

Megiddo Message

November/December, 2005



Don't be misled. Remember that
you can't ignore God and get away with it.
You will always reap what you sow!
—Galatians 6:7 NLT



How can we know THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH?

*Sanctify them by Your truth.
Your word is truth. —John 17:17*

When the Bible makes a statement about what is right or wrong, that statement is truth because the Bible is the Word of our Creator. No matter who accepts it or rejects it, the fact remains; it is still truth.

How do we teach our young people to respect and honor “truth” in a culture that says there is no truth? How do we teach them to regard truth when they are being told that truth is “what is true for you,” which may or may not be at the same time “true for me”?

*When God makes a statement,
that statement
is true no matter who
accepts it or rejects it.*

Diversity training tells students that it is wrong to make truth claims of any kind, that all truth is relevant. This twisted interpretation of tolerance makes it an offense to even claim to know something is truth, or to judge the ideas or behaviors of another. All beliefs, of whatever nature, must be viewed as equally valid and equally true.

This new definition of truth is being widely taught and accepted in our public schools, our colleges, through the media and all official information published by any government or social authorities.

What might seem like an innocent approach is

actually a total worldview that makes every person responsible for determining what is true in his or her own mind. The result: truth loses all meaning because each person has a different—personal—interpretation.

How can this false view of truth be countered in the minds of our children? Even if our children attend church, we must supplement the church’s instruction with regular, daily talks at home. We can have Bible reading and discussion at the breakfast table. As a family we can have readings that interest the children and tackle worldview questions. Together we can analyze the news, and point out what the outcome of an event might have been had biblical values and biblical principles been applied. Even more than this, we can point out how current events are fulfilling Bible prophecies made centuries ago. God knew what the news would be centuries in advance!

All of us face daily choices, everything from friends to activities, from science projects to social studies. We must teach our children God’s values by pointing out what the culture lacks, and how God’s way is better.

Bottom line: We want our children to learn to critique what they read, or hear, or see, so that before they accept it they will ask, “How would Jesus view this?”

Am I overstating the need to teach values? Just look around you. It is impossible to totally divorce ourselves from the culture. A century ago we might have escaped to a deserted island to get away from it all, but today there is no way to run away from the Internet, the music, the magazines, the media.

Our only hope is to be alert and discerning ourselves, and to teach our children to discern. As committed disciples of Christ, we have to set the example in our own lives, taking Jesus Christ and His teachings for our role model, and watching that we consistently think, speak and act according to the one absolute standard He has provided: the Word of God.

It may be the only way those around us will be able to learn the truth about truth. ♦

Can I ^{Still} Thank God?

You may wonder why anyone who has my faith, or enjoys my blessings, or shares my opportunities should ask such a question. Can I, in my situation, still thank God?

Well, I am one (and I believe I am not alone) who associates thankfulness with the great and the spectacular. If I very narrowly escaped what looked like sure disaster; or if I were suddenly delivered from excruciating pain; or if I inherited some very special treasure I never dreamed could be mine—then I would be thankful.

Or I connect thankfulness with other people and other places. We send emergency relief to stricken inhabitants of the South, or the West or the Far East. They should be thankful.

But I who have so much, can I be thankful?

The question bothers me. It plagues me. It devastates me, simply because I know how irresponsible I have been when it comes to showing a lively gratitude to God for all that He has done for me, both temporally and spiritually.

Did you ever stop to think that an abundance of blessings can actually be a hindrance to real gratitude? that it is possible to be so busy using and enjoying our blessings that we neglect to give thanks to the Giver?

Another difficulty in my thankfulness is the fact that I have so many blessings that I do not know where to begin to appreciate them. If I had only a few, I think it would be easier. As a child I longed for certain things. If only I could have a new dress like Sally's. Or all the strawberries I wanted. Or something special that I could call my very own. But now, God has met all my needs and so much more—and can I still thank God?

I used to think, Why not take a pencil and paper and make a list? But alas!—today I need my computer. The multitude of my blessings is so great that I could not possibly list them all. And the question remains: Can I still thank God, even when I do not know where to begin?

Another difficulty is in remembering the ordinary blessings of my life. I awoke this morning. An alarm clock told me the hour. A common little mechanism;

yet is it not an amazing design, keeping the time day after day with only a tiny battery?

Before I had been awake a single hour, I had already used dozens of seemingly ordinary blessings. Electric light at the flick of a switch; water at the turn of a faucet, hot or cold to suit my whim; a soft, dry towel which I had neither to spin thread for nor weave. A comb, a toothbrush, a bar of soap; comfortable, colorful clothing, a pair of shoes designed for the comfort of my feet—I could go on and on.

I prepared the morning meal for my family and used a dozen more “ordinary” blessings—dishes, spoons, a paring knife, a dishcloth, a smooth clean tabletop, a pantry stocked with good wholesome foods to meet my needs—all such very common blessings in my life, yet any one of which I would miss, were it suddenly removed. Am I thankful?

I pursued my regular work through the day, enjoying so many more common blessings—sunlight, and window glass to let it into my home; a microwave to heat my food; a refrigerator to keep it cool and safe; a broom, a mop, a cloth, a vacuum cleaner; a pencil, a pad of

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Giving
thanks always for
all things to God
the Father.

—Eph. 5:20

Thanksgiving



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FRONT COVER: WHEAT FIELD NEAR BET GUVRIN, ISRAEL. PHOTO BY TODD BOLEN, COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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paper, a printed book—and—God help me in my counting! And when the day is done, a soft-pillowed, clean-sheeted bed where I can rest. Can it be possible—all this for me, while millions crave only a place to lay their heads to sleep or forget their misery, or...to die?

I can walk, and talk, and move. I can think, and work, and pray. I am blessed with health, home, happiness and Christian fellowship; plus hope, promise and understanding—and a God whom I can approach anytime in prayer—what more could I ask?

And then, the thought struck me: If all I call my own were suddenly taken away and I were left alone in the world, alone with only my faith in God to sustain me; alone, with all my creature-comforts gone; alone, with survival my only blessing—could I still thank God?

I think of those who suffer from crippling disease and incurable pain. Were such a life to be mine, could I still thank God?

I think of those who have lost their homes in floods or fires; whose families have been taken by accident or sickness; who cannot enjoy a normal life. And those words haunted me all the more: Could I face it, and still thank God?

I think of how many days I have lived as though I were the source of all my blessings. How often I have said thanks to God for a new day, and then turned around and lived as though I didn't even know God! I didn't feel thankful; but did God ever say we should thank Him only when we feel like it?

Suppose God had the attitude I have had sometimes, that since I didn't appreciate the blessing He would withdraw it. What then? Would I suddenly start counting my blessings?

My mind runs to a bit of history, and I see a group of men and women, suffering, sick and dying. I see this courageous band enduring three and one-half months of agony on the Atlantic in a leaky boat. I see them clearing land and making homes in a place where wilderness and winter and disease all seem united against them. I see them, or barely half of them, observing a time of thanksgiving less than a year later, with a band of Indians as their guests. They were giving thanks—for what? their abundance? their affluence? No, their gratitude was for survival—for life itself, and for the opportunity to pursue life in this new land.

I picture myself in their situation. Could I have been there and given thanks? Could I still thank God, if all I had to be thankful for were survival itself?

Yet the words of these great people of our American history were but echoes of the expressions of thanks offered by our forbears of

another day and place. The Hebrews sang their songs of thanksgiving and praise even in times of adversity and suffering. Their song strikes a familiar chord in our ears. We have heard it before;

"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures for ever" (Ps. 136:1).

Simple words, simple praise, simple thanks; yet I wonder—if I were a captive with Daniel in Babylon, could I have sung it?

Or if I were a Christian missionary in the days of the apostles, despised, forsaken, persecuted, deprived of all that makes life as I know it complete and comfortable—could I still thank God?

Or if I were like Jeremiah, hunted for my life, or suffering in a dungeon; or like Joseph, young and energetic, yet compelled to languish in an Egyptian prison for over two years—and that, unjustly—could I have faced life as it came to them, and still been thankful?

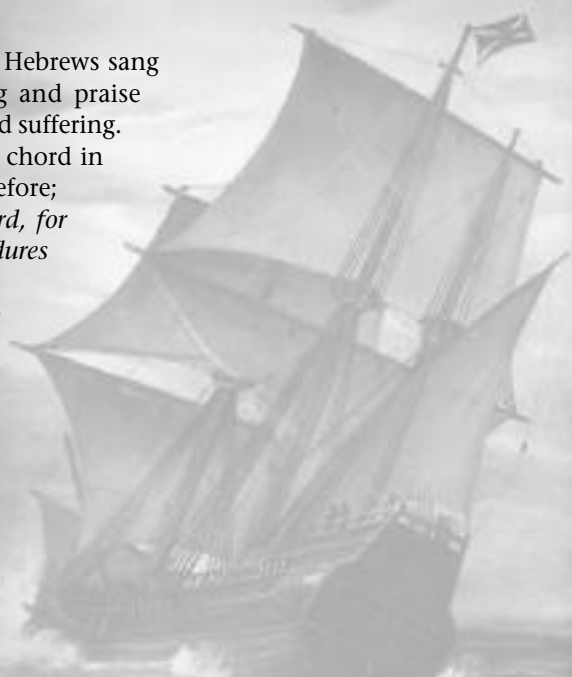
But thank God, these tests are not mine. God has spared me their sufferings. And yet, I have been given my own life, and from it I must learn the same lessons they learned.

God may not always continue giving me the abundance of things I now have. Perhaps even tonight He may see fit to "help" me by taking away something which seems most essential to me. If He does, can I still thank God? Can I still kneel tonight and say, "Thank You, Lord, for all Your goodness to me; Your mercy endures forever"?

I must remember that I am not here just to enjoy life; I am not here to revel in blessings. My objective is not pleasure but the will of God for my life; not comfort but a character like Christ's. And however God may bless me and help me toward that goal, can I still thank God?

*Thou who hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more; a thankful heart;
Not thankful when it pleases me,
As though Thy blessings had spare days,
But such an heart whose pulse
may be Thy praise!*

This is my prayer. Won't it be yours also? ♦



*If all
I call my own
were suddenly taken
away, with survival my
only blessing—could
I still thank
God?*

Here I Raise My Ebenezer

The Jewish people in Old Testament times would have had a far easier time had it not been for the strong and determined Philistines. Long-time residents of that tiny country called Palestine, the Philistines are thought to have migrated from the area now known as Yugoslavia about 1200 years before the time of Christ, and settled for a time on the Island of Crete. Then they tried unsuccessfully to get into Egypt. Turned back by the forces of Rameses III, they settled just outside Egypt on that narrow coastal area known today as the Gaza Strip, an attractive, fertile, maritime plain which is still the scene of strife today.

Physically, the Philistines were big people. When Moses sent Joshua and a small band into Palestine on an exploratory mission, the "giants" the ten spies reported to be inhabiting the land were the Philistines. Goliath was a Philistine in the time of King Saul.

