

The Danger of Judging

John Wesley (1703 – 1791) and his brother, Charles, are largely credited with founding Methodism, the evangelistic movement that swept Britain and later the United States. It started when John Wesley began open-air preaching.

I read recently about a situation in his life that taught him – and us today – a very important lesson.

There was once a man Wesley regarded as miserly, and therefore he had little respect for him. Wesley felt so strongly about this man that, on an occasion when the man gave only a small gift to a worthy charity, Wesley openly criticized him.

Not long after, the gentleman paid a visit to Wesley. The preacher was surprised to hear that this man – someone whom he assumed was simply greedy – had actually been living on parsnips and water for several weeks.



The man told Wesley that, in his past, he had amassed a great deal of debt. Since his conversion to faith in Christ, he made a choice to pay off all of his creditors, and therefore he bought nothing for himself and spent as little as possible elsewhere in order to do so.

“Christ has made me an honest man,” he said, “and so with all these debts to pay, I can give only a few offerings above my tithe. I must settle up with my worldly neighbors and show them what the grace of God can do in the heart of a man who was once dishonest.”

Wesley then apologized to the man and asked his forgiveness.

The story is a wonderful reminder to us. It's easy to find fault with others when we don't know their circumstances or reasons for their actions. It's also amazing how a few facts can forever alter our perception of a situation, as was the case with Wesley.

When we feel compelled to judge, it's a good time to ask God for wisdom and patience to understand the facts.

He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace (Proverbs 11:12).

– Beecher Hunter