

A Hairy Reminder

A person between the ages of 20–30 has about 615 hair follicles per square centimeter. A person 50 years of age has around 485 hair follicles per square centimeter. Typically, most people have somewhere between 100,000–150,000 hairs on their head. By the way, the average hair loss for an individual is 50–100 hairs per day. As a result, there is no way you can tell accurately how many hairs you have (in fact, unless you are going bald, most of us don't really care). But God knows.

Jesus said: "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29-31). This passage reveals three interesting truths.

First, **God knows more about us than we know about us.** That is a humbling thought. When we sometimes feel like no one understands us or grasps our situation, we forget that God does. God knows your personality. God knows your strengths. God knows what motivates you. God knows when you stumble. God knows what you like and don't like. God knows the real you. Therefore, when God declares something worthwhile, He knows what He is talking about. When God warns about danger, He knows what He is talking about. When God tells us that we should do something, we need to do it, because He knows us better than we know ourselves.

God is a God of detail. How insignificant are hairs and sparrows to us. Yet God is aware of them. He is a God of details. The motives, attitudes and heart behind our actions are as important to Him as the actions themselves. It does little good to give, if you have left out the detail of being cheerful. Singing fails if we neglect thankfulness in our heart. Let us be a people of details, as God is.

God cares about you. This is why Jesus referred to sparrows and hair. We are of value to Him. Christ was not sent to save the whales, the environment, or the endangered species but mankind. Man has value! Stress and worry often make us wonder if God cares. These two simple illustrations remind us that He does.

- by Roger Shouse

When Church Is Boring

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It's time for a change! Now the question is, change what?

Many folks think the answer is to change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour!

Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. *Celebration* and *praise* are the buzzwords.

Malachi lived at a time when people found "church" boring. Speaking of Israel's worship, God said through the prophet, "You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it" (Malachi 1:13).

God proposed two changes in these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home (1:10). The better solution - the change He preferred - was to repent (2:2). Notice what God did not approve of: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher or the one who leads the prayer can give more thought to what he says and the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns. But when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper.

- by Frank Himmel

A Pardon Rejected

During the presidency of Andrew Jackson, George Wilson robbed a federal payroll from a train and in the process killed a guard. The court convicted him and sentenced him to hang. Because of public sentiment against capital punishment, however, a movement began to secure a presidential pardon for Wilson, and eventually Jackson intervened with a pardon. Amazingly, Wilson refused it.

Since this had never happened before, the Supreme Court was asked to rule on whether someone could indeed refuse a presidential pardon. Chief Justice John Marshall handed down the court's decision: "A pardon is a parchment whose only value must be determined by the receiver of the pardon. It has no value apart from that which the receiver gives to it. George Wilson has refused to accept the pardon. We cannot conceive why he would do so, but he has. Therefore, George Wilson must die." "Pardon," declared the Supreme Court, "must not only be granted, it must be accepted." George Wilson, as punishment for his crime, was hanged.

Likewise, God, through His mercy, has provided every human being pardon from their sins. However, that pardon must be accepted in the way God has ordained. Those who do not accept the pardon will perish.

- **selected**

The Rod of Correction

A generation ago Dr. Spock, the famous child care author, popularized the idea that children ought to never receive any physical punishment for misbehavior. He claimed that such "negative discipline" is dangerous, does not work, and should be replaced with positive reinforcement. Many parents followed his advise. The result? -- the hippies and flower children of the late 60's and early 70's who had learned nothing about self discipline or restraint. Even Dr. Spock backed away from his failed philosophy.

Sadly, this view still surfaces from time to time. Compare it to what God says about child rearing in the book of Proverbs:

"Foolish is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." (22:15)

"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell. " (23:13,14)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." (29:15)

Obviously, these instructions should not be used to justify child abuse. Also, they need to be administered in conjunction with love and positive reinforcement for behavior that is right. Ephesians 6:4 urges us to use a balanced approach that will not "provoke your children to wrath".

But when we refuse to give physical discipline when it is needed, we are saying that Dr. Spock knows more about raising kids than God does. Think!

- **by Greg Gwin**