The Philistines were not only big, they were brutal. They had a barbarian energy. They also had an advantage over other nations in that they are thought to have been among the first to use iron in military weaponry. In our own lifetime, archaeologists report unearthing in Philistia the remnants of a sword factory and an iron smelter. The Bible mentions the Philistine iron chariots that terrified Israel in the time of David. Recall that in the fight between David and Goliath, the giant wore armor made of iron.

Samuel Leads Israel to Victory

Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the Lord, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the Lord; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." So the Israelites destroyed their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the Lord.

Then Samuel told them, "Come to Mizpah, all of you. I will pray to the Lord for you."

So they gathered there and, in a great ceremony, drew water from a well and poured it out before the Lord. They also went without food all day and confessed that they had sinned against the Lord. So it was at Mizpah that Samuel became Israel's judge.

When the Philistine rulers heard that all Israel had gathered at Mizpah, they mobilized their army and advanced. The Israelites were badly frightened when they learned that the Philistines were approaching.

"Plead with the Lord our God to save us from the Philistines!" they begged Samuel.

So Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the Lord as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the Lord to help Israel, and the Lord answered.

Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the Lord spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them.

The men of Israel chased them from Mizpah to Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way.

Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer—"the stone of help"—for he said, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!"

So the Philistines were subdued and didn't invade Israel again for a long time. And throughout Samuel's lifetime, the Lord's powerful hand was raised against the Philistines. —1 Samuel 7:3–13 NLT

When the Israelites first entered Palestine, the Philistines were among the major opponents. In fact, from the moment the Jews crossed the Jordan to occupy the land, the Philistines were their chief rivals.

One of the more notable battles occurred just west of Jerusalem. The time is a little more than a millennium before the birth of Christ, when the Israelites were still a group of tribes settled in Canaan and not yet a kingdom in their own right.

The account of this battle is in the book of First Samuel. The Philistines scored an overwhelming victory. First Samuel 4 summarizes the results of the battle:

"So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home; and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain" (1 Sam. 4:10–11 ESV).

Defeat! A crushing defeat! Thirty thousand Israelite men were dead. And some very important men, too, even the sons of the high priest

Eli. In addition to all this, the ark of God, that chest which the Israelites carried with them and which symbolized the presence of God among them, was in the hands of the Philistines.

Fast forward twenty years after that crushing defeat. Once again the Israelites meet the Philistines in battle. This time, under the godly leadership of Prophet-Judge Samuel, Israel wins. It is one of Israel's first and greatest victories over the giant Philistines with all their iron weaponry. And after that great, long-awaited victory, Israel rejoices.

At this time the prophet Samuel did something very significant. Wanting to give glory to God, he set up a stone to celebrate the triumph. He set this special stone on a dry and sandy hillside and called it "*Ebenezer*," meaning "*the stone of help*." Travelers on the road from Mizpah to Shen would see that stone memorial for years to come, that stone which Samuel had erected as an act of gratitude to God.

Almost thirty centuries later the hymn writer, Robert Robinson, caught the idea when he wrote these words:

*"Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."*

Ebenezers! Are there any in your life? in mine? Do we have some moments of victory that we want to remember with a special sense of gratitude to God?

Perhaps we come to a hard place in our lives. Conflict. Challenge. Opposition. With all the help that God has given and all the inner strength that we can muster, we must contend against ourselves and the strongest impulses of our nature. And so we fight—and win! In that supreme moment of triumph, do we not want to raise our Ebenezer, our stone of thanksgiving to the God who has been our source of help?

Our Ebenezers may vary in size and shape, but each is a unique expression of gratitude. Each reminds us of a special moment when, in view of some great blessing—a deliverance, an act of mercy, a fresh opportunity, an act of mastery—the feelings of our heart welled up in praise and thankfulness to Him who made it possible.

What special cause for thankfulness do you have in your life? What is there that you want to mark in profound appreciation for God's goodness to you?

Think over the recent months, when thousands have been buried by devastating earthquakes; when thousands more have lost their homes—and even their lives—to the ravaging of floods. Thousands more are dying of aids. Add those for whom existence is a struggle even for the basic necessities of life; and the countless number who grope in the darkness of superstition or trust in blind hopes—do we not have great reason to thank the God who has blessed us with life? Can't we say right now, "Here I raise my Ebenezer; thus far the Lord has helped me."

In addition to the calamities that by the grace of God we have escaped, can't we all think of some special favors we have had? Have we not had blessings beyond measure? Have we not in our possession this very moment the most priceless treasure on earth, the Book of all books that contains the

key to eternal life? Haven't we ample reason to build right here our Ebenezer to the God who has brought us safely thus far and who has promised to go with us to the end?


The Thanksgiving hymn, "*Now Thank We All Our God*" is itself an Ebenezer. Do you know the circumstances behind it? It was written by a pastor after the village in which he served had been almost totally destroyed by a plague, followed by a famine. In that one year over 5,000 persons perished. Some days he presided over as many as 50 to 60 funerals. A heroic people were almost destroyed. But a few survived, and among them was the man who wrote this hymn. He wrote it first to use as a prayer for his own family at mealtime. Later it was put to music. The hymn is an Ebenezer type of thanksgiving:

*Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices.*

*Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

All of us face some kind of giants in our daily life, some obstacles in the way, some inclinations hard to overpower, some temptations that seem so very much a part of us that they will not go away. It might be a physical woe that brings us to the point of complaining. When we take each problem to God in prayer and find in Him the strength to conquer any foe; when victory arises out of apparent defeat, then let us set up our stone of remembrance and sing:

*"Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home." ♦*



*Find a high moment
of victory in your
life and set up your
Ebenezer to the Lord
who helped you.*



Part Five

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

The definition of appropriate dress is sensitive because what we wear is very much a part of who we are. In today's culture, what we wear is part of our identity. What we wear tells others what we want them to believe about us. And generally speaking, we want them to approve.

But perhaps even stronger than the desire to be approved is the desire for freedom of expression, and one's appearance is viewed by both men and women as a means of self-expression. In simplest terms, "it's nobody's business to tell me what to wear."

What does the Bible say about what one wears? Since *"the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7), does it matter what we look like on the outside? Is self-expression through body piercings, earrings, nose rings, necklaces, tattoos, sloppy trousers, and so on and on, simply a matter of personal choice?

The first question is, who do you want to please? If your goal is to be accepted by your peers or applauded by society, then your appearance is only a matter of personal choice. But if your goal is to be approved by God and Christ, then it becomes a matter of "what does God say?" Because when we look into the Bible, we find definite principles governing dress and appearance. In fact, the Bible says that what we are on the outside is an indicator of what we are inside.

Our clothing identifies us as belonging or not belonging to the culture. If one dresses immodestly, in sheer, form-fitting clothing, he/she is dressing to appeal to people who approve immodest clothing. If one chooses conservative clothing that is plain and neat, he/she may be identifying with people who think more seriously about the deeper issues of life and do not wish to draw attention to themselves.

People dress from a wide variety of motives.

By our choice of clothing we show our loyalties, whether to the present world, or to God.

By the way we dress we show our self-respect, or our lack of it.

By our choice of clothing we display our values—whether we love *"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,"* or whether we love the higher values of virtue, integrity, and honor to God (1 John 2:15-17).

What does God say?

People today have widely differing opinions on what is right or wrong in matters of dress and appearance. People dress from a wide variety of motives—some dress solely for comfort, others for image, others simply to "blend in." The important question to the eternal life seekers is, what does God say?

In the Bible we find both examples and principles. It may seem strange to us in a culture where advertisers promote fashions for men as well as women that most Bible laws are addressed to women. But God's laws apply to both sexes. He has one standard for all. *"In Christ Jesus"* there is *"neither male nor female"* (Gal. 3:26, 28). In ancient times, the women may have taken the lead in wanting to expose, display, attract and appeal. But in today's culture, it seems that fashion and pride dominate both genders, and males are just as prone to "want to look sharp" as their female counterparts.

For both men and women, living worthy of Christ means dressing in a manner consistent with a life of virtue and godliness. Walking "worthy" of Christ means dressing as He would approve. How do we define that ideal?

WHAT I SHOULD WEAR?

1

DON'T dress to conform to the changing fads and fashions of this world.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

Can you imagine the economic crisis if everyone started wearing their suits, shirts, pants, slacks, belts, dresses, jackets, blazers, coats, and hats until they were no longer serviceable? But no, the clothing manufacturers hire designers, who keep their finger on the pulse of the people to pick up what will sell as that ever-changing "new" and "mod" look. Underneath are the media, the entertainers, the designers, the advertisers, the manufacturers, the merchants, and all who serve them, all chasing Dame Fashion—and money.

In the present culture, the serious Christian is a "stranger," an "alien," a "sojourner" (1 Pet. 2:11; 1:17).

2

DON'T dress for pride, vanity or show.

Clothing is for the purpose of covering the body, not to show off one's wealth, social status, or bodily features. Adorning one's person reveals inner pride and vanity, which the Bible says is destructive. *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"* (Prov. 16:18).

"You should not use outward aids to make yourselves beautiful, such as the way you do your hair, or the jewelry you put on, or the dresses you wear. Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God's sight" (1Pet. 3:3–4 TEV).

3

DO dress modestly.

Clothing should promote moral values and upright conduct. The Apostle Paul said, *"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing"* (1 Tim. 2:9).

Modest means not appealing to sensual tastes; not self-exhibiting, not suggestive, not form-fitting or exposing one's body.

4

DO dress gender specific.

Women should look like women; men should look like men. The modern "look-a-like" idea is not endorsed by the Bible. God's law to the Israelites was, *"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God"* (Deut. 22:5). This law does not allow women dressing like men, or men dressing like women. The Lord says of all such, "I hate it."





BIBLE PRINCIPLE 1 **DON'T dress to conform to changing fads and fashions.**

The majority of people seem reluctant to be different. What can be wrong with wearing fashionable clothing, or changing one's clothing with the fashions? *Everybody does it!* And if some choose to dress more conservatively because of their commitment to God's standards, aren't they alienating themselves from those to whom they want to witness?

This may seem like good logic, but man's reasoning is not God's. The Bible gives guidelines that one wanting to please God must follow. What is more important: the directives in God's Word, or the dictates of fashion and the culture?

One important guideline in the Word of God is found in the words of the Apostle Paul: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom. 12:2). Or as phrased by J. B. Phillips' translation: *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within."* Yet, there is a built-in fear of being ridiculed, rejected or criticized. The natural reaction is, Why take the risk?

The issue is, shall I listen to the culture and conform, or shall I follow the guidelines of the Word of God? Whose approval do I want? Who is setting my standard?

To be Christ's representative takes courage. Not to conform to what is popularly accepted takes courage. It takes courage to stand out and say, "I'm not changing the way I dress just because the style changed." It takes courage to wear an acceptable style of clothing year 1, year 2, year 3, and year 4 after that style has been replaced by a new design. It takes courage to say, "I am choosing to wear these clothes because they are neat and becoming, and consistent with my desire to please God. Whatever others say, I have to be right with God."

