

Ask Twice, Judge Once

Curiosity before condemnation.

Track: Community Lessons

Estimated time: 10 min

Related hymn: Hymn V - Ask Twice, Judge Once (/hymns/general/hym-05)

Generated: 2026-02-25 09:40 UTC

Source URL: <https://common-sense-church.com/lessons/ask-twice-judge-once>

Principle: Most conflict is caused by misunderstanding.

Before you decide someone is malicious, check whether you're simply not aligned on meaning. This is how you reduce harm without becoming naive. The Two-Question Rule Before you respond to anything emotional, ask two clarifying questions.

Good questions: - "When you said X, what did you mean?" - "What outcome are you hoping for?" - "What part felt unfair to you?" - "What did you hear me say?"

Bad questions (disguised attacks): - "Why are you like this?" - "Do you always do that?" The Failure Mode: Assuming Intent When emotions are high, we assume motives: - "They're disrespecting me." - "They're trying to control me." - "They're attacking my values."

Sometimes that's true. But if you decide it's true too early, you become the hazard. In The Wild (Examples) Text message reads cold: - Ask: "Did you mean that as blunt, or am I reading tone into it?" - Ask: "Do you want help, or do you just want me to listen?"

Someone says something offensive: - Ask: "What did you mean by that?" - Ask: "Are you open to hearing how it landed on me?"

Work conflict: - Ask: "What constraint are you operating under?" - Ask: "What does success look like from your side?" The Practice (This Week) - Ask two clarifying questions before giving your verdict. - Watch for the urge to "win" instead of understand. Reflection (Optional) Where do you decide too fast that someone is an enemy? Related Hymn Hymn V - Ask Twice, Judge Once