

Be Curious, Not Judgmental

By: David Burruss

There's a simple quote attributed to Walt Whitman that has stuck with me lately: "Be curious, not judgmental." It's the kind of line that sounds easy until you really start living it out. Judgment feels natural sometimes. We size people up, put them into categories, and assume we know what's going on. But curiosity, real patient curiosity, takes effort. It asks us to listen longer and love deeper.

When I think about this through the lens of Scripture, I'm reminded of something Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-2: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

Let's be honest, those words hit hard. It's so much easier to judge quickly than to pause and be curious. Judging puts us in control. It places us above someone else. But curiosity? It requires humility. It invites us to learn, to ask questions, to imagine what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes.

When the Pharisees dragged a woman caught in adultery before Jesus, hoping to trap Him, they were full of judgment. Ready to condemn. Jesus, however, was curious. Not curious about her sin because He already knew the truth, but curious about the hearts of those who were so quick to accuse. In John 8:7, He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Can you imagine the silence that followed? One by one, they dropped their stones and walked away. Jesus didn't deny the woman's sin, but He also didn't define her by it. He saw her with eyes full of mercy and truth.

I think about how different our relationships would be if we led with that kind of curiosity. What if, instead of assuming we know why someone is struggling, we asked? What if, instead of labeling someone based on a moment, we listened to their story? Proverbs 18:13 warns, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." Rushing to judgment not only harms others, it makes us foolish.

Curiosity changes everything. It softens our hearts. It opens doors for grace. It allows us to love like Jesus loves, with both truth and tenderness.

So today, maybe we can take Walt Whitman's advice and Jesus' command to heart. Let's be curious, not judgmental. Let's ask questions, listen closely, and offer the kind of kindness that makes people wonder why we're different. Because the truth is, when we stop judging, we start loving. And love, as Scripture tells us in 1 Peter 4:8, "will cover a multitude of sins."

And honestly? The world could use a lot more of that.