

Judge Not Lest You Be Judged

Week Three Really, Now?

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Monday morning, Amy and Jenny walk into class, finding Ed and Pete sitting at adjacent tables. Amy smiles, knowing that the guys sitting at separate tables can only mean one thing. Amy takes a seat next to Ed, telling him, “that’s a really beautiful necklace. Where did you get it?” Ed replies, “my girlfriend gave it to me.” Amy’s heart melts, as she tells Ed, “thank you for a wonderful weekend. I really enjoyed our time together.”

One table over, Jenny tells Pete, “hey, sweetie.” Pete replies, “hey there. I’ve missed you.” Jenny, after spending most of her weekend with Pete, warmly replies, “I really enjoyed spending my weekend with you.” Jenny pulls her chair close to Pete’s and, leaning her head on Pete’s shoulder, tells him, “I probably shouldn’t tell you this, but I was up like half the night thinking about what a wonderful weekend I had.” Pete puts his arm around Jenny, communicating far more than words could ever express.

Interrupting all the texting and checking of social media, Dr. Lawrence begins today’s lecture. As she customarily does before she gets into the prescribed course material, Dr. Lawrence gives a bit of computing history that cannot be found in textbooks. Dr. Lawrence’s secret is that she gives a bit of computing history for five or so minutes before she starts her lecture because a few students usually stumble into class a little late.

Dr. Lawrence informs her class, “last week, I mentioned to you that one person was largely responsible for writing the operating system for the Control Data Cyber supercomputers. I also made mention of these modern-day certificate sellers who teach a six-month coding class, and try to place their graduates on the same level as you. Today, I am going to briefly discuss the difference between you and these certificate buyers who get their worthless certificates from certificate sellers.”

With absolutely no real world experience, the students are curious to hear what Dr. Lawrence has to say to them today. Giving an actual example, Dr. Lawrence explains, “many years ago, there was a professor here on campus who received a contract to write a parser for a particular computer language. That professor is no longer with this University. One of this professor’s graduate students worked on the project, and received a master’s degree for her work. Instead of using graduate students to do the actual coding, this professor took what he thought was a short cut, and hired a team of fifteen certificate buyers to do the coding. Big mistake.”

Now having everyone’s attention, Dr. Lawrence expounds, “at that time, the graduate student that was working for this particular professor was taking my graduate level compilers class. When I was going over parsers, in class, she asked me how I would write a parser for that particular computer language. Using her question as an example, I wrote the code for a generic table-driven LL(2) parser on the board, which that particular language requires. The parser was thirty or forty lines of recursive code. It took me less than fifteen minutes to write the parser.” Some students, who are currently taking the undergraduate-level compilers class, are now listening intently.

Dr. Lawrence then asks her class, “how long do you think the certificate buyers spent writing the parser that they never completed?” One student answers, “a month?” Dr. Lawrence replies, “no. Not even in the ballpark.” Another student answers, “a year?” Dr. Lawrence replies, “pretty close. Fifteen certificate buyers and eleven months later, they still couldn’t complete the task. So, the graduate student asked me if she can use my code. I responded, ‘sure. Go ahead. I don’t care.’ But, she had to write the tables for the language, which took her less than a week.”

Dr. Lawrence then concludes, “so, that’s what a company gets when they hire certificate buyers. You are far more valuable than certificate buyers who went to a weekend coding class. Please remember that when you hit the working world.” Dr. Lawrence then moves on to her prepared lecture for the day.

Today, Ed and Amy pay little attention to Dr. Lawrence’s lecture. Instead, Ed and Amy talk about diving, specifically planning to go diving before dinner again today. Once their plans are set, Ed asks Amy, “after we go diving, do you want to go out and eat?” Amy replies, “sure! I’d really love that. I’m kind of getting tired of campus food.” Ed replies, “I totally get that. And, we can’t just live on pizza.” Amy replies, “hmm. Living on pizza. You have to admit, it’s a nice thought though.”

