

“Be Careful How You Judge”

John 8:1-11

Most of us have observed a person or a situation and based on what we saw we reached a certain conclusion. But many of us also discovered later that our conclusions were wrong. Why is that? Because we didn't have or know all the facts. We weren't seeing the whole picture. So we need to be careful about the judgments we make, especially about other people.

Hello friend, I'm J. Mark Horst, your host and I welcome you to *Hope for Today*. The program you're listening to is produced by Heralds of Hope, we're an international Gospel media ministry. Each week the Bible teaching broadcasts of *Heralds of Hope* circle the globe in English and 21 other major languages. Thousands are tuning in each week to receive spiritual nourishment and blessing.

The Bible is the only source of lasting hope. It is God's Holy Word. You know as well as I do that we can't rely on the words of men because men change. Think of all the unkept promises people make, maybe even specific promises to you personally. But God is unchanging, He keeps His promises. His Word is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Psalmist, David, said in Psalm 119:89, "*Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.*" You and I can depend on God's Word.

Because God's Word is unchanging and reliable, we share this teaching with many people around the world in different languages in both audio and print. And we receive many testimonies of lives that have been transformed by the power of the Gospel.

Just recently, we learned of an 81-year-old man in Kenya who gave his life to Jesus after reading one of our Gospel tracts in his language. Our ministry partner told us that this man had been in prison for 13 years. Think of it; even when this man wasn't in prison, he still wasn't free. He was a slave to sin, and because of that he ended up in jail.

But just a few days ago he completed his sentence and was released. Now he is truly a free man because, not only has he been released from prison, but he has also been set free from the power of sin! Praise God! Now he is free to walk in newness of life.

Now in just a few moments, we'll present today's teaching, "Be Careful How You Judge." But before we do, let's pray. Gracious God our Heavenly Father, we bow in your holy presence. We acknowledge You as the giver of every good gift. We worship you and praise your name, and we rejoice together that this 81-year-old man has found rest and peace in you through Jesus!

And now, Father, as Dr. Yoder comes to teach us from your Word, open my heart and the heart of my listening friend to receive what you have for us today. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Now, here's Dr. Yoder.

We are all made with the ability to decide. God has placed within us reasoning powers. Those reasoning powers cover the whole of life, every area, and make us continually responsible. Some have developed this ability to a high degree. In the legal profession they are appointed judges, to interpret the laws of our communities and to hand down decisions. Though not as highly developed, every one of us has this ability because we are human. Because of this we must be sure we use our powers properly and impartially.

Most of us judge our neighbors much more harshly than we judge ourselves. It may be because we do not have all the evidence. So, our judgment is unfair of them and most likely unfair of us when we judge ourselves.

During the life of Jesus people came to Him with many of their problems. They wanted help. On several occasions certain persons planned to create a situation which left Him no real choice, no way to decide without violating God's holy law. Such an occasion is reported in John 8:1-11. I want you to see exactly what happened.

- 1 *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*
- 2 *And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them.*
- 3 *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,*
- 4 *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*
- 5 *Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?*
- 6 *This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.*
- 7 *So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*
- 8 *And again, he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.*

- 9 *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*
- 10 *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*
- 11 *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

In this experience we should see the several CONCLUSIONS that are necessary to help us be more careful how we judge.

For example, here is one who is Guilty in Act.

The evidence was proof. They brought her. They said she was taken in the very act. Proof enough so they set her in the midst as a victim. They awaited the verdict. So they went to the law of Moses, a very good and legitimate law. They said Moses said in the law to stone her, that such a one should be stoned.

What's your verdict? What do you say? Here is one guilty, taken in the very act; how shall we judge her? How do you judge her? They were very quick to condemn. Had they not delayed bringing her to Jesus to tempt Him to find out what He would say, they would have stoned her on the very spot. Guilty in act.

But there is also the Guilty in Heart.

They put Jesus on trial, so they did. Instead of answering them immediately He began to write on the ground. We do not know what He wrote, but they kept pressing Him. They kept asking for a verdict. They kept wondering how and what He was going to say. So He raised Himself up and said, "The one who is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her." Then He went on writing.

Now did you notice in the text that they were convicted in their hearts and began to leave, from the oldest to the last? Guilty in heart they were. Surely they found her guilty in act but they were guilty in heart. So they left. It is very important, my friend, in your process of judgment that you search out your inner spirit before you begin to condemn. Yes, it is easy to be very harsh until the case is turned to you, yourself.

After they were all gone, except Jesus and the woman, He looked around at her and said, “Where are your accusers?”

This brings me to the third conclusion: Guilty but Pardoned.

There was Jesus and the woman. She was still waiting for the verdict. When He asked her, “Has nobody condemned you.” she said, “No, no one”. Listen to what He said to her. Jesus spoke to her like this: “Neither do I condemn Thee. Go and sin no more.” He acknowledged her guilt. Yes, He did. But He said, “I’ not going to condemn you.” The One who could have by His verdict thrown the first stone, the sinless One, said, “No, I don’t condemn you.”

Evidently this poor woman was repentant, so He said, “Go and sin no more.” Imagine how she must have felt, deep in her soul, that she was not condemned to death for Jesus had pardoned her. Ah, but He said, “Sin no more.”

When you judge, be sure you consider these conclusions: the guilty in act (and who has not sinned?); the guilty in heart and who must not confess that; guilty but pardoned, who does not want to hear Jesus’ words, “Neither do I condemn Thee. Go and sin no more?”

My friend, if God were to deal with us as we deal with one another there would be no hope at all. But once pardoned, the word of Jesus should restrain us to go and sin no more.

Thank you, Dr. Yoder for that sober warning. My friend, I’m sorry to say that too often I have not been careful enough in my judgment of others. And God’s Holy Spirit has convicted me of that sin. I am so grateful for the mercy and forgiveness of God!

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Now friend, I urge you to tune in next week as we continue study in the Gospel of John. In his teaching, Dr. Yoder will speak on the subject, "We Need Help." You won't want to miss that. And until then, keep looking for that blessed HOPE.