

## COOKING

Cooking is an activity that can be viewed in two different ways, a dreaded chore or a pleasurable experience with great rewards. Some of us even consider it to be great fun. Just the other day I baked some biscuits. Canned biscuits may not be real biscuits by some people's standards, but I enjoy them. Right on the label I found these instructions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place biscuits on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes. Pretty simple stuff, eh? A few minutes later I had warm, wonderful biscuits.

You can deviate from the instructions a little. I like light brown biscuits with a lot of white still in them. Some folks like darker biscuits. You can adjust the time a little, the temperature a few degrees one way or the other. It is usually not that big a deal, but if you stray too far from the directions the results can be awful. You could bake them at 700 degrees for 6 minutes, but they may be a bit black on the outside and raw on the inside. You could bake them at 200 degrees for 30 minutes, but they might be a bit dry or perhaps chewy. To be honest I've never tried either of those two methods. In simple terms, cooking has some basic guidelines that must be followed to achieve a desired result.

Have you ever heard anyone complain about cooking? Of course you have, but I'm talking about weird complaints. Things like "There are too many rules you have to follow." "You can't do what you really want to do." "It takes so long to do anything." "Why do I have to heat things?" "I hate having to use potholders when stuff is hot." Perhaps we have heard such complaints, but not usually. For the most part people accept that there are certain things you must do, rules that must be followed. Nonetheless, within these basic governing rules, the opportunity for discovery, expression, fulfillment, and creativity are almost boundless. Not to mention the fact the results can be quite tasty. It just takes a bit of time, practice, and patience to learn to cook well.

There are some similarities between Christianity and cooking. Have you ever heard how limiting Christianity is and how it squelches all of your desires? Some say it is a hard and arduous life, almost a painful experience. Many loudly proclaim that living your life any way you want is a basic human right. Any of that sound familiar? All are lies that Satan has propagated since the beginning of time. God has always instructed people to

live their lives in the best way possible. Not to limit us, not to punish us, not to make life harder, but so that we can experience life in the most fulfilling, enjoyable way possible. In John 10:10 we read, "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" Satan the thief has only two purposes: to steal joy and to destroy life. Jesus came for just the opposite reasons, so that we could have joy and life.

Solomon spent many years pondering life and wisdom. He summed all of his thoughts up in one sentence: "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*" (Eccl. 12:13). The whole book of Ecclesiastes is a warning to those who think happiness can be found in the things of this life. The only path with any merit or any hope of true happiness is following God. It also makes our lives more fulfilling. Following after God is not all that complicated either. When you get right down to the crux of the matter, what has God ever asked or demanded that was truly insurmountable? The simplicity of God's commands is often overlooked. "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8)

A close examination of some of the commands of God can really awaken our understanding of how basic, simple, and desirable following God can be. To begin with, it is in our nature, our design, our make-up, to worship something. So God says, "Worship Me and Me alone." Think about it. You're going to worship something. You're going to devote your time and energy to something. Why not a benevolent, loving God who created the heavens and the earth and wants nothing but the best for us? Some still say, "No thanks. I'd rather worship money, or a rock, or a stick, or a philosopher, or myself." They may never actually say that or consciously admit to it, but the end result is the same. Which one seems more like liberty? Which one is a more logical path, the things of this world or God?

God says, "Don't murder people." Is that a troubling restriction? Killing someone has never caused any problems has it? Putting sarcasm aside, would you really want someone to be able to kill you without consequences? Can someone in your family then kill them for revenge? Where does it stop? How could we have a society? How could we close our eyes at night? The list goes on, things like "Don't take things that don't belong to you" and "Don't lie to each other." Yet some still say, "Being a Christian is so hard." Or, "The rules just don't make

any sense." Really? Can anyone argue against the wisdom and prudence in these commands? Are these not the basic rules we want our pre-school children to understand and follow?

After only minimal consideration, any thinking reasonable person can figure out why fornication, adultery, divorce and remarriage, and a myriad of other sins related to the flesh are undesirable actions. The world says, "Go ahead and cheat on your spouse, tear up your home, hurt your children, sleep with one eye open, it is so much fun!!" To the unmarried they say, "Wait until marriage to sleep with someone? Why? It's your life. Enjoy it." Okay, maybe they don't say it quite like that, but the end result is the same. The fleshly side of us never stops to consider disease, unwanted pregnancies, guilt, emotional turmoil, unintended consequences, hurt feelings and the host of other reasons not to indulge in such practices and activities.