An hour and a half later, class lets out. Pete gently rocks Jenny, telling her, “hey. Wake up, sleepy head.” Jenny slowly wakes up, telling Pete,

“wow! I must have like fallen asleep or something. What did I miss?” Pete replies, “she talked about the various boolean algebra laws, and went over their AND forms and OR forms.” Still half asleep, Jenny replies, “that sounds like really complicated.” Pete informs Jenny, “I took good notes. And, it’s in the book.” As they walk out of the classroom, Amy tells Pete, “she just needs a glass of wine. That will reboot her brain, and she’ll be back in sync with the rest of the world in no time.”

The following Friday, the Interdenominational Campus Fellowship meets once again. Dana, intentionally arriving early, sits on the edge of the stage having a conversation with Rodney Steele. It would be nice to believe that the two leaders are discussing tonight’s program but, instead, they are gossiping about Ed, Pete, Amy, Jenny, and perhaps a few others in the group. Within no time, Donna and Theresa join in on the gossip, sharing a few photos that they’ve taken of Amy and Jenny over the last week.

Totally oblivious to the fact that they are being gossiped about, Ed, Amy, Pete, and Jenny walk in and sit on the floor against the wall at the back of the room. As they are talking among themselves about their day, there is a lot of laughter and bubblyness accompanying their conversation. It is hard for Rodney not to notice the light and airy conversation in the back of the room. It is also not hard for Dana to realize the group settling in the back of the room is getting bigger and bigger.

Ed casually mentions to Amy, “I have a surprise for you after the meeting.” All excited, Amy asks, “really? What is it?” Ed smiles, and replies, “I’m not saying.” Overhearing Ed and Amy’s conversation, Pete tells Amy, “you might as well give up now. You’ll never get it out of him.” Now even more excited, Amy asks Ed, “how long do I have to wait?” Ed looks at his watch, and replies, “if we stay for the meeting, an hour and a half. If we leave now, maybe ten or fifteen minutes.” Jenny advises Amy, “stay. The longer you have to wait for it, the better the surprise will be.” Ed laughs, and tells Jenny, “maybe I’ll give it to Amy tomorrow then.” Amy replies, “okay! I’ll wait however long it takes. But, I want my surprise before Jesus returns.”

Joe Sugarman walks in, also taking a seat in the back of the room. Jenny wastes no time at all asking Joe, “did you get a chance to look at my DNA yet?” Joe replies, “I did. I’m almost finished. I should have it done by early next week.” Jenny tells Joe, “thank you so much for looking at that for me. I really appreciate it.” Joe replies, “no problem. I’m seeing a side of you that no one has ever seen before.” Jenny laughs hysterically, and tells Joe, “it’s not like you’re looking where the sun don’t shine!” A dozen or so people in the back of the room laugh hysterically at Jenny’s comment. Joe smiles, and replies, “well, in a way, I am.” Jenny makes tentative plans to meet with Joe to find out what he has discovered.

Interrupting all the fun at the back of the room, Rodney announces, “okay, everyone. It’s time to get started.” Everyone in the room stands up and quiets down, and Rodney opens the meeting with a prayer. As Rodney prays, Jenny holds Pete’s hand and Amy holds Ed’s hand. The wandering eyes of Dana and Donna once again take notice of the hand holding and smiles at the back of the room as they hear not a word of what Rodney is praying. Rodney concludes his prayer, and the praise band takes the stage.

Jeff Gilbert, the praise band’s guitarist, announces, “our first number tonight will be a solo, sung by our own Dana McPherson. Dana will be singing her rendition of *You Say*, by Lauren Daigle.” Dana takes center stage, carefully surveying the room as the band plays the introduction. Dana begins her solo, trying to ignore Ed and Amy whispering to each other during her performance. And, taking a break from his officiating duties, Rodney walks around the room, stealthily seeking out the scent of alcohol, tobacco, herbal teas, or any other substance that doesn’t meet his strict approval.

After Dana’s solo, the fellowship group sings two more songs together. Rodney stands up and takes the stage, telling the group, “that was a really nice solo by Dana. Please join with me in giving Dana another round of applause.” The group applauds, expressing their appreciation of Dana’s performance. Dana would gladly trade all the applause she receives for one date with Ed, but that’s not the way the world works, at least not Dana’s world.