It takes courage for a young person to say no to the fads that seem so compelling. Why be different? Because the Bible says, "Do not conform."

Ask yourself, What is more important, to be accepted by my peers, or to know that I am pleasing my Creator?

BIBLE PRINCIPLE 2 **DON'T dress for pride, or vanity, or to draw attention.**

"A proud look" is at the head of the seven abominations (Prov. 6:17). Again we read, *"Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 16:5). Dressing to adorn one's person, using fancy or extravagant clothing to draw attention to one's self, is not God's way. Dressing to adorn attracts the attention of the worldly-minded, not the godly.

Adorning one's person is usually motivated by pride and a desire to draw attention to oneself or one's clothing, and the Bible has very specific commands against human pride. *"Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall"* (Prov. 16:18).

The Bible has many examples of those who dressed to show off themselves, and they are not characters any Christian wants to emulate.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the use of jewelry and eye-catching clothes often accompanies immoral behavior.

◆ Jezebel, the unscrupulous queen of Israel, *"painted her eyelids and fixed her hair"* (2 Kings 9:30 NLT) shortly before she was thrown to a disgraceful death.

◆ God's Prophet Isaiah condemned the daughters of Zion for wearing *"tinkling ornaments"*—chains, rings, bracelets, pendants, headdresses, leg ornaments, etc.—and having no heart to fear and obey God (see Isa. 3:18–23).

◆ The Prophet Jeremiah used the allegory of a seductive woman with painted eyelids and decked with ornaments of gold to represent the nation of Israel when they had abandoned God and were trying to attract idolatrous allies (Jer. 4:30).

◆ In the book of Revelation, the Bible emphasizes the attire of two symbolic women: the great harlot, and the bride of Christ. Notice the contrast in their clothing. The harlot is pictured as wearing expensive jewelry and the finest scarlet colored clothing, while the bride of Christ is dressed in *"the fine linen clean and white,"* representing the righteousness of the saints (Rev. 17:1–4; 19:7–8). The great wealth and extravagant finery of the harlot only reinforced her evil character.

◆ Both the Apostles Peter and Paul in their Epistles contrast the simple, unadorned dress of Christian women with the elaborate ornamentation of those belonging to the world. Both associate simple, modest clothing with godly character, saying that eye-catching hair styles, jewelry and costly apparel are inappropriate for women professing godliness. Both warn Christian women against adorning their person, adding that outward glitter and ornaments are inconsistent with the inward ornaments of the heart—a quiet spirit and good deeds (1 Tim. 2:9–10; 1 Pet. 3:3–4).

What is the message to the world? That those who

dress according to biblical guidelines live to glorify God, not to draw attention to themselves.

BIBLE PRINCIPLE 3 **DO dress modestly.**

This command comes directly from the Word of God: to dress *"in modest apparel"* (1 Tim. 2:9).

What is modest? Basically it means reflecting moral values, not exposing or displaying the human form. (The term "modest" is *kosmios* and means: "well-ordered, becoming, dignified, decorous; showing inner self-discipline and a humble attitude."—*Strong's Greek English Lexicon*.)

□ **"Modest" means dressing to cover the body.**

The earliest biblical record of dress is that of Adam and Eve. Although we believe this portion of the Bible is an allegory, it clearly indicates that God wanted His people to be properly clothed. Adam and Eve *"sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"* (Gen. 3:7). But this did not satisfy God. He wanted them to have something more, and so He made them *"coats of skin, and clothed them"* (Gen. 3:21). According to Strong's definition of the Hebrew word translated "coat," it was a "complete covering of the upper and lower parts of the body; a tunic, or skirt-like garment."

Several incidents in the record of the Israelites' wilderness days show that God wanted His people to have their bodies covered.

Those who served as priests in Israel had to conform to a detailed dress code so that their bodies were covered in a dignified and distinctive manner (see Exodus 28). The Levites also wore special clothing on many occasions.

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the law for the people, and Aaron and the Israelites built the golden calf, we read that the Israelites *"corrupted themselves"* (Ex. 32:7). God severely condemned and punished them for this transgression, and thousands died. Along with the transgression of making and worshipping the image, we read that the people were dancing "naked" (Ex. 32:25). This description implies unrestrained conduct, running wild or open defiance of authority and may or may not have included actual nakedness (Strong's Lexicon). But Canaanite religions often involved naked or near naked socializing—one reason why God wanted His people to have no part whatever in any Canaanite religion or religious rites. He wanted a consistency between the inward life and the outward appearance. His people were to be separate (Lev. 20:26), and not adopt the practices of the Canaanites.

□ **Modesty is dressing with respect for God and one's self.**

Underlying modesty is a reverent, God-honoring approach to property that rightfully belongs to God. It is putting a spiritual value on what one wears because

one's body is to be an instrument of service to Him and others, not for one's own pleasure.

□ **What is not modest?**

Form-fitting clothing is not modest.

Clothing that is loud and conspicuous is not modest.

Clothing that is sheer and transparent, exposing one's form is not modest.

Clothing that draws sensual images to one's mind is not modest.

When God made laws for ancient Israel, He included a command specific to the modesty of His priests who served in His tabernacle. The altars where they officiated daily were to be built in such a way that the priest did not have to walk up steps. *"You may not approach my altar by steps. If you do, someone might look up under the skirts of your clothing and see your nakedness"* (Ex. 20:26 NLT). Did God care about modesty? Most certainly He did!

Modesty prohibits any clothing that might be sensual or suggestive. It means showing respect for God, for others, and for oneself, because our bodies are the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16–17), and should be treated as God's property; they do not belong to us.

Christians are called to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, and wholesome (Phil. 4:8). As Christ's representatives, they are called to emphasize what is spiritual and what is important to God, not what belongs to this world.

BIBLE PRINCIPLE 4 **DO dress gender specific.**

This may sound strange in the twenty-first century, but the Lord had a law in ancient Israel which addressed this very point. *"A*

woman shall not wear anything

that pertains to a man nor shall a man put on a

continued on page 12



The Eye In Your Pocket

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. —Prov. 15:3

If you have a dollar bill with you, you might be interested to know that you have an eye in your pocket. Perhaps you never noticed, but you will find it circled by rays of light at the tip of the great pyramid engraved on the back. This emblem

was placed on our currency by the government as a reminder of the discerning all-seeing Eye of the One who never sleeps.

Perhaps many Americans do not care to be reminded today, but the facts have not changed. The Lord's eye is still open; He never sleeps.

It speaks the Biblical truth that *"the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Prov. 15:3).

There may be yet another reason why the symbol is so important as it is displayed on our currency. It reminds us that God sees our motives. He sees how you spend that money. He sees if you use it honestly, or with selfish intent. He sees your thoughts as carefully, silently, perhaps unknown to others, you turn that money

into the goods or services you think you need.

How we spend our money is one of the things that shows what our motives are. God sees the intentions of our heart and knows how we spend it, whether it is for ourselves or others, whether we are making the right use of what we have.

When Jesus watched the people as they brought their offerings to the temple, He saw the rich casually dropping in their offerings—large amounts, but little sacrifice. It was all spare money; it cost them little.

Then He watched as a poor widow dropped in her two coins worth about one-half cent. Whom did He commend? What was He judging? Not the size of the gift but the amount that remained. *"For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had"* (Luke 21:4).

God has made us stewards of His property. Next time you buy something, remember there is an Eye in your pocket. ♦

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

continued from page 11

woman's garment; for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God" (Deut. 22:5).

We hear so much today about unisex fashions, unisex apparel, unisex clothing, as if to minimize the distinction between men and women. Here again, God's law is different. His law does not allow women dressing like men, or men dressing like women, or any of the modern look alikes in men's and women's clothing. The Lord says of all such, *"I hate it."*

The modern "look alike" style,

men looking like women and women like men, may be dominant in the culture, but here again God's way is different.

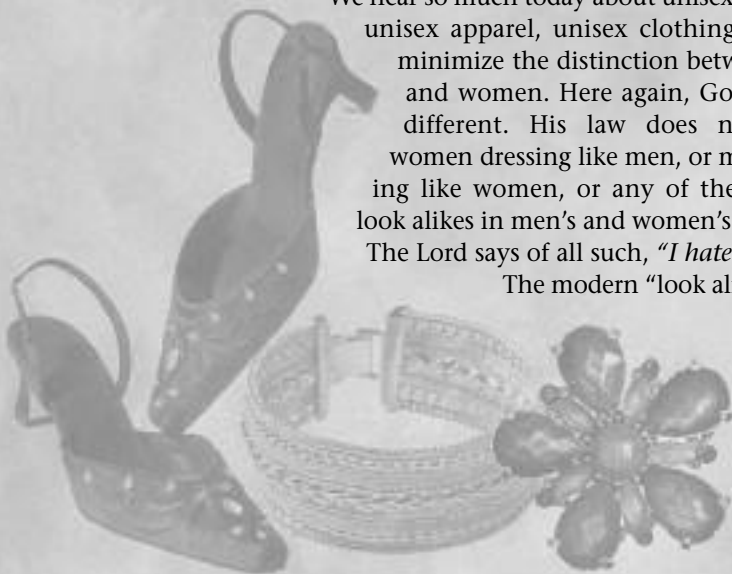
In Summary

A Christian's clothing should be neat, dignified, and orderly, reflecting one's inner moral values. Clothing also affects conduct. Appropriate dress encourages appropriate behavior.

God calls His people to a high moral standard, which means *"saying No to ungodly and worldly passions"* (Titus 2:12 NIV). It means denying ourselves things that we might naturally enjoy, because we have a higher commitment.

Someone will say, "What I wear is no one's business." But one's choice of clothing reveals one's desire to conform to—or resist—a godless, unrestrained culture.

What is the underlying principle for all who want to please God? *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor. 10:31). ♦



Why Katrina?

What was God's role in the tsunami and in hurricane Katrina? We really need some help here when our "unbeliever friends" confront us with this issue.

I've heard about God corrupting the earth as part of His punishment for the Original Sin, but what I don't know how to answer is the fact that He always picks Florida and that part of the country for most of these hurricanes. Why would He do that?

Man has free will, but there can't be such a thing as geological free will. I tried to say that Nature = Satan, but did I get laughed at!

Can you help here?

We, like you, have heard sincere, religious people stating that God corrupted the earth and the human race as part of His punishment for "original sin." We have even heard that the sin of Adam and Eve is the root cause of such events as hurricanes and tsunamis. Such conclusions are not supported by the Bible. God is fair and just, and has promised to reward or punish only according to what that person does, not what his greatest, greatest, greatest grandfather Adam did. There is nothing in the Bible that says that sin, or the guilt of sin, is inherited. (For evidence on this subject, send for our booklet on, "*What Must I Do To Be Saved?*")

And since God was not responsible for corrupting the earth or condemning the race for the sins of Adam and Eve, He certainly is not punishing any specific area, i.e., Florida, by sending them hurricanes.

But neither has God promised a given amount of life or happiness to every person who happens to come into existence. The same God who designed and created the universe set all things in order according to definite laws. The human race has been many centuries discovering these laws, to say nothing of the idea that these laws just happened, or that they were the result of man's designing.

