

## Jumping to Conclusions

(or, “The Leap’s not so Bad, but the Landing can be Very Unpleasant”)

I want to address a very common mistake. We all commit this blunder at times. Sometimes the results are merely comic or embarrassing; other times the consequences can be quite painful. Proverbs 18:13 spells out the problem and the result very clearly:

*The one who gives an answer before he listens – this is foolishness and disgrace for him. (Holman Christian Standard Bible)*

Yep, you know what I’m talking about: Jumping to conclusions. Making up your mind before exercising your ears. Hearing one side of the story and running with it. Assessing motives and assigning blame based on limited information. It’s so easy for us to make this mistake because we assume the little bit that we know is the whole story. Proverbs 18:17 uses a courtroom example to describe the problem:

*The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him.*

See, the problem is that much of the time we never bother with the cross-examination! We hear something, assume it’s the whole story, get all hot and bothered, and then start adding to the problem by passing on our own “analysis” of the situation. The results are predictable: Poor decisions, hot rumors, hurt feelings, disrupted relationships, and *split churches*. It’s easy for us to make such leaps, but the landing does a lot of damage. Bottom line: It’s foolish to jump to conclusions and it brings disgrace on us and on the name of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, let’s quit that! We’re sons and daughters of God and we can do better. Proverbs 19:11 tells us how:

*A person’s insight gives him patience, and his virtue is to overlook an offense.*

So, the next time someone drops their “information” in your lap, do three things. First, *exercise insight*. Realize that you’ve heard only one perspective. If the matter is important, discretely – DISCRETELY! - talk to the others involved to gain their perspectives. Second, *be patient* in forming opinions or prescribing solutions. Don’t rush to judgment. Third, *keep your emotions in check*. Don’t be so quick to take offense. Be a part of the solution instead of just reacting to the problem.

Friends, jumping to conclusions will bring misery into our lives. We’re nuts if we do this!