

The Prayer of a Junior High Girl

I thank you God. I thank You for the huge amount of stuff and things I have that overflows our house. I thank You for the reminder that I have unceasing love from a pet I don't take care of every time my socks get wet. I thank You for every day that I see the sunrise while I wait for the school bus -- it is a miracle to me every time. I thank You for smiles that I get from my family -- and the warm feelings they always give. I thank You for snow -- it's an excuse to have Mom's cinnamon hot chocolate. I thank You for the humid summer days that remind me of the awesome design You made with this world. I thank You for spiders -- yes, spiders -- not matter how "amazing" human "intelligence" gets, we can never create life. I thank You for cuts, as it's said in the Bible there is life in blood and it will never cease to amaze me. I thank You for tears -- You gave humans and humans alone the emotions to feel for each other's grief and pain, and I'm glad my pain can be helped by someone else. I thank You for the moon -- a symbol that though I may feel alone, You are there day and night. I thank You God, every day, for my sight -- with which I see Your amazing creation, my touch with which I feel the wind, my hearing with which I hear the rain, my smell that I can breathe in the smell of spring, and my taste with which I taste the wonderful fruits You gave to us. I thank You for rainbows, which hold a promise from You. But God, I thank You so much for Your Son, so I can someday see the immeasurable Glory of Your Kingdom.

Shaping It Down Here

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

During the depression a good man lost his job, exhausted his savings, and forfeited his home. His grief was multiplied by the sudden death of his precious wife. The only thing he had left was his faith and it was weakening. One day he was combing the neighborhood looking for work. He stopped to watch some men who were doing some stone work on a church building. One of the men was skillfully chiseling a triangular piece of rock. Not seeing a spot where it would fit, he asked "Where are you going to put that?" The man pointed toward the top of the building and said, "See that little opening up there near the spire? That's where it goes. I'm shaping it down here so it will fit in up there." Tears filled this good man's eyes as he walked away and thought of how the words "Shaping it down here so it will fit in up there" applied to his life and eternity.

The blows of hammer and chisel hurt, but hold on to your faith. Keep praying. Keep believing. The Master has to do some shaping of us down here so we'll fit in up there.

The Third Strand

"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1Peter 3:5-7).

A braid appears to contain only two strands of hair; however, it is impossible to create a braid with only two strands. If the two could be put together at all, they would quickly unravel. Thus, what looks like two strands requires a third, and the third, though not immediately evident, keeps the strands tightly woven.

In a successful and happy marriage, like the third strand in a braid, God's presence (His revelation, law, and will) holds the husband and wife together in a sacred bond.

The New Religion

In Dublin, Ireland there is a fascinating billboard. It is large and white with nothing on it but a woman's red shoe and the bold caption: "Is Shopping the New Religion?" The pursuit of possessions continues to be one of the most powerful motivations that people experience. But can the accumulation of things bring true satisfaction?

In Luke 12:15, Jesus answered that question with a firm and uncompromising "No!" During a discussion on material wealth, He said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Life must always be more than just the inventory of the things we own.

King Solomon also attempted to find satisfaction in the pursuit of things. He discovered it to be full of emptiness (Ecc. 2:1-17). If we have placed "the abundance of the things" we possess at the center of our lives, shopping may, in fact, have become a substitute for God—a new religion. But such endeavors will always result in emptiness.

David prayed, "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16). Only God is able to bring real satisfaction to our lives. You are rich when you are satisfied with what you have. (B. Crowder)

Common Sense

Voltaire said, "Common sense is not so common." It may be the only thing that atheist ever got right. In a society that has grown increasingly litigious, we are inundated with warnings on products, mostly because some people lack common sense. Just read the following instructions. On a hair dryer: "Do not use while sleeping." On an iron: "Do not iron clothes on body." On a chainsaw: "Do not attempt to stop chain with your hand."

Common sense can be learned from experience or the teaching we receive from those we trust. But God's Word is the best source of all to develop discernment and good judgment. Three words echo throughout the book of Proverbs: wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. God has packed this book with common sense. Proverbs 11:12 advises restraint: "A man of understanding holds his peace." Proverbs 17:27 warns: "He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit." Proverbs 20:13 is practical: "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty." To get more common sense, consult God's Word—the source of wisdom—daily.

The Tongue

James, a "pillar in the early church" (Gal. 2:9), recognized the great destructive power and the danger of an uncontrolled tongue. He was not alone. Men and women in many cultures have warned us about the need to guard our speech. This bit of verse by an unknown writer says it well:

"The boneless tongue, so small and weak,
Can crush and kill," declared the Greek.
The Persian proverb wisely saith,
"A lengthy tongue, an early death."
Sometimes it takes this form instead:
"Don't let your tongue cut off your head."
While Arab sages this impart:
"The tongue's great storehouse is the heart."
From Hebrew wit, the maxim's sprung:
"Though feet should slip, don't let the tongue."
A verse from Scripture crowns the whole:
"Who keeps the tongue doth keep his soul."

Is it any wonder that James likened the tongue to a little fire that sets a great forest ablaze, or to the very small rudder that turns a mighty ship in a storm? (James 3:4-6).