

A lack of discipline leads to problems

By Walter Soderstrom

I have written several articles about covetousness in the past and would like to continue about some of the consequences of covetousness listed in the Bible.

Previously I had written about the incident involving David the King and Bathsheba, and the judgment from God, which was proclaimed through Nathan, the prophet of God. The judgment that Nathan revealed in II Samuel, chapter 13 was that the sword would never depart from David's house and his descendants and his wives would be adulterated publicly, which was done by Absalom in II Samuel, chapters 15 through 18.

Later -- actually only a few years later -- a similar situation occurred involving another of David's sons, named Adonijah. In I Kings, chapter 1, we can see that Adonijah tried to usurp the king's authority over the kingdom by stealth. One very interesting fact included in the story is that in verse 6 we are told that David had not, at any time, displeased his son by saying, "Why have you done so?" this illustrates the fact that in families where there is no discipline, often serious problems occur.

There is a similar problem, though not connected with David, that also illustrates what can happen when there is a lack of discipline, which is referred to in I Samuel, chapter 2. Verses 12 through 36, tell how Eli the priest allowed his sons to behave wickedly, and what the Lord said to him in a message sent to him by what was called "a man of God." When there is no discipline, chaos can result. This is obvious in our society today which is so full of hedonism and lack of parental, as well as self-discipline. There is so much crime, lack of marital fidelity, drunkenness, drug addiction, etc., caused by lack of discipline and commitment to the Lord.

More on covetousness and its consequences next time. •

Just the right gift

By Reverend William Randall

Black Friday, the name recently coined in reference to the day of sales following Thanksgiving Day, is the best day of the year for merchants. Another big day is when stores open after Christmas. Americans haven't given it a name, but Canadians call it Boxing Day. It is the day for packing up unwanted gifts and taking them back for exchanges or refunds. Though gifts are returned, additional sales are made especially when the returnee buys something more expensive. Have you stood in those long lines? Obviously many impractical gifts are not wanted. Many who receive ties don't take them back; they are hung on the rack where they stay or are left in the box.

Christmas is Jesus' birthday. Therefore, it seems that some gifts should be given to Him. Are our gifts to Jesus meaningful? Is he pleased with our gifts?

Gift giving to Jesus should be expected. After all, he has given so much to us. Jesus gave his life as a ransom for our souls.

Giving to Jesus and to others is also inspired by the Magi, who brought gifts to the Christ Child. They were practical gifts.

The gold offered would have provided for the Holy Family while they were in Egypt to which they fled when escaping the murderous intentions of Herod the king.

The Wisemen gave Jesus frankincense, something used in worship. Jesus was born under the law. He never sinned, yet he kept and fulfilled the law. The Bible tells how he traveled to Jerusalem to keep feast days, Jesus could have presented the frankincense with meal offerings he brought to the temple. In Leviticus, the Old Testament book of worship instructions, we read: "When any will offer a meal offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour and he shall pour oil upon it and put frankincense thereon" (Leviticus 2:1). It was a sweet savor unto the Lord. Imagine how wonderful the odor must have been. Most everyone loves the smell of baking bread. Flour in the flames plus the odor of incense would have been pleasing to man and more so to God because it was an act of worship.

The third gift was myrrh. Perhaps it had been saved by Mary throughout the years; or Nicodemus, who cared for the body of Jesus, himself provided myrrh and aloe to anoint Christ's body for burial. Use of myrrh was also an ingredient in the oil by which Aaron and his successors were anointed. Christ, our High Priest who represents believers and makes intercession before God, was anointed with myrrh. The three gifts had a special significance and must have brought joy to Jesus and to his mother.

There is a satisfaction when we give gifts that are appropriate and gratefully received. Let us offer Jesus the gifts that would please him. Let's say, "Here's my gift, Jesus. Have a Happy Birthday." The best gift would be to give our hearts. •

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