One such law is the law of gravitation. Our world is so constructed that all objects heavier than air tend to gravitate toward the center of the earth. A stone is dropped, and it falls to the earth. A man jumps from a sixth-floor

window to his death on the pavement below. An airplane, a body heavier than air, loses its momentum because of a mechanical failure, and crashes to the earth, claiming many lives. Did God do it? Did He create the force of gravity to kill? God did not, for the same law which caused that man's death preserves life. By the same law we are able to walk and move, to rest and work. We cannot condemn the law; but when that law is violated, we suffer harm.

Tsunamis, floods, typhoons, earthquakes, tornadoes, lightnings, droughts are all the result of the forces of nature, and are part of the world God created. They are natural phenomena, resulting from the existence of laws He set in motion. These laws are constantly building up and tearing down the surface of the earth. They were not designed to destroy life, but when people happen to be in their path, those people suffer or die.

Why does God allow it? The present world is not a perfect world. But God's whole creation has purpose. Everything is set up for the fulfilling of that purpose. Ultimately God will have a perfect world, filled with happy immortals. Selecting and developing these individuals from among the human family is His chief concern. Outside this selection process, "time and chance" happen to them all (Eccl. 9:11). No exception.

God has set the forces in motion, and at the present time He does not choose to openly interfere or redirect those laws; thus events take their course.

God, in His magnificent design, has made it possible for our environment to repair itself, within some limitations, while humans abuse it. For example, there must be about 22% oxygen concentration in the air we breathe to support life. Also, through the cycles of weather a fresh water supply is maintained, though abuse has done harm to some of the aquifers.

The landscape which helps protect the gulf area from violent storms has been largely destroyed for the sake of human "progress." Due to the earth's design, the Gulf region naturally has a lot more severe storms than in some other areas. If we choose to live there, we must use our God-given abilities to make provisions for these storms; and our responsibility includes caring for the buffer zones God put in place. Scientists knew that destroying these areas would intensify the potential for destruction by storms, but we did it anyway. It is not God who brings the disasters upon us, but simply the chance happenings of the forces of nature, along with the abuse and negligence of people. ♦

FAITH *in Action*



by RUTH E. SISSON

SUCCESS IN EPHESUS



Read Acts 19:10–20

Paul's outstanding success in Ephesus may have been due in part to his many miracles, especially in view of the fact that the brethren there had not previously even heard of the Holy Spirit (19:2). The miracles were of two kinds, which the Bible describes as healing the sick and casting out demons.

While we today recognize casting out demons as the curing of mental illness, in the ancient world people did not understand illness of the mind. They thought it was caused by some demon in a person that could be removed by a process called exorcism. When attempting to cast out a demon, exorcists would list the names of many gods or important people, hoping one of them would produce the desired results.

In Acts 19, we meet seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who were exorcists. Watching with jealous eye Paul's successful miracles which he did in Jesus' name, these exorcists tried to counterfeit Paul's power by adding Jesus' name to their catalog of names.

1. What did the sons of Sceva attempt to do? (19:13–14) _____

2. What was the result of their attempted exorcism? (19:15–16) _____

We do not have enough information to understand fully this incident. But it seems clear that these sons of Sceva, being Jews and not believing in Jesus, were using Jesus' name irreverently. It may be that what happened was God showing His disapproval of the charlatanry of Sceva's sons. In any case, the account sounds as though the demon, or the one said to have been possessed with the demon, jumped on them. If this was a divine demonstration of authority, it was as if to say to the sons of Sceva, you are trifling with God Almighty, and He does not tolerate such scandal.

3. What was the result of the sudden rebuff? (19:17) _____

Acts 19:10–20 (NKJV)

10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."

14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

“Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified”—extolled and exalted, not degraded. The people realized that the God of heaven had superior authority, and that His name was not to be treated lightly.

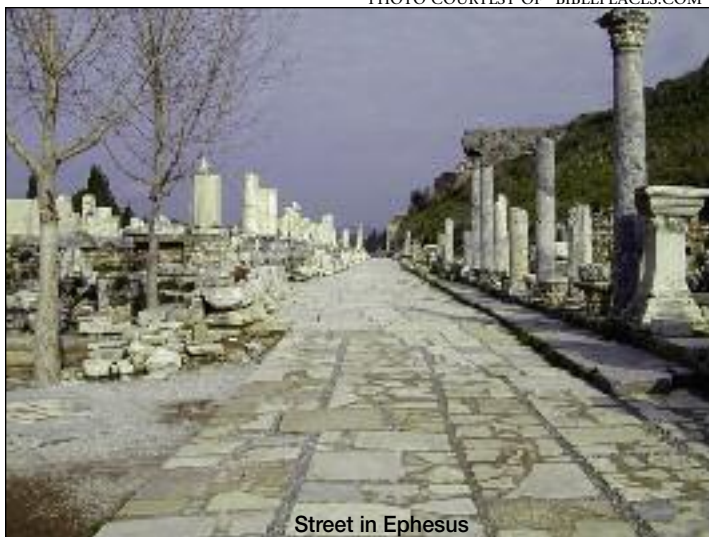
4. What was the effect on those *who had believed* Paul’s teachings? (19:18) _____

The open exposing of the counterfeit healers brought about some dramatic changes, even in superstition-ridden Ephesus. Acts 19:18 indicates that the people *“who had believed”* were willing to make a clean break with their sinful practices, even to the point of destroying their books of sorcery and magic.

Whether all the book burners became serious, long-term believers or whether some were only caught up in the emotion of the moment, we are not told, but it was a dramatic move and a big—multi-million-dollar—bonfire by modern standards. When the value of the books of magic was counted, it totaled “50,000 pieces of silver,” which someone has equated to the total salaries of 150 men working for a whole year. These people were demonstrating clearly that they were leaving their past behind them, and were ready to seek a new way of life.

It is also interesting to notice how seriously these new converts were taking their faith. Those who burned their books of magic were burning their source

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Street in Ephesus



Insight

A Death Blow to Superstition in Ephesus

First-century Ephesus, like many other cities of the time, was a center for all types of superstitious practices. The people thought that their magic formulas gave them happiness, wealth, and success. Superstition and sorcery were common.

The law of God clearly forbids all such (see Deut. 18:9-13). Those who were becoming followers of Christ had to leave all superstition and magic behind.

The seven Jewish men who tried to imitate Paul’s power inadvertently helped his cause by bringing their practices of magic into disrepute.

What if God were to show a similar expression of His power against 21st century superstition? His view has not changed. He still calls it an abomination.



Take heed

Superstition in the Church

Ephesus or Athens have nothing over present-day superstitions. The Prophet Jeremiah had to counsel the people of his day: *“Do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers”* (Jer. 27:9).

When Paul saw the religious confusion at Athens, he described it as their craze either to *“tell it or hear some new thing”* (17:21). They had reverence for all kinds of deities, religious notions, fads, and claims, in short, a mindless reverence for a mindless religion with a love for newness and novelty.

The city of Ephesus had much of the same, where exorcists regularly dispelled demons in an attempt to heal the mentally challenged. To make their rites effective, they would perform them in the name of some powerful personage, whose spirit was supposed to overpower the evil spirit and make him exit.

Is our modern world any different, where instructions are sold on how to get rid of ancestral demons and curses and do “spiritual mapping”? Astrology is a growing business, along with horoscopes and psychobabble theories. Many religious leaders claim direct encounters with God and spiritual techniques for gaining access to and control over the secrets of the universe. Claims are even made for spiritism in Christian churches.

When the new converts brought their books of magic and burned them in the sight of everyone (19:19), they were demonstrating their faith by their works (Jas. 2:17). Convinced that their former lifestyle had been wrong, they were willing to be done with it, even though it had been a profitable source of revenue.

Bible Text: Acts 19:21–41

21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."

28 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.

31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.

34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

35 And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"

36 Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.

39 But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."

41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

of livelihood. It was a clear way of demonstrating their faith in the teachings of Paul and his message that they needed to take action about the things they believed. It is one thing to say we hate our sins, and another to leave them behind without a backward look.

If Ephesus was a center of superstition and sorcery, it was less so after the preaching of Paul and the resolute decision of some of the new believers. And when some charlatans tried to use the name of Jesus in their trickery, and their actions backfired, as it were, when the one whom they were supposing to heal jumped on them, tore off their clothes and beat them, likely more than one dealer in witchcraft and magic abandoned the business for fear of a like experience.

"So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed," even in Ephesus (19:20).



(Right) It was on this marshy site that the renowned **Temple of Artemis (or Diana)** stood in

Paul's day. One column has been reconstructed to give some concept of the size of the great edifice. Marble steps surrounding the building platform led to the high terrace which was approximately 260 ft by 430 ft. It was a vast structure, four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. It had 127 columns, each 60 ft high, adorned by the most gifted sculptors of the day. The **Temple of Artemis** was listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient



Silversmiths in Ephesus who had a thriving business making small models of the the goddess Artemis (or Diana) feared that the spread of Christianity would ruin their trade.



UPROAR!

Paul vs. The Silversmiths



Read Acts 19:21–41

If the teaching of the Apostle Paul faced a challenge from the charlatans and Jewish pretenders, it faced an even greater challenge with the businessmen and merchants of the city of Ephesus. Touch a man's religion, and you get his ire. Touch a man's pocketbook, and you get his axe!

The glory of Ephesus, in the view of the ancient people, was that it was the home of the goddess Diana, or Artemis, who was supposed to have fallen from heaven. It was more superstition, and this time it was big business with large monetary interests.

Each year people from many parts of the empire traveled to Ephesus to be part of the ceremonies at Artemis' temple, and many of these people bought silver images of the goddess as souvenirs or good luck charms. From the manufacture of these images, the silversmiths of the city earned a good living.

5. When Demetrius saw the interests of the silversmiths threatened, what did he do? (19:25) _____

6. On whom did Demetrius blame the business slowdown? (19:26) _____

7. What did he say Paul was teaching? (19:26) _____

8. Demetrius observed two effects of Paul's teaching. What were they?

(19:27) _____

9. Why do you think Demetrius appealed to their sympathy and love for the goddess Diana? (19:27). _____

Demetrius would have made a good modern-day union leader. Calling a meeting of the silversmith guild, he appealed to them as those who had common interests at heart, and presented a winning argument. First he reminded them that they all lived by the sale of the images of Diana. More shrines, more money. He immediately followed with a similar statement of the fact that they were experiencing a serious slowdown in business. Obviously the cause was the teaching of Paul, who had recently come to their town. And Paul was saying that their gods were no gods. The immediate effect of this reasoning, had Demetrius stopped here, would have been to attack Paul.

But Demetrius was keener than this. He wanted his argument to reach further than merely an attack on Paul. So his next statement was to rally his hearers to the support of the great goddess Diana herself. It was a turn from finances to faith. The inevitable conclusion was never put into words, but the

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When Paul's missionary success in Ephesus began to damage the silversmiths' trade, Demetrius organized his colleagues in an attempt to convince them and the citizens that Paul and his associates were not only ruining their trade but threatening the worship of their goddess Artemis.

