

## ***Don't Jump To Conclusions***

Elkanah, father of the Old Testament prophet Samuel, had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah (1 Samuel 1). Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. In a mean-spirited way, Peninnah "provoked" Hannah because of her infertility. When Elkanah and his wives went up to the house of the Lord to worship, Hannah prayed silently to God, vowing that if He would give her a son, she would give the child to the Lord all the days of his life.

The priest Eli observed Hannah praying, seeing her mouth move, but not hearing her words. Eli concluded that Hannah was drunk and rebuked her, saying, "*How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!*" When Hannah explained that she was praying with great grief, Eli recognized his error and blessed her.

We all fall prey to Eli's mistake from time to time. In order to make sense of the world around us, it is necessary for us to assign meaning to the actions of others. We observe someone's behavior and we frequently draw conclusions about that person based on their action. Actually we respond to the meaning that we assign to the action rather than the action itself. And sometimes, like Eli, we make assumptions which are invalid. Even if we succeed in being objective in our judgment, frequently there is more than one possible explanation for one's behavior. Eli's inappropriate rebuke was the result of his error in assigning meaning to her action.

It is not difficult to see how all this applies to us. A friend or neighbor does something and we begin assigning reason to their action. "He said that for the purpose of hurting me." "She did that just to spite me." "I know that she said that about me, even though she didn't mention me by name." Often the truth is that the speaker had no such motives. Unfortunately, friendships are sometimes destroyed because someone made unwarranted assumptions about another's actions or speech.

This danger of making unwarranted assumptions also exists in our study of the Scriptures. It is easy to insert our own thoughts as we decide what the Bible is teaching us. If we are not careful, we will accept the opinions of other men without realizing that the Bible does not actually say such things. For an excellent illustration of this, ask your friends what kind of forbidden fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden. Why, an apple, of course! Where does the Bible identify the kind of forbidden fruit? We must differentiate between God's speech and our assumptions.

How can we avoid this pitfall of accepting incorrect conclusions? With respect to the Word of God, the careful Bible student will read and re-read the Word. He will test his religious convictions by that which he has read. Avoiding unwarranted assumptions could possibly save some friendships and perhaps our soul also.

***- by Allen Dvorak***

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## ***Offerings That Cost***

*"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will verily buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor..." 2 Samuel 24:24*

David, the king of Israel, had sinned grievously against God and His people by proudly numbering the mighty men of his army, in spite of the Lord's prohibitions. As punishment for this sin, God sent a terrible pestilence upon the land and thousands of the people died. When David realized the gravity and consequences of his actions, he set out to build an altar upon which he would make burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the Lord.

In searching for a suitable place for the altar, David approached the threshing floor of Araunah. And when Araunah saw the approach of the king, he graciously sought to donate everything that David might need for his sacrifices. But as kind and generous as this offer was, David rejected it. While the king was willing to pay Araunah for the things he would use for sacrifice, he strongly refused to offer unto God that which had cost him nothing. David understood that it would have been no real sacrifice on his part to offer that which had been freely given to him. He would only offer that which cost him.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every child of God had this attitude today? Too often we want to

get by as cheaply and easily as we possibly can. This is revealed not only in the pittance some contribute, but also in the unwillingness to sacrifice time and energies to work in the kingdom. Some are willing to give a little, work a little, and worship only a little, as long as it doesn't cost too much. And if some kind modern-day Araunah is willing to do more than his share of the sacrificing, they are happy to be relieved of the cost -- let God have what others give to Him. May we remember that when it costs nothing, that is all it is worth – nothing! Let us be sure that we are offering God true sacrifices.

**- by Bob Dickey**

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### ***Getting Extra By Giving Extra***

For several years my sons earned money during the summer months by mowing lawns for different individuals. It was hard work, but they did well, and by “word-of mouth” they developed a clientele of several dozen different people.

I watched with interest as they worked for these folks. Some people were determined to get all that they've paid for, and then some. They would watch carefully as their lawn was mowed, and then frequently ask for some sort of “extra” at the end. This might include trimming a shrub or cutting weeds in a flower garden. There was usually very little expression of thanks. I can tell you that the boys didn't always enjoy working for people like that, and there was the tendency to do what had to be done and get out of there.

On the other hand, some of their customers were more than generous. They regularly commended them for their good work, and some even gave them an extra \$5 once in a while. You'd be surprised at how much they got for that extra \$5! There was a desire to do a really good job for these people. Because of the kindness and appreciation these folks gave, they got more without even asking for it.

I was thinking about how this has some application to our work together in the church. There are different kinds of people in any congregation. Some are negative and critical. They have many complaints and often express how dissatisfied they are. When folks do this they very often hurt themselves. The natural (not necessarily right, but natural) reaction is to draw back from such people. They are not pleasant to be around, so people start avoiding them.

On the other hand, there are brethren who are positive and pleasant. They are quick to encourage others and express their appreciation. These 'go the extra mile' in showing their love and commitment to their fellow Christians. And, as a result, they get more in return as folks give the same back to them. They get more by giving more!

Which kind of Christian are you?

**- by Greg Gwin**