The applause subsides, and everyone takes a seat on the floor. With today’s message, Rodney begins addressing the group, “social media is a big part of all of our lives, perhaps a much bigger part than it should be. There is one fact that we cannot escape from. That fact is that we all probably spend way too much time on social media than we should. Imagine if we spent as much time praying as we do staring at our phones during class, checking out what was posted on social media since our last class. Tonight, I’d like to talk about what I’ve seen on social media over the last few weeks. Now, please don’t take what I have to say as judging anyone.” Ed whispers to Pete, “here it comes. The wrecking ball is about to hit.” Pete laughs, and whispers back to Ed, “be sure to duck when it comes this way.”

Rodney continues, “over the last week, I’ve been pleasantly surprised at the number of prayer requests that I’ve seen online. As Christians, this is exactly what we should be using social media for. In today’s society, how else would we know each other’s prayer needs?” Jenny rolls her eyes at Rodney’s last comment, and whispers to Amy, “how about like talking with someone face to face? Did he ever think of that?” Rodney speaks for a few minutes regarding a few prayer requests that he’s seen online, while

many of the fellowship members sit patiently waiting for the praise band to take the stage again.

Moving on to part two of his sermonette, Rodney continues, “so, what else have I seen on social media this week? I really hate to bring this up, but, I feel that I need to. I’ve seen pictures posted online of some of you drinking alcohol. I’ve seen pictures of some of you smoking. There are even pictures online of one person taking a hand full of pills. I can’t even imagine how any of that could glorify the Lord. I even ran across one picture of someone scantily dressed sitting on someone else’s lap out in public. Some of the pictures I’ve seen in this regard have been very suggestive in a way. Now, please don’t get me wrong. I don’t want to be seen as the morality police.”

As Rodney continues his pontification, Ed quietly laughs, and whispers to Amy, “I think he’s talking about us.” Amy, who knows exactly who took and posted the pictures which Rodney is referring to, whispers back, “he is. I saw the pictures that were posted.” Ed whispers to Amy, “it’s not like you can go diving in jeans and a T-shirt.” Amy giggles, and tells Ed, “and, he said something about sitting on someone else’s lap. It’s not like you can sit on your own lap.” Ed laughs, momentarily catching the attention of Rodney.

Hearing Rodney’s pinpointed accusation, Jenny, who did not sleep well last night, asks Pete, “would you like to go out after the meeting and get a slice of pizza? I want a glass of wine.” Pete smiles, and replies, “sure. I’d love to.” Jenny tells Pete, “it’s a date!”

Rodney continues his sermonette, judging others yet vehemently claiming that he is not. Realizing that Rodney has singled out Amy on more than one occasion, Ed whispers to Amy, “if you want, we can leave early and I can give you your surprise.” Greatly appreciating that Ed recognizes that she is in the firing range of Rodney’s verbal machine gun, Amy whispers back, “that’s okay. He can say whatever he wants. His little temper tantrum isn’t bothering me in the least bit.” Amy lays her head on Ed’s shoulder, waiting for Rodney’s well-prepared tirade to end.

Finishing his fourteen-minute, thirty-two second presentation that could not have ended soon enough, Rodney tells the group, “if any of you here would like to give your testimony, or share with our group what the Lord is doing in your life, please let one of our leaders know and we can put it on the schedule. I don’t want to be the only one up here on the stage every week.” No one believes Rodney for a minute. If Rodney had his way, he’d speak for an hour every week and lock the doors so no one can leave.

Joe Sugarman stands up, and announces, "I'll be glad to give next week's talk." Rodney announces, "thank you, Joe. I'm sure we'll all be glad to hear from you again." In the back of the room, Jenny springs up, announcing, "I'll give the talk two weeks from now!" Looking at Jenny as if she were from a different planet, Rodney tells the group, "okay. In two weeks, we'll hear from Jenny, and what the Lord is doing in her life." Jenny is the last person Rodney ever expected to volunteer. Truth is, Rodney was hoping that no one volunteered so he can have center stage all to himself.