People quickly gathered and soon formed a rioting mob, making for the theatre (left), a giant structure which seated over 24,000 people.

Pandemonium reigned in the theatre for two hours, with the crowd shouting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," before city officials managed to quiet them.

The Great Theater of Ephesus was an important part of city

case was so carefully worded that it drew from the listeners not a campaign against Paul but a rallying crusade for Diana, the source of their revenue.

10. What was the cry of the craftsmen? (19:28) _____

11. What was the result of the rallying call? (19:29) _____

12. How did this affect Paul and his companions? (19:29) _____

What followed was a full-scale riot. *"The whole city was filled with confusion."* Emotion let loose, and people shouted without reason or restraint. They rushed into the great amphitheater, shouting and yelling. And in their confusion, *"some cried one thing and some another, and most did not know what they were shouting about"* (19:32).

When Paul wrote later to the Corinthians that he had *"fought with beasts at Ephesus"* (1 Cor. 15:32), was he recalling the uproar caused by the silversmiths?

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A closer look

Accurate Details

Luke's accuracy in detail is noticeable throughout this account.

First, as capital of the Roman province, Ephesus was under the supreme governorship of the proconsul. The townclerk could certainly say, in a city such as Ephesus, *"The courts are open, and there are proconsuls"* (19:38).

Second, Ephesus was a free city, retaining its own democratic Greek constitution. The city was nominally governed by "the crowd," (19:30), who gathered in its assembly (19:32), which met apparently as a *"regular assembly"* (19:39), three times a month.

Third, the executive officer of the city was the townclerk (19:35), who had official authority to call and dismiss the assembly.

Fourth, as a religious center, Ephesus was the seat of the religious confederacy of the cities of Asia (19:31).

"The whole story is so vivid and so true to life that it is impossible to doubt its historicity" (*Interpreter's Bible* 9:259).

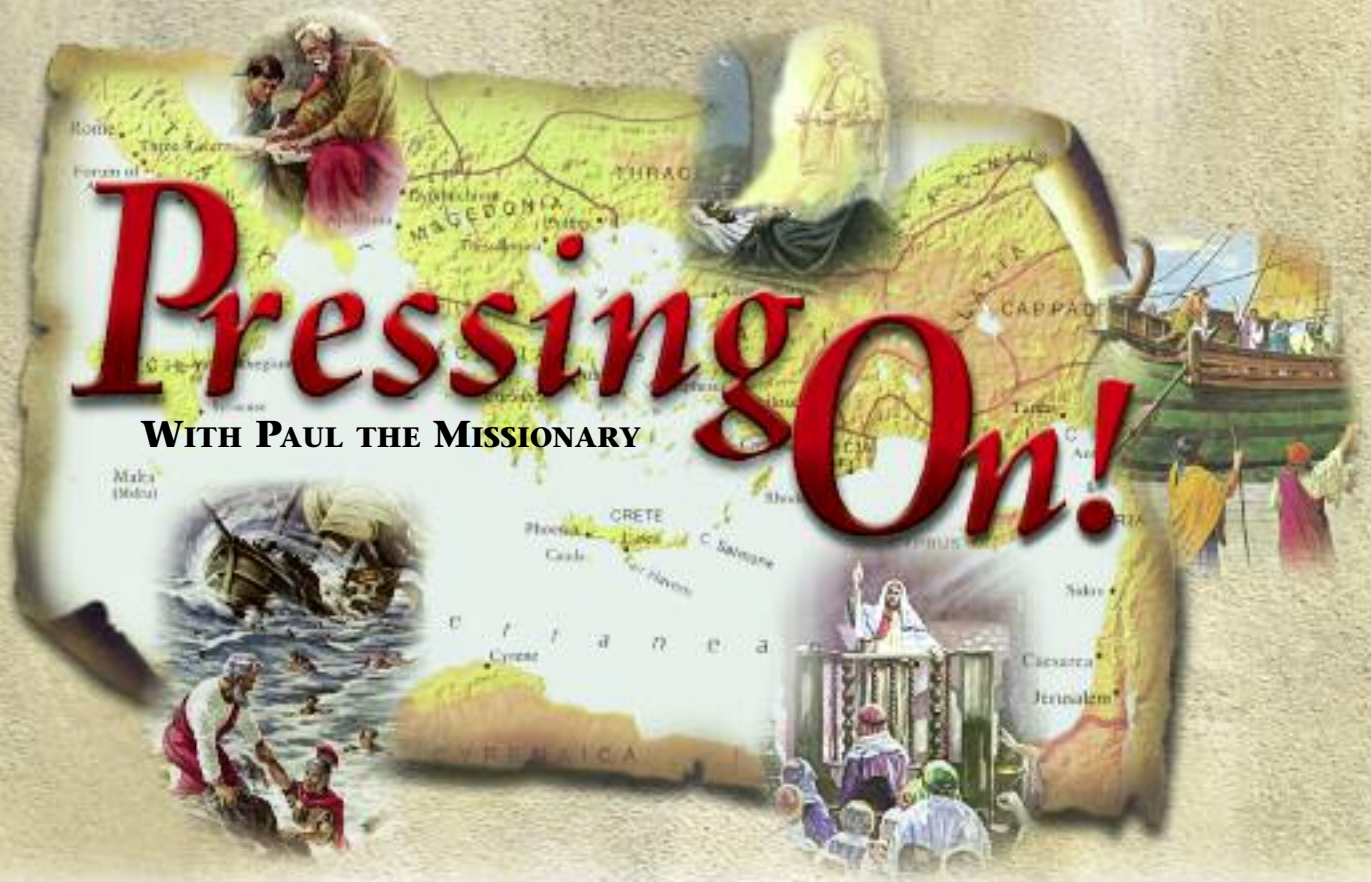


Insight

What is Important?

People seem always to be touched by what touches their pocketbooks. When money is involved, the issue becomes important. What is bad for business should obviously be opposed, regardless of its social, moral, or religious implications. This was the thinking of the residents of Ephesus, who derived revenue from the prosperity of their goddess Diana.

It was inevitable that the teachings of the Apostle Paul about Christ would clash with the interests of the worshippers of Diana. Her temple in Ephesus being one of the wonders of the world, her worshippers were numbered by thousands and thousands. Images of the goddess could be seen in almost every home, and scores of silversmiths in Ephesus kept themselves busy and wealthy making images of the goddess to sell to the thousands of pilgrims who visited Ephesus every year.



Chapter 2: Ambition and Personal Sacrifice

NARRATOR

Rumor has it that the Apostle has been released after two years' house arrest. There is also a more ominous report that the Emperor Nero is about to move against the Christians, making them the scapegoat for the recent disastrous fire in Rome.

*But first, a flashback of six months, and we see the great missionary "in his own hired house," guarded by a soldier, who sits in a corner, uncomprehending and silent. **Paul** wears a light chain attached to his wrists. The furnishings are simple: a table, chairs, and a lampstand. Paul, his hair and beard now quite gray, is seated across the table from **Lucius**, a richly-dressed young Roman patrician, a convert to the Way. The young man's face is serious, even sad; the two men are engaged in serious conversation. The problem is that of ambition and personal sacrifice.*

Paul: (fatherly) You did well for a season, Lucius; what is hindering you now?

Lucius: It is this, Sir. The Way is narrow, but I expected that. It contains discipline, but as a Roman I can take that. Even welcome it. But it also calls for a great deal of personal sacrifice.

Paul: Can you not also make that? It is only a matter of exchanging the poorer for the better.

Lucius: I know we are supposed to look at it that way. But try as I will, I can't avoid the question, Is it really worth it?

Paul: (with deep conviction) I believe it is. It is worth everything, if we look to the prize Christ has set before us,

even everlasting life in His Kingdom. What is it, Lucius my son, that you are finding so difficult to give up?

Lucius: It is the things I have—or can have. That is where it hurts. A man can willingly give up the things he does not have and is not likely to have. The poor can renounce money, but I have it. The unpopular can give up the friends they do not have, but I have hosts of them—or did have until I became a Christian. The incapable and uneducated can easily turn their backs on ambition, but I have education. I have talent. I know I can make money. I have been offered a government post with a brilliant future, if I will conform to the State religion, at least outwardly. The obscure have no such problems. The old can resist the lure of opportunity—their lives are behind them. But I am young. Everything is ahead for me!

Paul: In other words, you figure that this thing hits you harder than it does most people.

Lucius: (hesitating) Well, to be truthful, yes.

Paul: Look, Lucius, whatever you do, don't start feeling sorry for yourself. It's the very worst thing you can do. Now I don't blame you for counting the cost. That is just what our Lord told us to do. But don't get the idea that you are being charged a higher price just because you have it. You don't know the other person's problems, or the sacrifices he is making. Where much is given, much is required, and where

little is given, little is required; but it all adds up to the same total—your all. The poor widow who cast in her two mites made more of a sacrifice than the rich who kept something for themselves, because she gave *all* she had. Much or little, the Way calls for a full surrender, a complete sacrifice. It's a challenge. If you can't go through with it, I would suggest you not start. *(Sadly)* I thought you were man enough to measure up to the task, Lucius; don't make me mistaken.

Lucius: But what do we get in return?

Paul: The disciples asked that question, and you remember what Jesus answered?

Lucius: Yes... *(pause)* a hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. *(warmly)* But that was spoken to fishermen and peasants, men who had nothing—no possessions and no prospects.

Paul: Remember what I told you, that all things are relative? They left their *all*, and though it was little it was as precious to them as *your all* is to you!

Lucius: *(beginning to understand Paul's point)* Well, I suppose you could look at it that way.

Paul: Now let's look at a few of your problems. You have money. That's good, if you make the right use of it. Money brings its own problems. To many—and you have known them—it has been a curse. I, too, came from a well-to-do family, and for my change of heart I was disinherited. Yet I survived the blow, and have managed to make a living with my hands—which wouldn't hurt you if you had to do it. I also learned the lesson to give money its proper place in life but no more. There are many things it cannot give, as you will learn to your sorrow as you grow older, if you put your trust in it.

You have talent and ability. That is good. The church needs you. Is it not better to burn yourself out in a cause you believe in than to waste your talents pursuing pleasure and the honors of this world, which can vanish overnight? Is it not better to live for Christ and for others—

Lucius: *(reverently)* As you are doing.

Paul: *(with rapt enthusiasm)* As I find my highest pleasure in doing, or striving to do. To me, the Christian life has been more than rewarding. I wouldn't go back to the old, selfish way of life for all the world—I wouldn't go back if I could...and I could. I could compromise and perhaps gain my freedom, but what would I gain in the long run?

You have had popularity, and could have it again; but what is more fickle than popularity? I know it puffs up the ego and feeds the vanity, but how long does it last? Who has more popularity than Nero's favorites, but where are they? Who is the favorite of today? Who of yesterday? They change so fast one can hardly learn their names before they are gone. Is that the kind of popularity you crave? For my part, I prefer the approval of God and Jesus Christ

and the angels, and the fellowship of God's children.

