

pages of another.

In the Sanhedrin, “The law required the youngest judge, in term of service on the bench, to cast the first vote. The balloting was to continue in this manner from the youngest to the high priest in order that the juror might not be unduly influenced by the examples of their seniors by reason of years of experience and authority.”[5] Due to hatred toward Jesus, this principle was forgotten as they quickly condemned Jesus unanimously instead of one at a time. Judicial systems and employees are prohibited from showing partiality in court (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). The Proverbs’ writer extended the principle to everyone (Proverbs 24:23). James wrote about brethren who were involved in this sin being “judges with evil thoughts” (James 2:4). Their partiality of the rich made them condemn the poor—without giving them a fair trial (James 2:1-9)! Many are so quick to cast off others because they do not look, talk, or act like them or others with whom they like. Some choose to stay with what they know and judge what they do not even if it leads to poverty (Proverbs 28:21). God rebukes the partial (Job 13:10).

God is not partial (Acts 10:34-35) but instead gives everyone a fair trial with equal stipulations. Instead of casting a vote against someone based off preconceived ideas and likes, choose to be loving and merciful to everyone.

Fourth, don’t let favoritism be your standard in judgement.

**Revise Your Book Before You Revise Others’.** It is easy to edit someone else’s book before our own. We could find every mis-defined word, improper punctuation, and wrong sentence structure in our friend’s paper, but avoid proofreading our own. Judgement of the pages of the lives of another must not come before an honest examination of our pages is done (Matthew 7:1-5). What does Jesus teach us from this passage?

*We often see errors in the work of others when the same mistakes are blatantly evident on our pages*

(Matthew 7:3). The word “beam” denotes a plank, while “mote” describes a splinter. One’s sin can be hidden in the hypocritical judgement of another who has committed the same offense (2 Samuel 12:1-7). It is common to bring the accused before the judgement seat when the accuser deserves to be placed there too (John 8:7-9). This was a common plight of the Jew (Romans 2:1, 21-23). A good question to ask is: How can a blind man be helped if the person helping him is blind (Luke 6:39)?

*We often examine our essay briefly but are overly critical of others’ works* (Matthew 7:3-4). Jesus contrasted these hypocrites’ judgement of themselves and others. Of others, they were looking from without and judging them based off of a skewed view. Of themselves they dimmed the light. Often the harsh critic is the one who does that which he is condemning. It is sinful to dim the light on our own hearts while turning up the brightness for another.

*We must look to self BEFORE others* (Matthew 7:5). We must be willing to look inwardly before any outward judgements are made, else we be seen as a hypocrite. Make sure you can pass the test before you start handing them out to others (Matthew 7:5). Self-righteous attitudes are condemnable (Luke 18:11-12)

Fifth, place yourself before the judgement seat before you have another sit there.

Books are meant to be read thoroughly, not to just have their covers admired or critiqued. The next time we read a book lets cover the content before we make an assessment.

#### Endnotes

- [1]<https://studyfinds.org/judge-a-book-by-its-cover/>  
[2]The Greek word translated “malignity” is κακότης and Vine wrote “an evil disposition that tends to put the worst construction on everything.”  
[3]Merriam Webster.  
[4]<https://connectingdotstogod.com/2013/01/29/three-questions-to-ask-yourself-before-you-judge/>  
[5]Rex A. Turner, Biblical Theology Fundamentals of the Faith, Revised Edition, Editor, Don Shackelford, Amridge University Press, 2010, p. 256.

# JUDGING BOOKS BY

*Pages*

NOT

*Covers*



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NOAH OLSON

One study done of 2,000 adults revealed that 57% of people buy or read a book because of the cover, while 80% avoided books because of the cover.[1] Humans are quick to judge and slow to listen or observe. They are judges without evidence, scientists without statistics, and officers without witnesses. There is much danger when men judge according to the flesh (1 Samuel 16:7; John 8:15).

Jesus was falsely accused many times. On one occasion He was said to have had a devil (John 7:20). This statement urged Him to discuss the importance of making righteous judgements as He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

With these words in mind, what are some ways we can following Jesus’ principle?