Rodney leaves the stage, expecting applause but getting none. Amy whispers to Ed, "I know Rodney's problem." Whispering back, Ed asks, "what's that?" Amy replies, "someone baptized him in pickle juice." Ed laughs, prompting Pete to ask Ed, "what's so funny?" Ed tells Pete, "Amy says Rodney was baptized in pickle juice." A few people standing in the back of the room laugh, again leaving Rodney wondering what could possibly be so funny. Rodney, seeing the group that is laughing, concludes that the group is laughing at him.

The praise band takes the stage again, and uplifting energy once again fills the room. The offering plate is passed around and, after two numbers, Rodney takes the stage once more, this time to close the meeting. Following Rodney's closing prayer, the group splits into smaller groups, when many either hang around socializing, head out to eat, or plan to do something together.

Jenny was also the last person Pete expected to volunteer for speaking to the group. Pete asks Jenny, "why did you volunteer to speak?" Jenny succinctly replies, "seriously, now. Do you really like want to listen to Rodney every week?" Ed laughs, and tells Pete, "she does have a really good point." Not overly impressed with Rodney's presentation today, Amy suggests, "if we all fill up the schedule, we won't have to listen to Rodney spitting out his emotional guilt trips." It is not hard to figure out that Rodney is not exactly everyone's favorite speaker.

Dana walks to the back of the room with Donna and Theresa, intending to eavesdrop on Ed and Amy's conversation. Seeing Dana a few feet away, Amy compliments Dana, telling her, "that was a really beautiful solo you sang earlier. You have a really nice voice." Putting on a fake smile, Dana replies, "thanks." Trying to be friendly, Amy mentions to Dana, "I saw you at the pool last week. Do you like to swim?" Attempting to gaslight Amy, Dana replies, "you must be mistaken. It wasn't me." Dana continues her conversation with Donna and Theresa, secretly listening in on what Pete is discussing with Ed. Deep inside, Dana is beginning to have another meltdown.

Totally oblivious to Dana's presence, Pete tells Ed, "me and Jenny are going out for a slice of pizza. Do you guys want to join us?" Amy tells Ed, "if you want, we can do that. My surprise can wait." Ed suggests to Pete, "how about in twenty minutes, bro? Will that work?" Pete replies, "sure. No problem. That will work." Ed energetically tells Amy, "let's go get you your surprise." Amy smiles, grabs Ed's hand and rushes out of the meeting, eager to see what surprise Ed has waiting for her.

On the way back to the dorms, Ed takes a minor detour. Amy asks Ed, "where are we going?" Ed replies, "your surprise is in my Jeep." Amy asks, "oh, really? How is your surprise in my Jeep?" Ed laughs, and tells Amy, "your Jeep? You sound a little excited." Realizing what she said, Amy laughs, and tells Ed, "okay! Let me try this one more time. How is my surprise in your Jeep?" Ed replies, "because, I wanted you to be the first to see it. And, besides, I just picked it up earlier today."

Arriving at Ed's Jeep, which he intentionally parked under a bright security light earlier today, Ed tells Amy, "okay. Close your eyes and turn around." Amy turns around, hearing Ed unlock his Jeep. After a few seconds of silence, Ed tells Amy, "okay. You can turn around now." Amy turns around, seeing a beautiful 24 by 36-inch poster size picture of her in mid air, executing a dive that she did while she and Ed were at the pool last week. Showing tears of happiness, Amy exclaims, "wow! It's so beautiful! Thank you so much! I love it!" Amy gives Ed a big hug and kiss, expressing her heart felt appreciation.

Taking a closer look at the photograph, Amy exclaims, "wow! It looks like a painting!" Ed explains, "I took the image that we downloaded from your camera to the camera shop. They printed it on canvas and put it in a frame." Amy exclaims, "it's so beautiful! I really love it! Thank you so much!" Amy asks Ed, "what made you think to get this for me?" Ed explains, "when we were at the pool, you said you always wanted a picture of you diving." Amy cries more tears of happiness, telling Ed, "you remembered!"