You have position. So had I. I was an honor student under the great Rabban Gamaliel. That doesn't mean anything to you, but to a Jew it does. I was in line for a seat in the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews. My prospects were bright. I was already a leader of the most radical and violent faction of the Pharisees, so violent that I persecuted the Church of Christ. But when I saw my awful mistake, I turned my back on it all and became in their eyes as the off-scouring of all creation. Why? Because I believed that Christ would give me much more, far higher honors, honors that will be everlasting. The new prospect was so far ahead of the old that I chose the better.

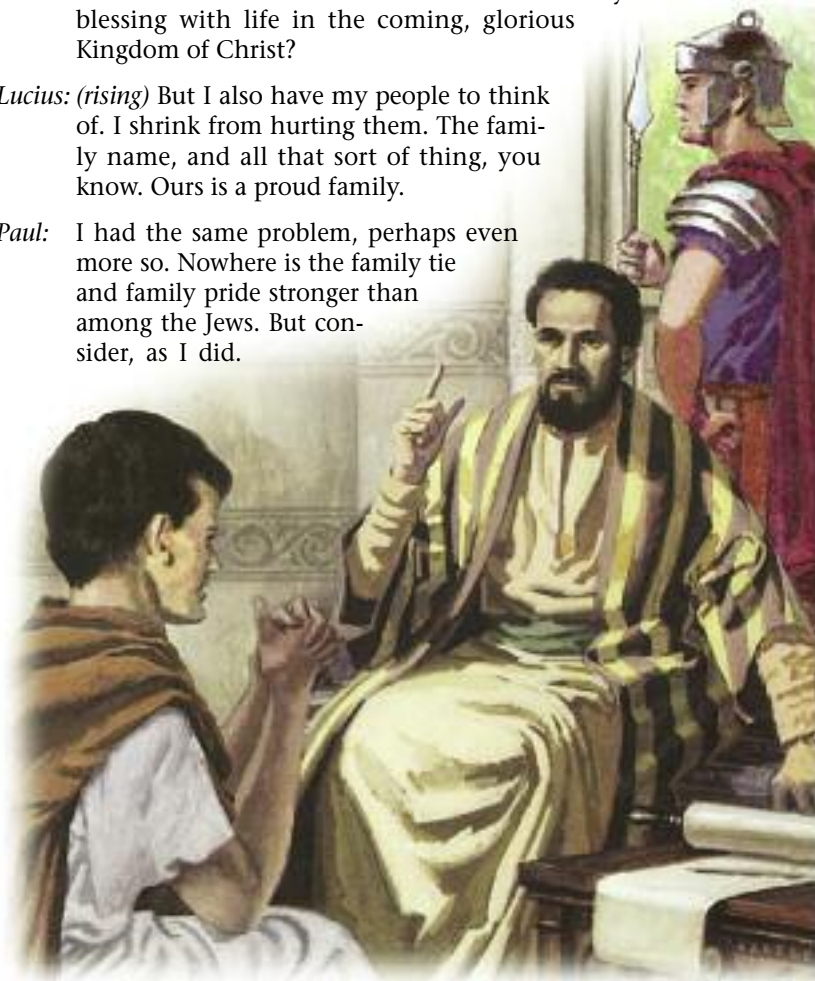
Lucius: *(sighs sadly)* I wish I could have some of your faith.

Paul: *(lovingly)* I much more, Lucius. I wish I could give it to you, but every one must develop his own faith and take up his own cross and follow Christ. I can only point you in the right direction.

You have youth. So had I. I was young when I entered the Way, and I praise God for the early start I made. God has done so much for me, my only regret is that I have only one lifetime to give Him. But you will find, as I have, that youth does not last. It gets away with breathless speed, and then where are you? What have you done with the years? Have you been just a successful Roman, or have you built a noble character that God will count worthy of blessing with life in the coming, glorious Kingdom of Christ?

Lucius: *(rising)* But I also have my people to think of. I shrink from hurting them. The family name, and all that sort of thing, you know. Ours is a proud family.

Paul: I had the same problem, perhaps even more so. Nowhere is the family tie and family pride stronger than among the Jews. But consider, as I did.



This is a matter of life and death—for us, personally and individually. It is every man for himself. When death comes, to them or to you, what can your people do for you? Can they give you life beyond the grave? Can they give you eternal health and happiness?

Lucius: (thoughtfully) I see. It seems to be all a matter of present or future values.

Paul: Exactly. *(enthusiastically)* Who are our true relatives? What did Jesus say? *"Whoever does the will of my Father is My brother and My sister and mother."* It is a family which never fails or disappoints you. I have found it a better way; you can find it so, too.

Lucius: (with a sigh) It is not an easy decision—for me, at least. Perhaps I can work it out, with your help. But *(hesitating)* I have wondered what I would do if persecution should arise. Anything can happen nowadays. Could I stand the disgrace, the physical tortures, perhaps a violent death? It's a question we may have to face some day, and I don't know...

Paul: (earnestly) Very true, Lucius. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, in some form. But we all face death sooner or later. It is a prospect which I face far more immediately than you *(holds up his chain)*, and from which I cannot escape.

Rome honors its soldiers who suffer and die so that some corrupt politicians may gain power and a few landlords be enriched. Those who have fallen never know of their honors. But for the soldiers of Jesus Christ who suffer for their faith, even to death, the promised glory will be theirs to enjoy for ever and ever. What is a moment of suffering and scorn when we know that God and the angels are watching? Our names can be written in the Lamb's book of life!

(all glowing) As I look back over my life and consider the glorious prospect ahead, I ask myself, Where is the sacrifice? All this—and the Kingdom, too?

(He places his arm around the young man's shoulders affectionately as the curtain closes.)

Next: *Hopelessness*



A closer look

Who Loves an Idol?

Idolatry is an affectionate attachment to anything ahead of God. The person or thing which one most honors, or on which one most strongly sets his affection, to which one gives first place in his life, is what that person worships. If that object of devotion is not God, the worship is idolatry.

According to the Bible, all worship belongs supremely to God (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8–9). The Lord God alone is worthy of our strongest affection and the first place in our hearts. When we put anything else in this first place, we are guilty of idolatry.

The Ephesians gave first place to their idol Diana. How different are people today? While they may not be tempted by an image, many make money their idol, giving it first place in their thought and life. Others make pleasure, self-gratification, or self-will their idol.

Are there any idols in our heart? Anything that comes between us and the worship and honor of God?

Unless God has first place in our hearts and lives, we too are guilty of idolatry, and no idolater has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5).

continued from page 17

13. How long did this shouting continue? (19:34) _____

14. Who was able to quiet the crowd? (19:35) _____

Paul might have been a victim of the tumult, had it not been for the protection of some of the city's officials, who seemed to be on his side (19:30–31).

After two hours of shouting, the townclerk was able to quiet them. An executive officer who acted as chairman of the assembly, he was an important personage. Inscriptions show that times were measured by the terms of the townclerk. Acting with a level head, the townclerk advised the people to *"keep calm and do nothing reckless"* (Moffatt).

15. Using psychology, how did the townclerk insist that the shouting was unnecessary? (19:35–36) _____

16. What indirect compliment did the townclerk pay to the Christians? (19:37) _____

17. What alternate means did the townclerk recommend for settling the grievances of the silversmiths? (19:38–39) _____

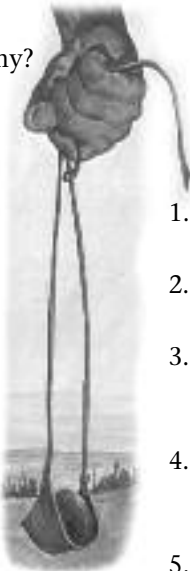
18. What did the townclerk say might be the unhappy outcome of the day's disorder? (19:40) _____

The townclerk was a man of legal authority, and apparently responsible for keeping order in the town. One thing Rome would not tolerate was civil disorder. If there were riots in any town, Rome would have to know the reason why, and the magistrates responsible could lose their positions—all of which was a far greater threat than the mere loss of some income to the silversmiths. It simply was not worth the risk.

(to be continued)

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1. Why was Goliath the champion of the Philistine army?
2. Who was David's main support in going to meet Goliath? In whose name did David meet Goliath?
3. How did David happen to come to the army camp and hear Goliath challenging the soldiers of Israel?
4. What was David's ammunition in fighting Goliath?
5. Why did David feel at least partly qualified to take on the challenge of Goliath?
6. When Saul accepted David's offer to challenge Goliath, what were Saul's parting words of blessing to David?
7. What weapon did David use to kill Goliath?
8. What was David's occupation?
9. Where was Goliath from?
10. To whom did David give credit for the victory even before he had killed Goliath?



OF CREATURES, GREAT AND SMALL

1. How did the Lord provide for Elijah's needs at the Brook Cherith?
2. What animal did God use to get Balaam's attention on his journey to Moab?
3. What type of meat did God provide for the Israelites in the wilderness after they complained about the manna?
4. What did the angel of the Lord provide for Abraham to sacrifice on Mount Moriah after Abraham had obeyed God's command?
5. What was the first bird sent from the ark by Noah after the flood?
6. What was the second bird Noah sent out after the flood, and what did she bring back to him in her beak?
7. What animal was roasted and eaten by Israel at the Feast of Passover? Who provided the animal?
8. Which two birds does the Psalmist say find a home and a nest for themselves in the temple of the Lord?
9. What lowly creature does the wise man in Proverbs send the sluggard to observe? What is the lesson?
10. Upon what did the Lord ride in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
11. With what was Elisha plowing when he received the call from Elijah to follow him? How did Elisha show his strong conviction to obey God's call?
12. When Paul was shipwrecked in Melita (Malta), and was gathering sticks for a fire, by what was he bitten? What did Paul do? What did the onlookers think of it?

Answers to questions above

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1. He was a giant. (1 Sam. 17:4)
2. Gath (1 Sam. 17:1-4)
3. David's father had sent him with food for his three eldest brothers who were in the army (1 Sam. 17:17)
4. Shepherd (1 Sam. 16:11-14)
5. While watching his father's sheep, he had killed the lion or bear that had attacked the sheep. (1 Sam. 17:34-36)
6. "Go, and the Lord be with you" (1 Sam. 17:37)
7. A sling (1 Sam. 17:48-49)
8. Five smooth stones from the stream (1 Sam. 17:40)

9. God. "I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts,...whom you have defied" (1 Sam. 17:45)
10. God. He said, "The battle is the Lord's, and he will deliver you [Goliath] into my hand" (1 Sam. 17:47)

OF CREATURES, GREAT AND SMALL

1. He sent ravens with food (1 Kings 17:1-6)
2. The donkey he rode on (Num. 22:21-28)
3. Quails; many of the people died as a punishment for craving what they had had in Egypt (Num. 11:30-34)
4. A ram (Gen. 22:13)
5. A raven (Gen. 8:6-7)

6. A dove brought back an olive leaf (Gen. 8: 8-11)
7. A lamb or a young goat one year old, with no physical defects; each family provided its own (Ex. 12:1-11)
8. The sparrow and the swallow (Ps. 84:3)
9. The ant, because the ant prepares in advance for the coming winter (Prov. 6:6)
10. A donkey's colt (Matt. 21:5; Luke 19:28-36)
11. Twelve yoke of oxen; he sacrificed his oxen and used his plow for firewood to cook the meat (1 Kings 19:19-21)
12. A viper; he shook off the viper and was unharmed; the people of the island thought he was a god (Acts 28:1-6)

Oops...We're Guilty, Too



The day after Mr. Haglund's visit, the Johnson children still found it hard to forget his grumpy ways. "Why" said Melissa, "I didn't hear him say Thank you—not once!"