**Always Be Ready to Think the Best Before Handling a Book.** Maya Angelou said, “When people show you who they are, believe them the first time.” It is wise to look at the cover of one’s life and assume best intentions before worst intentions (1 Corinthians 13:7). A mother’s love for her son is the perfect example of this important command. Her love prompts her to place the best construction on his actions, be willing to listen to him before she listens to accusations about him, and always seek to find ways to muddle the bad out the best she can.

Although assuming the worst in others may be an automatic decision, it is a wrong decision. It is sinful to malign (Romans 1:29[2]). It is harmful to slander (James 4:11-12). It is good to train our minds toward a heightened view of humanity for heavenly wisdom does so (James 3:17). To cultivate such a disposition, try:

- *Loving the bad ones* (Matthew 5:43-48). Bad constructions are often placed on those with whom we dislike, our enemies, or the sinful.
- *Humbling yourself before others* (Philippians 2:3-4). The only reason malignity exists is because of selfishness. The feeling of superiority over a supposed person’s sinful choice is founded in

arrogance and pride.

- *Finding good qualities* (Mark 12:34). Everyone has some good in them, even if it is a little.

Cynicism is harmful, but optimistic observation is helpful. Abraham Lincoln said, “If you look for the good in people expecting to find it, you surely will.”

First, always determine to think the best before you pick up a book.

**Read the Whole Book Before You Make an Assessment.** No one likes a critic who skims the first chapter only to give a one-star rating. To judge is defined as “to form an opinion about through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises.”[3] However, many times forming an opinion is all people like to do.[4] Assumptions and unfair judgement tend only to destruction (Genesis 20:1-17; Joshua 22; Job 21:27-34).

Since no one knows what is in a man’s heart, it is unfair to assume what is in it; God sees the hearts of men (1 Corinthians 2:11). When God’s people heard about a supposed sin in their camp, they were to “enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrong among you” (Deuteronomy 13:14). It is important to judge the cover by the content (Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33). Someone said you know the “root by the fruit.” What questions should we ask to make an honest assessment of others?

- What do they do in their free time (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Peter 4:3)?
- With whom do they associate (Proverbs 13:20; 22:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:33)?
- How do they act around me?
- Is my personal bias affecting my sincere judgement of them (Galatians 6:1)?
- How do they interact with others (Ephesians 4:29-32)?

One said, “fruit cannot lie;” therefore, eat the fruit before you judge it.

Second, determine to read all the pages of someone’s

character before you judge them.

**Don’t Judge the Book by the Previous Editions.** It is common for books to undergo revision. Revisions are done to correct grammatical errors, update statistics, or perhaps to add new information. No one judges a new edition of a book by its older version. Yet, some are quick to judge the new life of others by their previous decisions.

Saul was a bad man. He persecuted and killed Christians. Thankfully God forgave him (Act 9:18; 1 Timothy 1:12-15), but it was not as easy for man to do the same. When Saul came to Jerusalem, the disciples did not believe he was sincerely converted (Acts 9:26). They looked at his past murdering’s and threatening’s (Acts 22:4; 26:11) and judged his present. Barnabas advocated Paul’s sincerity and honesty (Acts 9:27-29), overlooking his past and making an honest assessment of who he was then.

We must not believe sin to be an incurable disease and think that it is something people carry with them all the days of their life. People can be forgiven and leave the old man in the grave. Judging others by their past is like unburying a buried man! Making assessments of others’ dispositions by their past mistakes is not mercy, grace, or love (Proverbs 10:12). Such an attitude is contradictory to Jesus of forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15).

Third, don’t determine someone’s present based off of their forgiven past.

**Refuse to Let Your Love for One Book Make You Hate the Next Book.** It is normal to assess the second movie based on the first movie. Have you ever said, “I know I won’t like this book...I already have a favorite.” Sometimes partiality is the mother of all assumption. This attitude is known to cast the worst connotation upon another because of their adherence and allegiance to someone else. Rightly, Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Justice cannot be for one side alone, but must be for both.” Don’t judge one person’s pages based off the