Ed hands Amy a self-adhesive wall hook, telling her, "here's your other surprise. You can hang the picture on your dorm wall." Amy asks, "can we go and do that now? Please?" Ed replies, "sure. We got a few minutes."

Amy and Ed walk over to Amy's dorm, where they hang the poster size photograph on the wall over Amy's bed. Amy tells Ed, "that looks perfect! I like it! Thank you so much again!" Ed asks Amy, "you do know what everyone is going to ask you now, don't you?" Amy replies, "no. Tell me." Ed tells Amy, "everyone who sees the photo is going to ask you if that's you." Proud of the one significant accomplishment she's had in her life, Amy replies, "and, I'll tell them, 'yup! That's me!'"

On the walk to the pizzeria, Ed asks Amy, “do you know what?” Amy replies, “tell me.” Ed tells Amy, “you were the first person I’ve ever run across who understood how much work I put into diving.” Amy asks, “how is that?” Ed explains, “when I met you at the pool that day, you said my dive was beautiful and artistic. Then, you mentioned that I put a lot of work in over the years.” Amy replies, “well, it really was beautiful and artistic!” Amy then laughs and tells Ed, “and, you don’t learn how to dive like that by reading the diving board manual!”

Ed asks Amy, “don’t you just love it when you do a two and a half with one twist, and someone who has never dived before asks you, ‘can you show me how to do that?’” Amy laughs, and replies, “yeah. You really want to tell them, ‘just jump off the diving board and do it.’” Ed and Amy walk into the pizzeria, seeing that Pete and Jenny have already arrived.

The two couples take a seat in the same booth where they sat once before. Once everyone decides what they are going to have, Ed and Pete go up to the counter and place the order. Returning to the table, Ed and Pete bring the drinks as their pizza is cooking in the oven.

Jenny takes her glass of wine, telling the group, “watch this.” Running her tongue along the rim of her wine glass, Jenny imitates exactly what Dana once caught on camera and posted all over social media. Pete jokingly tells Jenny, “you’d better be careful. The alcohol police are probably right around the corner.” Ed tells Pete, “don’t look now, but the alcohol police just walked in.” Seeing who just arrived at the pizzeria, Jenny runs her tongue along the rim of her wine glass once again, and takes a sip of her wine.

Seeing more people walking in after Rodney, Jenny comments to her group, “oh wonderful. DDT and the praise band have joined the Pharisees for dinner.” Amy asks, “what’s DDT?” Jenny replies, “Dana, Donna, and Theresa. DDT. In case you haven’t noticed, they’re kind of toxic. Donna and Dana were eavesdropping on us after the meeting, which is why they ended up here. They wanted to see if I would have a glass of wine.” Catching Donna’s eye, Jenny takes another sip of wine, and whispers to Amy, “and, the other girl with them is Leesa Iron. She’s a Pharisee in training. Rodney is making a proselyte out of her. She’s like the perfect match for Rodney Steele. Get it? Iron and Steele.” Pete laughs, and tells Jenny, “I never thought of it that way before.”

Somewhat naive about the situation, Amy casually asks Jenny, “they eavesdrop on us?” Taking another sip of wine, Jenny replies, “yeah, girl. They do. And, they like don’t think I know it. They’re all like watching me right now.” Pete tells Jenny, “you might have a point. Every time you turn around, those three girls are there.” Thinking about what Pete said, Ed comments, “hmm. Amy and I were at the pool a week ago, and I took

pictures of Amy diving from the high board. That girl, Dana, was standing in the water at the end of her lane, staring at us.” Amy adds, “I saw Dana and Theresa in the locker room that night. After the meeting tonight, I told Dana that I saw her at the pool. She denied it, and told me she wasn’t there.” Jenny tells Amy, “that’s because Dana is like the classical dark triad. She’s gaslighting you, girl.”