"Every one of us tried to be nice to him, but do you suppose he could even smile at us?" asked Ann.

"Well, do you remember when Christ healed the ten lepers?" questioned Mom. "How many of those lepers—who had been so very sick and wretched and outcast—how many of them bothered to say Thank You to Jesus after He had entirely healed them?"

"Only one of them thanked Jesus," said Mark.

"That's right. And each of you may as well learn now that you are going to be disappointed in life if you expect folks to actually thank you every time you do something for them. Even though a lot of folks will appreciate what you do for them, not many of them will say so. Maybe they intend to say thank you, but they just never get around to it. So, it's a good idea not to expect to be thanked. And yet we should remember to thank others even though they may not thank us—that's part of the Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12).

Mom pulled several tins of cookies from the oven. Six pairs of eyes lit with delight at the sight of those fresh-baked peanut-butter cookies.

"Those who would like a cookie form a line to my right," announced Mom.

In a twinkling, six young Johnsons stood in a row. Then, with Mark at the head, they marched up to a cookie tin, each one reaching for a cookie. As they happily munched cookies, they pranced around the kitchen. The cookies eaten, Mark winked at his mother, then headed his sisters and brothers for the cookie tin again. When each had finished a second cookie, Mark headed his company back to the counter for a third time, but Mom shook her head. "One dozen cookies will take care of you until supper!"

"Say, I could eat a dozen all by myself—between now and supper," Mark told her.

For a few moments, Mom stood quietly watching the beaming faces of those who had enjoyed her cookies. Then she said, "I'm waiting!"

Six Johnsons looked at her, wondering.

"Waiting for what, Mom?"

"Waiting to hear just one cookie-gobbler say Thank you."

Sheepishly, the children glanced at one another. Then there was a whole chorus of "Thank you's."

"Hmmmm," said Mom, winking one eye, "seems like I heard some young folks around here finding fault with a certain old man because he didn't say Thank you. Reminds me of a verse in the Bible that says, '*Judge not that ye be not judged*'" (Matt. 7:1).

Paul looked up at her, his freckled face puckered in thought. "Guess we aren't any better'n ol' Gramps—and he doesn't have Mommie to teach him to say 'Thank you.'"

MEMORY VERSES:

Judge not, that you be not judged. –Matthew 7:1

FOR DISCUSSION:

What does the Bible say about finding fault with one another? (Matthew 7:3; Romans 2:1; 2:21)

Rather than find fault, what should we do? (Romans 14:13; James 4:12)

The "Thank You" Game

"Mark must have gotten up on the wrong side of his bed today," said Stephen to his father, one morning. "My! has he ever got the grumps! Nothing suits him."

It was plain for anyone to see when Mark came in and took his place at the table that he was feeling cross. So Steve was not at all surprised when Dad announced, after saying the table grace, "We're going to play the Thank You game today while we eat. We'll start with the youngest this time."

The Thank You game was one of Dad's inventions. As each person's turn came, he would tell of something for which he was thankful—something which no one else had yet mentioned. The object of the game was to see who could keep counting his blessings the longest.

Now little Beth started the game with, "Glad I have a kitty."

Paul was next with, "Glad I have my red hen."

continued on page 25

The Sense-sational LOBSTER



You call us sensitive? I'd rather say we are sense-sational. You see, we don't have a lot of built-in defenses, but our Creator designed us with so many sense organs, from antenna tip-to-tail, that we are constantly in touch with a very large environment. A predator is coming? We know it well in advance, and have plenty of time to find cover.

Belonging to the order of decapods, we have lots of appendages. We have five pairs of legs, which we use for eating and walking. We have two kinds of antennae (short and long), and six pairs of swimmerets. The last pair is enlarged to form our tail fan.

What are our senses? First, our longer set of antennae is constantly picking up signals that tell us about the physics of our environment: clear, or murky; rough or smooth; quiet or rippled; cool or warm. In addition, our bodies are covered with tiny hairs, each a miniature sense organ picking up information about what it touches.

Then we have two sets of shorter antennae. These are chemo-receptors—they pick up odors or chemical signals carried by the seawater. The delicate hairs on these antennae have more than 400 different types of receptors. (Did you get that—400 different types of receptors? Isn't that fantastic?!) Using these, we know who is around, and even what mood he is in! So, if you smell like bad news—I'm getting out of your way!

Then, we have a third type of sense organ in the short bristles that line the insides of the pincers on our walking legs. These sense organs work very much like your taste buds—we can taste with our feet before we put the food into our mouths, which is a real convenience for us.

Plus, we pick up information with our compound eyes—each is

made of between 10 thousand and 14 thousand units, though we don't rely heavily on our eyesight.

Put it all together, and don't you agree we are sense-sational? Perhaps all these nerves and sense organs have something to do with our snappy disposition?

Let's change the subject. I want to tell you about some of our more amiable traits. But first I need to give you a little background.

Where do we live?

You will find us in the eastern coastal waters of North America from Newfoundland to North Carolina. As larvae we drift in the ocean current. When young we hide at the bottom of shallow waters in seaweed and rocks. As adults we become more exploratory and move out to sea, sometimes living in the deep and frigid waters miles off shore.

What are we? We're the American Lobster!

However, you humans seldom see us in our natural habitat. We are more frequently sighted in tanks at a local restaurant, or on a plate at the dinner table. So you likely don't know what awesome creatures we really are.

How long do we live?

You humans haven't yet figured out how to determine our age, and I wouldn't want to scandalize by saying. However, I can tell you that our lifespan often rivals yours. We can live upwards of 100 years—if we escape the traps. But, unlike you, during that time we never stop growing! Starting out as larvae almost too small to see, we can



grow to lengths of several feet! According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the largest lobster ever caught was 44 lbs. 6 oz., and between 3 and 4 feet long. That's the size of an average 5-year old child! You never saw a lobster that big at dinner? Thankfully, there are laws protecting lobster elders, young lobsters and lobster mothers. Otherwise there might not be any more of us lobsters!

How do we grow?

Do you wonder how we grow at all when we have a tight fitting, hard, protective exoskeleton? Does our skeleton stretch as we grow? No! We molt (that means we outgrow our shells and struggle out of them) repeatedly in our lifetime. When our shell gets too small, it splits open so we can crawl out and grow another, larger shell. In our first six years of life, we molt around 25 times!

When it is time to get a new shell, our Creator has designed us to make a new soft shell, right underneath the old one. Just prior to shedding the old shell, our claws shrivel to about a quarter of normal size, as water and blood leave our appendages. Our shell weakens, as the flesh reabsorbs some of the calcium from the shell. The old shell cracks down the middle of the back, we flex our body several times to pull it away from the cracked shell, and crawl out from under it.

How does our new skeleton grow to a larger size than the one we shed, when it forms around the same body? Here is a wonder of design from our great Designer. After we shed our old skeleton, our soft body absorbs water very quickly and we take on water weight. This makes a larger framework for our new shell to form around. Then, when we lose that extra water weight, we have room inside our shells to grow! Do you remember as a child having clothes that were bought a couple of sizes too big for the sake of "growing room"? Great idea for us, too!

Recycle it!

If you think you people originated the idea of recycling, you must think again. Our Creator designed us to recycle our

shells as long ago as lobsters were first around. And that's a very, very long time! The recycling serves two purposes. Most importantly, we need the calcium from our old shell to harden our new shell. And it keeps our environment clean. Imagine what our habitats would look like with all the old skeletons lying around! Fortunately though, after we reach our "adult" size, our molting slows to once a year. What a relief!

What is on our menu?

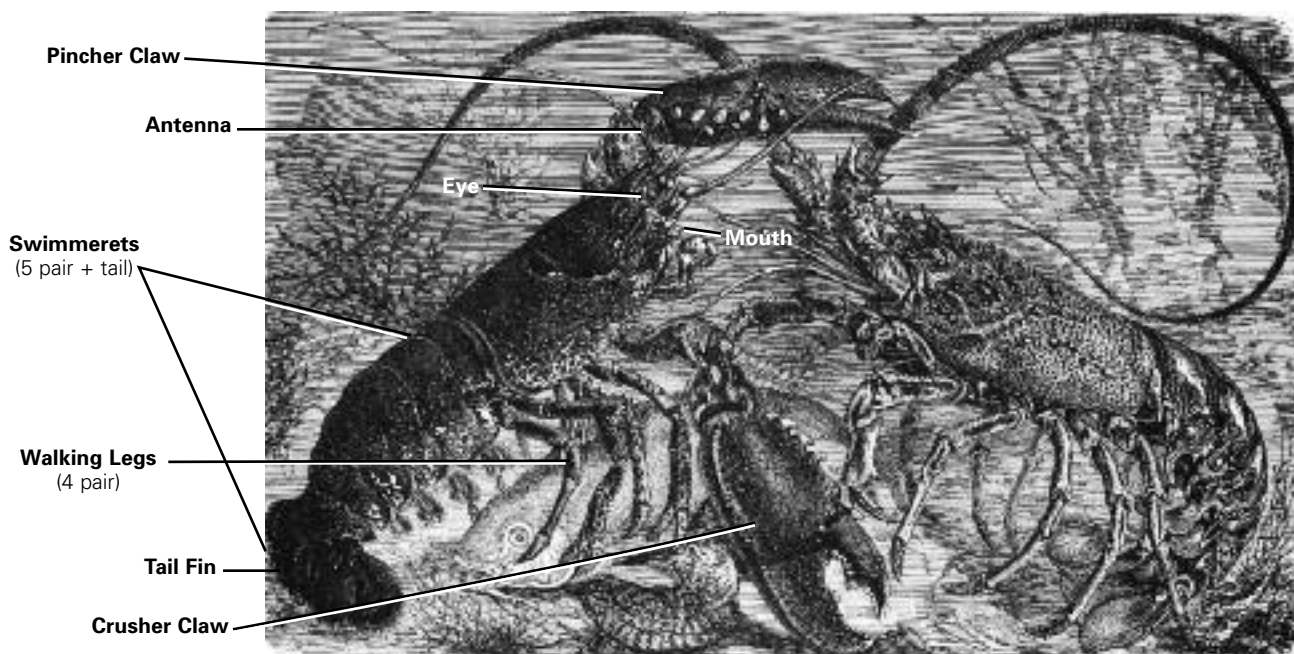
For safety's sake, we do most of our food hunting at night. We have been called scavengers, but we prefer fresh food—clams, crabs, mussels, worms, and occasionally a sea urchin or a sleepy flounder. We actually can eat up to 100 different kinds of animals and occasionally some plants as well.

