

Jumping To Conclusions

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jno. 8:32, ESV)

Christians are to be dedicated to lives of truth and love. When we base our conclusions on things that may not be true, we risk our lives, our influence with others, and possibly our souls. Let's study the things which make for peace in dealing with our neighbors.

Three reasons to avoid jumping to conclusions:

1. The conclusion may be wrong. Consider all the facts, not just those which support the conclusion you prefer. If the premises lead to the conclusion in a sound and valid way, and the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises, then the conclusion is true. If the points don't add up right, the conclusion isn't supported.

2. The conclusion may be hasty. That is, perhaps you have not heard all the facts to be considered. Remember what is written, "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Prov. 29:20) One might even say it is better to be a fool than to hastily say things he doesn't mean and have to retract them. Something may indeed be true without us yet knowing it.

3. The conclusion may be presumptuous. If we assume things to be true that may not be, our conclusions may not be sound. For example, "I know she doesn't love me because she bought herself a music CD. If she had loved me, she would have bought it for me." Remember the ointment question of Judas. (Jno. 12:4-5)

Three ways to avoid jumping to conclusions:

1. Listen to everything the person says without interrupting. Conclusions are based on hearing all the points. But, if we don't hear or understand some of the premises or didn't consider our biases, have we really tested the conclusion? If you would want people to hear what you say, will you treat them the same way you want to be treated?

2. Paraphrase what the person says in your own words. When they are done speaking, you might say, "If I understand you correctly, are you saying that Christians can smoke but they shouldn't because they should treat the body as a temple of God?"

3. If you are emotionally upset, decide to say nothing until you are calm. In years gone by, if someone received a message by letter that upset them, it was easier to wait a few days to respond in order to cool down. Telephone, Internet, and face to face talks have made it easier to fire off a response when we are agitated. The preacher suggests the following for talking with man and God, "Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few." (Eccl. 5:2) It is often better to be silent. (Prov. 17:27-28)