Ed recalls, “I wonder what happened. Last year, Dana was my lab partner in physics class. She acted so sweet. But, I ended up doing all the work.” Jenny interjects, “see there? More dark triad. She’ll like do anything to get what she wants. And, everything about Dana is always status dramaticus.”

Briefly interrupting the conversation, the waiter brings the order to the group’s table, and asks, “can I get you guys anything else?” Jenny replies, “I’d like another glass of wine, please.” The waiter asks, “is everyone else good?” Looking around the table, seeing no one needs anything else at the moment, Pete replies for the group, “the rest of us are good.” Jenny jokingly asks Pete, “are you saying that I’m bad?” Pete laughs, and replies, “no. I’m saying that you’re excellent.” Jenny tells Pete, “you’re so sweet.”

As she takes a bite of her pizza, Amy asks Jenny, “what’s this about a dark triad?” Jenny explains, “the dark triad is like a combination of being a narcissist, psychopath, and a manipulator.” As if he is reading from a textbook, Pete adds, “the dark triad refers to the combined personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. They are referred to as ‘dark’ because of their malevolent qualities.” Jenny exclaims, “I know, right? That was like a test question last year for Psyc class!” Pete apparently had the definition memorized.

Pete asks Jenny, “why didn’t you mention any of this about Dana before?” Jenny explains, “I don’t really want to gossip about people. But, when they cross the line and start stalking us, I have to like wonder why they’re doing that. And, it’s beginning to annoy me that they take pictures of me drinking wine, and put it all over social media.”

Amy reminds Jenny, “don’t let it bother you, girl. Remember, you reap what you sow.” Jenny points out, “yeah. I know. But, the Bible says we’re also not supposed to do things that make our brother stumble. So, I’m wondering if I should like even have my glass of wine when they’re around.” Amy replies, “it’s one thing if you have a glass of wine, and they think it’s a sin. It’s another thing when they stalk you, looking for what they consider to be a sin, and then put it all over social media as gossip.” Jenny sighs, and tells Amy, “yeah. You’re right.”

Over at the Pharisee's table, Donna tells her group, "I can't believe this. Jenny is on her second glass of wine. I just can't understand why Pete likes her." Jeff, the guitarist from the band, tells Donna, "why would you want to hang around with them, anyway? I'm kind of wondering if they're really Christians." Dana comments, "and, there goes Ed, taking a few pills again." Rodney informs his group, "I did what I could tonight during our fellowship hour. Apparently, nothing of what I said got through to any of them." Dale Gaucher, the band's drummer and perhaps the sole voice of reason in the group, suggests, "just let it go. Maybe God isn't finished with them yet. After all, a week ago, Joe explained how salvation is a process." Dale's comment is the last thing Rodney really wanted to hear tonight.

Ten minutes later, over at Ed's table, the group has finished their pizza. Amy tells Ed, "I'm going to step outside for a minute." Amy steps outside, attracting the attention of those at the Pharisee's table. It is hard for Dana not to notice Amy standing on the sidewalk lighting a cigarette, especially since Dana has had her eyes glued to Amy all night.

Not taking Dale's earlier advice, Dana comments, "there's Amy, standing outside, smoking." Donna tells Dana, "and, the way she's standing there, not even filling out her blue jeans, she looks so sexy." Dana, who is full of jealousy, replies, "thanks for pointing that out to me. I didn't really need to hear that right now." Quickly grabbing her cell phone, Dana takes a photo of Amy, which will likely be posted all over social media before Amy walks back inside the pizzeria.

As they are leaving, Jenny walks over to the Pharisee's table, and boldly tells Dana, "please don't post any more pictures of me on social media. Okay?" Gaslighting Jenny this time, Dana curtly replies, "I never posted any pictures of you online!" Taking her cell phone out of her purse, Jenny brings up a picture of Jenny drinking a glass of wine that Dana posted a few minutes ago, and shows it to Dana. Jenny, who has no problem confronting people, sarcastically tells Dana, "just in case you like forgot, I can see what you post." Jenny smiles and walks away, leaving Dana to explain her actions to those seated with her.