



The Kulas Kronicle



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Judging a Book by its Cover

I read a [news article about a “Good Samaritan” who returned \\$1,200 cash](#), which was lost, to its owner, but in doing so, he was met with a very rude response. The ungrateful man did not say thank you. In fact, saying nothing at all would have been better than what he did say: "I hope it is all there." The Good Samaritan, who owned and worked at an auto detail shop nearby where the man lost the money, had a scruffy beard, was tattooed, and was dirty.

I assume all of us have been guilty at some level of judging a book by its cover. As I meet new people on college campuses, I get many opportunities to practice withholding judgment. Even after learning my lesson about not predicting what a person believes based on his clothes, hair style, or body language, I still fall prey at times to judging a person by an outward sign. Here are two examples of when I should not have judged.



Garrett and Alex

Alex and Garrett, pictured above, appeared to be two modern-day, laid-back hippies, when I walked up to them at the University of Kansas while they were looking at the Justice For All (JFA) display.

Garrett, sporting the blonde hair and mirrored sunglasses, responded to me by saying, "I don't have an opinion about anything, man." So I turned my attention to Alex, who did want to converse. We discussed the purpose of the display, whether the unborn is a human being, and what constitutes an organism.

When the discussion moved to what constitutes an organism, Garrett perked up and chimed in with a thoughtful perspective. He continued to express his opinions on abortion as well, and the conversation continued for another twenty minutes before they caught a bus. My initial read on Garrett had been that he did not have depth to his personality and that he was not very bright. In that last twenty minutes, he proved me wrong.



Dusty and Vincent

"Babies are amazing for dinner" is what I saw Vincent writing on the Free Speech Board as I approached him. His close friend, Dusty, beside him in the camouflage hat and backpack, didn't improve the Free Speech Board Comments. It was more of the same: "I had a baby once. It was delicious. Free babies on demand."

Based on these two comments, I didn't expect much of a conversation with them and just assumed they would either walk away or make a crass comment. I was clearly judging these two books by their covers.

I asked them both, "Don't you think you should take the important subject of abortion more seriously?" After learning that they were both very pro-life, I challenged them to explain their apparently sinister remarks. Dusty explained that their comments were a reaction to a different statement on the Free Speech Board: "FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND." Dusty thought it was absurd that not only would someone seek permission to kill a baby, but would also expect to receive that procedure for free. So he wanted to "one-up" that absurd idea with an even crazier one. Dusty, Vincent, and I had a heart-to-heart talk about their inappropriate comments. Both of them were embarrassed by their insensitive comments, and I think left with a healthier perspective on how to engage people in conversation on such an important matter.

My challenge for all of us is to go beyond judging a book by its cover with a stranger whom we meet this month. My personal takeaway from these experiences was that spending a little more time to listen with understanding can provide a better understanding of who people really are and what is really important to them.

In Christ,

Paul G. Kulas