

MEN'S MINISTRY

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Proverbs 27:17

Judging By The Cover ... By: Jeff Searcy

“Beauty is only skin deep ... its true depth lies just beneath the surface ... things are not always as they appear.” These and other phrases are ones we have heard all our lives. What do they mean? While I am confident our answer to the question “What do these phrases mean?” would be very similar, I truly wonder if we really get it ... if we really apply the answer’s core message to those we meet every day. If we’re honest with ourselves, I think we know the answer.

There was a story that came out in the late 1990s about how Stanford University was founded. The account of the story was that Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford traveled to Cambridge, Massachusetts, the home of Harvard University, in order to speak to the university’s president about erecting a building in honor of their son who attended Harvard but died unexpectedly. Apparently, the president of the university responded rather gruffly to the shabbily dressed ‘country hicks’ and asked if they had any idea how much it costs to build a building. He told them he had over seven and a half million dollars in the physical structures on the campus. Mrs. Stanford looked at her husband and commented that if that was all it cost to start a university they should start their own. Her comment left the Harvard president speechless and the Stanfords went back to California and started Stanford University. While this rendition of the origin of Stanford University is absolutely false, the underlying moral of the story and premise of “never judging someone by mere appearance” couldn’t be truer.

“My dear friends, don’t let public opinion influence how you live out our glorious, Christ-originated faith. If a man enters your church wearing an expensive suit and a street person wearing rags comes in right after him, and you say to the man in the suit, “Sit here, sir; this is the best seat in the house!” and either ignore the street person or say, “Better sit here in the back row,” haven’t you segregated God’s children and proved that you are judges

who can’t be trusted? Listen, dear friends. Isn’t it clear by now that God operates quite differently? He chooses the world’s down-and-out as the kingdom’s first citizens, with full rights and privileges. This kingdom is promised to anyone who loves God.” James 2:1-5 (MSG)

Every day in the business marketplace ... in schools ... in our neighborhoods ... in churches ... people are judged based on their appearance. Of course, I am not speaking only of those who are looked down upon because they don’t quite meet a certain dress code or look. An attractive outer appearance has a similar impact but in the opposite way. How we present ourselves is very important. However, our outward appearance is not the determinant of who we are ... and certainly is not what God looks at. A perfect example is the Lord’s appointment and rejection of Saul as king of Israel (1 Samuel 9, 15) and anointing of young David as the future king (1 Samuel 16). “When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, ‘Surely, the Lord’s anointed is before him.’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’ 1 Samuel 16:6-7 (ESV).

I started at an early age to live by the creed “You only get one shot at making a first impression.” And appearance is a major factor in the impressions, both first and ongoing, that we make. However, one’s outer appearance doesn’t always reveal the “real” person. I have been guilty, more than I would like to admit, of judging someone based on appearance, both positively and negatively. I looked at them through my own filter and not God’s. And it’s interesting and humbling, how God convicted me when I did and how He still convicts me when I do.

“Lord, it is so easy to form opinions and impressions based on appearance. In today’s world, appearance has become so important and a condition of acceptance ... of promotion. Lord, despite what we look like to others and see others as, You know our heart and the people we are and, likely, the people we want to be. Lord, give me the courage to look beyond the appearance to reach others and love them as You did and do. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

I have often said that following Christ is like riding in the front seat of a high-speed roller coaster — with the lap bar up. Join me this summer, right here, as we are going to be hanging out at the amusement park. It is going to be a wild ride. Until then, keep it real ... and Armor Up! **PS**

Jeff Searcy is a highly-energized and radical husband, dad, executive, speaker, strategist, minister of opportunity, outspoken and motivated servant of the Almighty, and an average golfer. For more go to www.jeffsearcy.net.