Most of all, we have to be careful not to get eaten ourselves! Who eats us? Outside of you humans, cod are probably the greatest threat. Other bottom dwelling fish also are threats, especially for the young lobsters and those that have just molted. We have even been known to eat each other, though such behavior is hardly common in our natural environment. It occurs mostly when we are crowded into stressful spaces such as tanks and traps where space and food are limited.

But even though we don't often eat each other, I have to apologize for our push-shove behavior. I've heard that you "bite and devour" each other some times? We lobsters fight constantly. We're boxers! There is a boxing match almost every time one lobster meets another. We box to settle minor squabbles, and we box viciously to settle matters of dominance. Ultimately every boxing match would end in a kill, except that usually the weaker lobster backs out before that point, ending the fight.

Who benefits from being so belligerent? That's a good question. I think it comes from the same spirit you feel when you know you are right and you have to prove it! A good trait? Probably not, but isn't "every way of a [lobster] right in his own eyes"?

Yet I have to say it works against us. We don't make good neighbors. We are aggressive, territorial, and secretive. We've



even been described as ferocious. We'll sneak into a neighbor burrow if the occupant is not around—or even if he is—and claim it!

We like color!

Now let me talk to you about a more positive subject: our appearance. Our basic shell pigments are blue, red, and yellow. And we lobsters can be different degrees of any of these colors. We can even be half of one color and half of another, split right down the middle! As with other species, there are albinos as well. Why are we red on the plate? If you must know, a certain protein binds with other proteins and creates the blues, reds and yellows. When we are boiled (Ouch!) the protein, which is naturally red, comes to the surface and gives the red appearance. Albinos are the only lobsters that don't turn bright red when boiled.

We have another distinctive feature in our appearance. Our Creator has designed us with two very strong, very different front claws: a big-toothed crusher claw for pulverizing shells, and a smaller, finer-edged ripper claw that resembles a steak knife, for tearing soft flesh. Using both of these claws, as well as several smaller appendages around our mouth, we have all our kitchen tools ready to make dinner anytime. We can grip, shred, slice, tear—whatever is needed. Handy, isn't it? Another thanks to our Great Designer!

What if one of our claws is damaged? Or what if some predator grabs our tail, or leg, or antenna in his teeth, and—*Crunch!*—he has it! Now that could be very serious if we had to go the rest of our life without it. But our Great Designer gave us a remarkable ability. We can discard the disabled part—just leave it behind—and grow a brand new one! Isn't that an ingenious provision?

Defenses

Do we have any special defenses? Maybe one, or two. Our Creator has designed us with a tail that works like an instant reverse gear. I may be crawling along when suddenly, if some-

thing looks like danger, swoosh! I dart backwards, into the safety of the crevice of a rock, or under a stone. I really like tight corners. If you look dangerous, I can get in a tight corner. Then I take in water and swell the tissues of my body, wedging myself so tightly in that crevice—I dare you to pull me out! Maybe you'll get a claw, or a leg, but I'll be safe! And remember, my parts are replaceable.

Perpetuating our kind

We lobsters mate and lay eggs once every two years. When it is egg-laying time, Mrs. Lobster lays anywhere from 10,000 to upwards of 40,000 eggs which stick fast to the underside of her tail in a sticky glue-like substance. It takes about 20 months, from mating time to hatching.

And right here, I want to say that our Creator arranged for us to do community service. Maybe we're not friendly, but we do our share in providing food for other sea animals. Of those ten to forty thousand eggs we lay, only about one-tenth of one percent—I mean 10 little lobsters—will survive the first year. Ten! The rest are food for the community. Do you see what I mean by community service? We are great providers!

I might add another detail: of those ten lobsters that manage to grow up, on an average, only one—one single lobster—will escape your boiling pots!

So the next time you think about us lobsters, even if it's when we're on your plate, remember that we are more than just delicious dinner. We are another of God's awesome creatures. Be sure to give Him thanks! ♦



Newly Hatched Larva

Sources of data in this article include:

<http://www.cyhaus.com/marine/lobsters.htm>
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THE “THANK YOU” GAME

continued from page 22

Melissa said, “I’m thankful for Mom and Dad.”

Ann was thankful for the new dress Mom was making for her.

Mark hardly looked up from his plate as he said, “Well, I’m glad for this good food.”

Dad chuckled at this; and Mark, looking up at his father, almost smiled. But he couldn’t help grinning when Stephen announced, “Well, I’m glad I’ve got my sweet brother Mark.”

Mom was glad for having the whole family together. Dad was glad for home.

Around and around the table, the blessings were counted. By the time meal was eaten, no one had dropped out of the game—not even Beth. And so, as usual, there was no winner.

But when Mark stood up from the table, he was no longer grumpy for he had counted too many blessings to stay grumpy. ♦

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What was one of Christ’s regular habits? (Matthew 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8:1–10)
2. Let each one of us start each day by giving thanks to God. When we get up in the morning, too, let’s see how many blessings we can count—then we’ll be surprised how much happier each day will be for us.


MEMORY VERSES:

In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. –1 Thessalonians 5:18

The above stories are reprinted from *Happy Acres* by Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud. Published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.



Thanksgiving is...



*Thanksgiving is a
time of gratitude to God,
our Creator and Provider,
whose guidance and care
go before us...
and whose love is forever.*

*Thanksgiving is a time
of changing seasons,
when leaves turn golden
in Autumn's wake
and apples are crisp
in the first chill breezes of fall.*

*Thanksgiving is a time
to reflect on the changes of our lives,
to remember that we, too,
grow and change
from one season of life to another.*

*As we see the beauty
of Autumn, let us acknowledge
the many blessings
which are ours...
let us think of our families
and friends..
Let us remember the true meaning
of Thanksgiving,
and give thanks in our hearts.*

-Author Unknown

*He is poor
indeed who has
no gratitude.*

When you give a person a piece of your mind,
you lose part of your peace.

The wind of anger blows out the lamp of intelligence.

Hating people is like burning the house
down to kill the rats.

Never answer an angry word; it is the second one
that starts a quarrel.

Though vengeance may seem sweet,
there is still bitterness in the heart.

You can remove the cinders of doubt from
the eye of faith only with the water of the Word.

Some people have memorized the Scriptures without
practicing them.

DID YOU GIVE THANKS?

*Did I not cleanse ten...but where are the nine?
Only one has returned to give thanks.
But do not condemn, do you not do the same
As you hustle and bustle through life?*

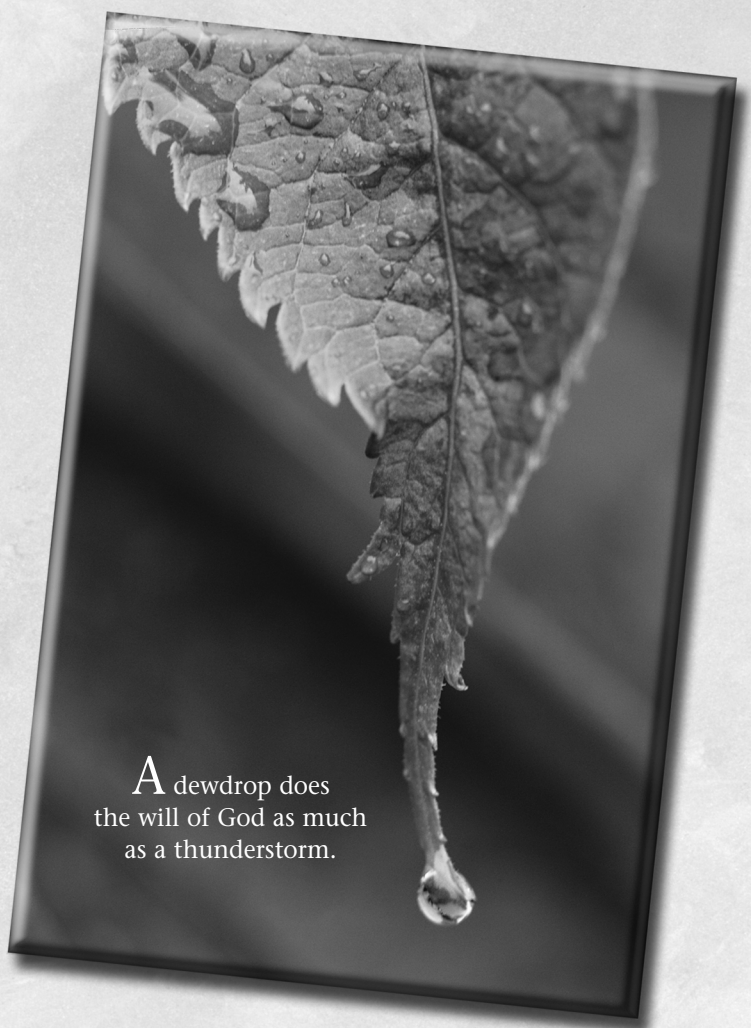
*Each day when you rise, do you say, "Thank you, God
For keeping me safe through the night"?
Then settling down at your table to eat,
Do you thank Him for every bite?*

*As you leave for your office, or fact'ry, or school,
Do you ask that His angel be near?
Or do you jump into the battles of life
With never a thought or a prayer?*

*When weary at night you retire to your bed,
Do you thank God for blessing the day?
You never can know when you lie down to sleep
If His sun will again light your way.*

*So let us give thanks for God's wonderful care,
For food, for our family and friends.
Such wonderful blessings are sent from His love,
His faithfulness never ends.*

— Melva Walton



A dewdrop does
the will of God as much
as a thunderstorm.

The more you grow up spiritually,
the less you blow up.

As long as you belittle, you will be little.

TASTY AND POPULAR...BUT...

A man living in a forested area found his home overrun with mice—too many to exterminate with traps. So he bought a few boxes of d-Con and distributed them around the house, including one under his bed. That night he couldn't believe his ears; below him was a feeding frenzy.

In the morning he checked the box and found it licked clean.

Just to make sure the plan worked, he bought and placed another box. Again, the mice went for the flavored poison like piranha.

But the tasty and popular nighttime snack did its deadly work. In the days that followed, all was quiet.

Just because something is popular doesn't mean it's good for you. In fact, it can be deadly—like sin.

You can learn a lot from reading the Bible;
you can learn the most by practicing it.

LORD OF THE FAR HORIZONS

*Lord of the far horizons,
Give us the eyes to see
Over the verge of the sundown
The beauty that is to be.*

*Give us the skill to fashion
The task of Your command,
Eager to follow the pattern
We may not understand.*

*When the path ahead is winding
And the lead of sense is blind,
Kindle a flame to lighten
Our unilluminated mind.*

*Lord of the far horizons,
Give us the faith to see
Beyond our mundane duties
The goal—immortality!*