Why are envy, covetousness, concupiscence, inordinate desires, and so many other natural tendencies sinful? Preachers often sum these up by a single word: lust. Simply put, one might say, "Don't long for and desire to have or do things you can't or shouldn't, particularly when the things or actions we desire will do nothing but breed trouble or further discontent." Covetousness is very often a useless heart rending occupation anyway. And when we do finally get something we want or do something we really wanted to do, it isn't that great anyway. These things may or may not make us happy, but rest assured any contentment gained is short lived. Often the desires are stronger for more or something different immediately after we have indulged. We simply make matters worse by our own indulgence. Solomon said, "*...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing*" (Eccl. 1:8b). Just as our eyes never get full, lust never gets full. Our lustful desires are never satisfied. It is better simply not to indulge it at all.

Are you beginning to notice a pattern? Everything that God asks, or has ever asked of his people was and is nothing but a way to have a fuller, richer, more enjoyable life. The only time a problem seems to come up with His plan is when we try to change it, interject a clause, exception, or our own selfish desire into it. Ever notice how so many of life's problems could have been avoided all together if we had simply followed God to begin with? If we follow the flesh too long it does become difficult to change our life and follow Him. In that respect Christianity may be a bit hard at times, but it is only because we have allowed ourselves to fall into a pattern and habit of destructive behavior. Old habits are indeed hard to break.

Intellectually, we must concede that sometimes it is necessary to purge old patterns of activities for a desirable outcome.

Even with the "restrictions" of Christianity we are given options and freedom beyond comprehension with our life. We can dream, make future goals, and then aspire to follow those dreams. Our life can be rich in accomplishments and experiences as long as we allow God to set some basic rules. *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps"* (Pro. 16:9). Go ahead and dream in your heart, but let God direct the steps. *"The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness"* (Pro. 11:5). Those who are walking in God's way, and are hence blameless and complete in Christ, are guided by that way. All others will fall eventually because of the way they choose to walk.

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* (Gal. 6:7-9)

The access we are given by God to His throne is difficult to imagine. The power that we can possess through faith is tremendous.

*And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* (Mark 11:22-24)

The difference in the results between trusting and having faith in God and following our own path is incomparable, which brings us back to cooking.

With cooking we readily accept there are basic things that must be done. Not to limit us, not to aggravate us, just basic principles you have to follow to get edible food. The same is true with our entire life and existence. You don't have to live life as a Christian. You don't have to do things like God has commanded. You don't have to lead a fulfilling life. It works with cooking too. You also don't have to bake things until they're done. You don't have to cook meat. You don't have to use potholders on a hot dish. Be free!! Do what you want!! Burn your

hand, get salmonella, it's your life!! Sarcasm aside, we understand that by design certain things must be done to achieve a desired result in cooking. It should come as no great surprise that life requires a certain amount of restraint and direction also. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

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## **SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS ON FAITH**

Noah and the Ark: Genesis 6 - 9

Abraham and Isaac: Genesis 22

Moses and the Exodus: Exodus 1 - 13

The Israelites Cross the Red Sea: Exodus 14

Joshua and the Walls of Jericho: Joshua 6

Gideon and the Midianites: Judges 6 - 7

David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17

## **APOLOGIA**

QUESTION: Do you think it is God's will that we work six days and have a day of rest?

ANSWER: This was the provision for Israel during the era of God's law given through Moses:

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD*

*made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exo. 20:8-11)*

But there is no mention in Scripture of the Sabbath ever being observed by God's people for 2500 years until the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. You will note in Genesis 2:2 that "HE [God] rested on the seventh day." There is no mention of man likewise resting until the era of Moses.

There is no doubt that rest and absence from pressure is good for the fleshly human mind and body, but no Scripture requires it for God's people in this day and era.

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EVERY PERSON HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE  
TO BECOME BETTER THAN THEY ARE

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Moses told God that if God wouldn't lift his burden, he would prefer God do what?
2. According to I Chronicles, during the second raid on the valley by the Philistines, David was to attack when God gave what sign?
3. In Psalm 74, a large creature is mentioned whose name also appears in Job. What is it?
4. Whose ear was severed when the chief priests came to apprehend Jesus?
5. In the book of Titus, what was Zenas' occupation?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. If a priest or the general community was guilty of unintentional sin, what was the required sacrifice? A YOUNG BULL WITHOUT BLEMISH (Lev. 4:3,14)
2. At Solomon's peak, how many wives and concubines did he have? SEVEN HUNDRED WIVES AND THREE HUNDRED CONCUBINES (1 Ki. 11:3)
3. According to the book of Isaiah, what would the daughters of Moab be compared to after Moab fell? A BIRD THROWN OUT OF A NEST (Isa. 16:2)
4. To whom did Jesus say, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"? A SAMARITAN WOMAN (John 4:7-24)
5. According to First Corinthians, how did Paul refer to himself and the apostles? AS "FOOLS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE" (1 Cor. 4:10)