



SNAP JUDGEMENTS

PREVIEW

Life is a constant stream of stimuli. Objects, trends, celebrities, news . . . they are all constantly being thrown at us, sometimes so fast we don't feel we have time to react. Except, we are always reacting in some sort of way. We see a new clothing trend and decide if we think it is ugly or not. We are introduced to a new celebrity and decide whether they are our newest obsession. We make what are called "snap judgments." The point is that we do this with the people in our lives as well. We see someone and make a whole host of assumptions about them that can greatly affect how we view them. Yet the question persists: Are snap judgments always correct?

PRAISE

Open up the group for discussion.

- Ask for experiences where others (or they themselves) have made snap judgments and how the situations played out.
- To keep it more lighthearted, you can ask for times when they may have thought a book, movie, or TV show might have seemed boring but turned out to be really enjoyable.

In any instance it's important to understand that we often form opinions and make judgments without knowing the whole truth or having seen the whole picture. We may have watched a show and initially thought it was boring, but learning the full story made us appreciate the show more.

PARABLE

Think of snap judgments as stubborn weeds. They grow quickly, are inconvenient, and form strong roots that are difficult to fully get rid of. Snap judgments are often based on things that provide very little actual substance to a person. For example, science shows that conventionally attractive people are typically seen as being smarter, more trustworthy, and morally good. But we know that a person's looks don't affect their intelligence or any other attribute mentioned. So we must ask ourselves: How would I feel if people made judgments about me based on how I look?

Another major difficulty with snap judgments is that the results can be hard to ignore. Once an opinion is formed, it can be difficult to change that opinion. In fact, maybe you have experienced the difficulty of changing someone's opinion of you. For example, how many of you used to be guilty of doing something when you were younger (like never making your bed or disliking certain foods), and then as you grew older you changed (started making your bed and liking those foods). If this has happened to you, then you know the tendency for people to still think of you in the same light as before, even though you have changed your ways. This isn't a godly principle. God allows us to change. He not only aids us in growth, but He respects it as well. We need to be open and willing to see people as God sees them.

PRESENT

In Mark 4:24 (NIV), Jesus said, "Consider carefully what you hear . . . With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more."

This verse warns us about the harsh reality of snap judgments and explains that however we judge others is how we will be judged. We discussed the frustration we feel when others are unable to acknowledge our growth, so imagine how it feels to be judged in the same way you judge others. We often find it too easy to take the blame off of ourselves, thinking only of the good in ourselves. But it is imperative that we treat others with the graciousness that we treat ourselves. It is also important to understand that this verse of Scripture goes both ways; some of us may not be as good at being kind to ourselves as to others, but it says that how we judge others is how we will be judged. If we approach others with gentleness, kindness, and love, then we will be approached with the same.

PRACTICE

Read Matthew 18:21–35.

This passage shows the consequences of not following Mark 4:24. The servant in the story didn't necessarily make a judgment, but he didn't show the same mercy that was shown to him. In other words, he was eager to receive mercy and graciousness for himself but did not pass that on to others. The servant did not judge by the merciful standard he had been judged by, and as a result he was thrown into prison. He may not have made a snap judgment, but he did make the mistake of believing that his faults were somehow different than his peers' faults, which is a byproduct of snap judgments.

In a way, this story demonstrates the concept of passing it forward. Judgments pull people back; they shut them down. But an open heart and mind allow for growth and healing. They allow us to judge with the same mercy with which God judges us. The meter God uses to measure us is one of incredible grace and compassion. It is one that we should all aim to emulate in our daily lives as we interact with the world around us.

PRAY

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for the mercy You perpetually grant to us. Thank You for the perfect example of what it means to measure others with kindness, love, and an open mind. Allow us to see others as You see them rather than making snap judgments that aren't based on truth. Let us be slow to assess without basis and quick to acknowledge change. God, we thank You for the opportunity to show Your wise and merciful discernment to those around us. In Jesus' name, amen.



PLUS

As an object lesson:

- Before class glue together to two pieces of paper that are different colors and keep the page hidden. Divide the students in half and, if necessary, have them stand on opposite ends of the room so they can only see one side of the paper. Ask them what color they see.

The lesson of the game: Judgments were made and ideas were assumed without having the full picture, and it was probably easy to think that the others were wrong. In reality, neither group was entirely right or entirely wrong, but each had different information and a different perspective.