

Judging, Assuming, and Love – 1 Cor 4:5 & 13:7 (updated from leadership group study 11/2019)

4:5 “do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts”

13:7 love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (NASB)

- Note v. 5b “*thinks no evil*” (NKJV) vs. NASB “*does not take into account a wrong suffered*”
- Note v. 7 in NIV has “*always trusts*” (weekend Q&A: does that mean always trust all people?)
 - o Compare same Greek word for sinners not trusted in Jn 2:23, trust taking time in Acts 9:26

Examples of assuming positively in Scripture:

- Eph 3:2-4, 4:20–24 (ESV): “assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace ... when you read this, you can perceive my insight ... assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to put on the new self ...”
- John 11:31: “When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus’ grave to weep. So they followed her there.” (NLT)

Examples of assuming negatively in Scripture:

- Acts 21:29-30 (NIV) “They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area. The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple.”
- Job 6:29 “Stop assuming my guilt, for I have done no wrong.” (NLT)

“Do and Don’t Assume Motives” (Challies.com): Love *bears all things*, which means it never gives up. It never grows weary of bearing with another person in their best and worst deeds. Love *believes all things*, choosing to believe the best about other people rather than the worst. It puts aside sinful cynicism to assume others are operating out of good motives instead of poor ones. Love *hopes all things* by looking toward other believers with the sincere desire that they are operating out of the best of intentions and the hope that they will accomplish great things for the Lord. And love *endures all things*, by not giving up quickly, but persevering through sin or the appearance of sin. It is quick to forgive, quick to overlook an offense, and slow to cast doubt.

... Here is what I conclude: *It is sinful to assume bad motives; it is sinful to not assume good motives*. So when you see [something] that jumps out at you, don’t immediately interpret it as saying something contentious or defensive. When you read an article or see a video [or text or email that troubles you], choose to grant the grace of believing and hoping and bearing and enduring all things. Think of that person as a brother or sister in Christ and choose to look for the best possible, not the worst possible, explanation.

It’s good to make assumptions if the assumption is that a person’s motives are good; it’s sinful to make assumptions if the assumption is that a person’s motives are bad. When we look at other Christians—their beliefs, their words, their deeds—love calls us to assume the best rather than the worst. Love calls us to regard them with hope rather than suspicion. Out of love for God and our brothers and sisters, we ought to grant them the same mercy, the same grace, the same hope we grant ourselves. [see also James 3:14, 17-18, 4:1-2, Mt 7:1-3]

“Avoiding Assumicide” [in marriage or ministry, www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org 6/22/16]

We make assumptions when we believe something to be true that is either not true or is not tested. It is not uncommon for people to make assumptions about one another... Assumption makers get it right... some of the time. Most of the time, they get it wrong. Wrong assumptions damage relationships... The Apostle Paul, knowing our inclinations to assume the worst, gives practical relational advice in **Philippians 4:8**: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things...”

When [believers] choose to think about things they know to be true and good about [the other person], they are less likely to make negative assumptions. When relational engagement has a “whatever is true” starting point, it is far more likely that the conversation will exhibit love, respect, gentleness, and kindness ...

How do we avoid committing assumicide in our relationships? The cure is simple—ask questions ... learn the art of questioning ourselves first, and honoring others with questions rather than assumptions ...

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, we discover something that Paul practiced which will also help us deal with relational conflict: "... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Before we are able to rightly question our own assumptions, we need to "catch them." Our own assumptions are often unknown to us. Taking "captive" our assumptive thoughts is a skill we can learn that involves asking questions of ourselves to surface our embedded assumptions: What do I believe to be true about [this person's] attitudes? What do I think [he or she] thinks that is fueling my own emotions? Making captive thoughts obedient to Christ involves evaluating our exposed assumptions against biblical truth.

This skill involves self-questions such as: Am I bearing false witness...in my beliefs about his intentions? Are my assumptions...kind and respectful? Am I motivated by love and concern...? Thoughts that are "obedient to Christ" are thoughts that are true, loving, and right.

The "Connected Questions" Skill. I teach a skill to counselors and counselees that I call "Connected Questions." So few people ask the type of questions designed to build relational connection. If they do ask questions, they hop from topic to topic and fail to ask more than two questions that build upon each other ... Honest, curious, connected questions get to the heart. A good question is a short one—fifteen words or less. A better question is one that is open-ended and cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no." The best questions are rooted in a true desire to know and understand and to promote increasing love in the relationship (Phil. 1:9).

Challenges to Getting to the Heart. Some people are more intuitive than others, and their ability to ask questions comes naturally. Others are less intuitive, and they struggle to know what questions to ask and how to respond to what they hear. A commitment to learn the basic techniques of building intimacy—asking and listening—is a requirement for a successful marriage [and other close relationships]. Whether it comes naturally, or takes extra effort to learn, accepting [the other person] for who they are and encouraging and supporting their efforts to change are necessary... for true intimacy ... love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor. 13:7.)

To open a heart shut to intimacy requires a commitment to trust and hope despite the hurt that has been experienced. Such trust and hope reveal that expectations are realistically set and that failure for both parties is acceptable (nobody's perfect!). Trusting and hoping also grows out of faith in the One who is always at work in the hearts and lives of His people to increasingly transform them into Christ's likeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

Join the conversation. How do you respond when your spouse [or others] makes hurtful and false assumptions about you? What benefit do you think you have gained by making assumptions about others' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and intentions? What have you lost?