a little understanding and prayer, you get this. — Hosea



A Christian friend explains, "Your sickness is due to unconfessed sin and a lack of faith. You need to confess ALL your sins (including ancestors' sins) and claim your healing in Jesus' name." — Stacey



You've been diagnosed with cancer, after being chronically ill for many years. A co-worker says, "You finally have a real illness. Maybe you'll learn how to get past all these other concerns." — Sherry



A lady from church says, "Consider yourself doubly blessed by God that He caused this pain to glorify Himself." — Holly



Your mother says, "God told me that you were not seeking His face," and "You are letting Satan take you out." — Rikki



Your husband and your sister comfort you with these words: "Do what you're able to do to, enjoy what you can because there is always someone who can do less and is suffering more." — Marian



After describing the trauma your disease put you through, one of your specialist physicians for a different condition says, "Oh, well that disease can affect even greater lengths of the digestive system, so really you should be thankful!" — Kaitlyn



A pastor advises, "You shouldn't 'receive' your diagnoses." — Catherine



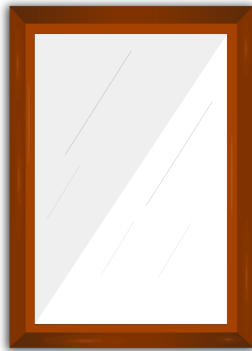
People from church are telling you that you are demon-possessed and oppressed for being ill. They also say you don't have enough faith. — Janice





## Guide to Mirrors and Windows Activity

Choose TWO of the judgy comments that you've ticked (p.5-8). These will be your scenarios for the **Mirrors and Windows Activity** (p.10-11). Now is your chance to work towards a God-honouring response. I've written examples, below, of what to consider within each box. **Please speak to your counsellor/pastor if you struggle with any of these steps.**

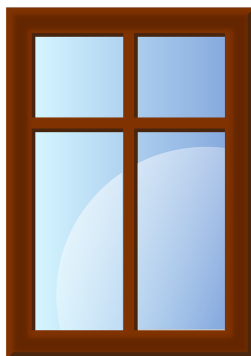


### Mirror A: Your Feelings

- How did the comment make you feel? What do you wish you had (or hadn't) said in response?
- Take your thoughts to God in prayer, even the ones that aren't very "Christian"! Pouring your heart out to God can open the door to his peace and comfort.
- Writing a letter or journal entry to God might help, if you find it hard to pray.

### Mirror B: God's Word

- Think about the Bible's teaching. How are we instructed to treat people who offend us?
- How can you respond in a way that reflects God's great love? Pray for strength to do this.
  1. For a small offense, consider letting it go (Luke 23:34, 1 Cor 13:4-5, Prov 19:11).
  2. For a larger offense, or a closer relationship, consider how you might respond assertively (Matt 18:15-17). If needed, set up protective boundaries.



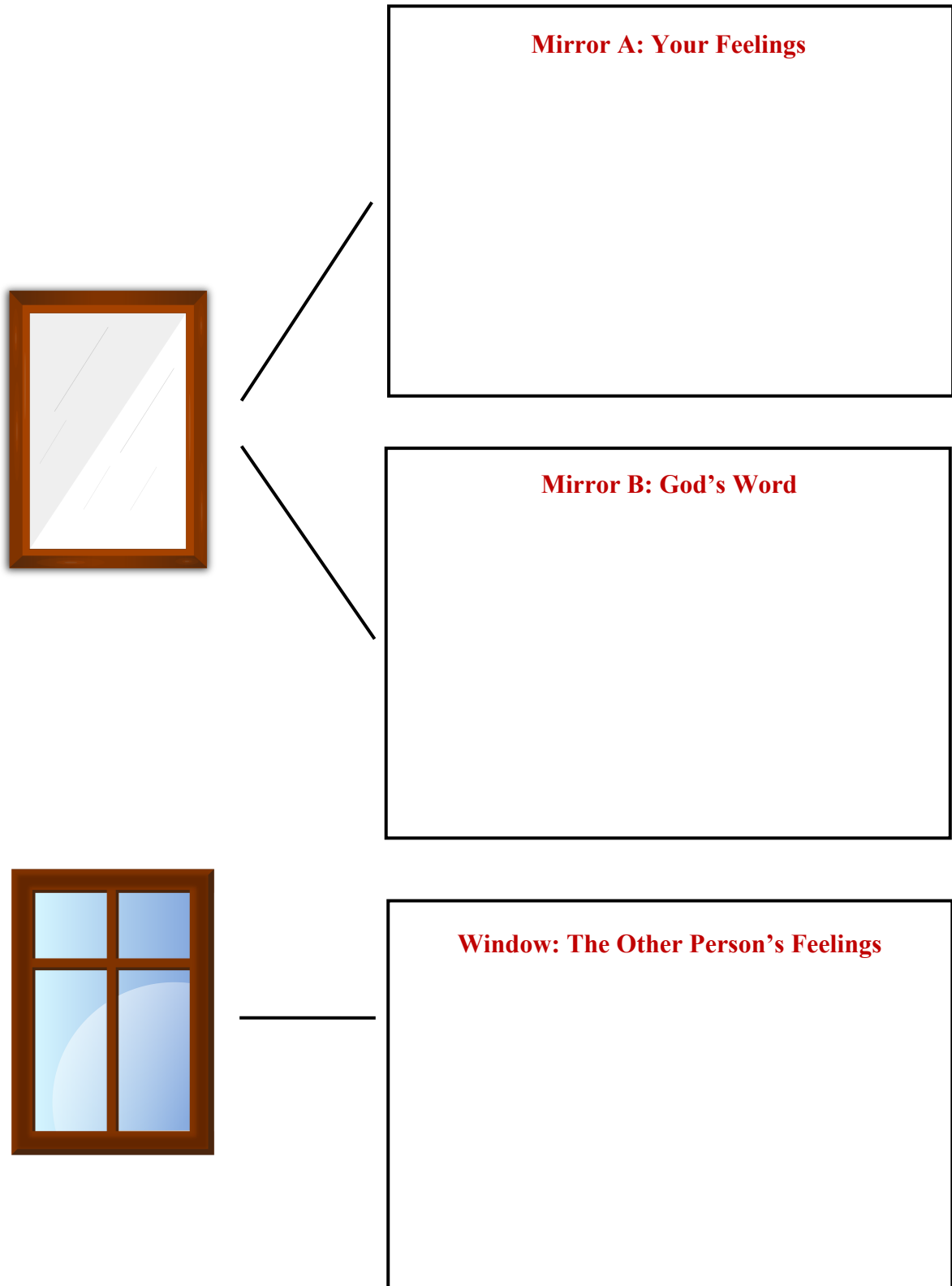
### Window: The Other Person's Feelings

- Were they genuinely trying to help?
- Were they reacting to their own "mirror" of feelings?
- Are they capable of understanding your situation? (No matter how much someone cares for you, there's no guarantee that they'll understand.) Consider how much health- or grief-related information it is wise to share with this person in future.

## Mirrors and Windows Activity

Scenario #1 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Mirrors and Windows Activity

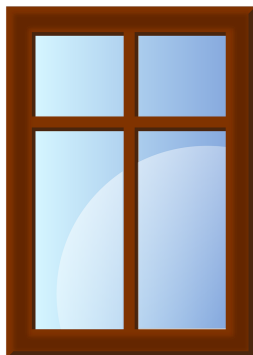
Scenario #2 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mirror A: Your Feelings**

**Mirror B: God's Word**



**Window: The Other Person's Feelings**