

APPEARANCE DOES NOT MAKE THE MAN

“It is not only fine feathers that make fine birds.”

- Aesop

Not much is known about the man Aesop, it is even disputed whether he was a real person at all. One thing is for sure, though: Aesop has had many words of wisdom to share, and they still resonate with us today. Most of you are no doubt familiar with such stories as The Tortoise and the Hare, The Fox and the Grapes, or The Boy Who Cried Wolf. In the quote above, Aesop highlights a common problem: appearance does not make the man.

There are really two sides to this issue. First, we often have a problem judging people (and things) by their appearance. It is a well known fact that “beautiful” people tend to make more money than the rest of us. Studies have also shown that taller people tend to make more money than shorter ones. One only needs to briefly flip through a magazine or the TV channels to see the weight given to one’s appearance. On the other hand, those who are not so beautiful, or who don’t have the right clothes or automobiles tend to get looked down upon, or at least over looked. Brethren, we must be careful about this. James warns us against showing partiality (James 2). He labels it as sinful and evil. Do we find ourselves judging whether or not some person will be willing to hear about Jesus based on how they dress? This is both foolish and dangerous. Who are we to judge another’s mind? How many opportunities are we missing by this kind of thinking? There is nothing wrong with appreciating beauty or of being wary of certain types of people, but be careful how you judge!

The other side of this issue is one of disguise. That is, hiding one’s true nature behind a mask. Jesus called out the Pharisees and their hypocrisy by likening them to whitewashed tombs: nice and clean on the outside but full of corruption on the inside (Matthew 23). We must be careful on this as well. It is all too easy to hide behind the façade of a “white collar American” or even a “good, church-going Christian”. Dressing nice and being at services most of the time does not make one a Christian (though not being there certainly *is* a problem!), anymore than putting on a badge and wearing a gun makes one a police officer. It takes more than just the appearance. Jesus went on to say that the heart must be involved. Being a Christian takes much more than just filling a pew and tossing a few dollars into the collection plate: it takes commitment, dedication, and effort.

Do not fall into the appearance trap. Do not judge solely on appearance, and do not pretend to be something that you are not. Make the changes on the inside and they will show on the outside. It is a dangerous game to play; we might fool other people, but we will not fool God. Do not squander opportunities to teach or even invite someone to services because of the way they look. That one may be a future preacher, elder, bible class teacher, or elder’s wife! Open your eyes!

MJW