

Walk a Mile in His Moccasins

No doubt you have heard – and likely quoted – the proverb attributed to various Native American tribes, which is: *Never criticize a man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins.*

A variation of it is: *Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins.*

Perhaps the saying does originate within the Indian culture, but the precept also appears in a poem written by Mary T. Lathrap (1838 – 1895). Whatever the source, there is wisdom for us to heed. Here is the complete poem by Ms. Lathrap:

*Pray, don't find fault with the man that limps,
Or stumbles along the road
Unless you have worn the moccasins he wears
Or stumbled beneath the same load.*

*There may be tears in his soles that hurt
Though hidden away from view.
The burden he bears placed on your back
May cause you to stumble and fall, too.*

*Don't sneer at the man who is down today
Unless you have felt the same blow
That caused his fall or felt the shame
That only the fallen know.*

*Don't be too harsh with the man that sins
Or pelt him with words, or stone, or disdain
Unless you are sure you have no sins of your own
And it's only wisdom and love that your heart contains.*

*For you know if the tempter's voice
Should whisper as soft to you,
As it did to him when he went astray,
It might cause you to falter, too.*

*Just walk a mile in his moccasins
Before you abuse, criticize, and accuse.
If just for one hour, you could find a way
To see through his eyes, instead of your own muse.*

(more)

*I believe you'd be surprised to see
That you've been blind and narrow-minded, even unkind.
There are people on reservations and in the ghettos
Who have so little hope, and too much worry on their minds.*

*Brother, there but for the grace of God go you and I.
Just for a moment, slip into his mind and traditions
And see the world through his spirit and eyes
Before you cast a stone or falsely judge his conditions.*

*Remember to walk a mile in his moccasins
And remember the lessons of humanity taught to you by your elders.
We will be known forever by the tracks we leave
In other people's lives, our kindnesses and generosity.*

Take the time to walk in his moccasins.

What a world full of love and brotherhood this would be if we could practice when the poet has taught!

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven (Luke 6:37 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter

