

APRONS OR BIBS

“ The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:28)

Stewart Briscoe is quoted in the April 10, 2005 *Lookout* as rebuffing a complainer by reminding her that the church is “not a buffet and we should wear an apron instead of a bib”. She obviously came to church with the expectation that it was going to “meet her need”. When it did not, predictably, she left and went “shopping” for another church. The idea that she should go to church to meet somebody else’s need, apparently did not enter her mind.

Jesus had the same problem with the very men whom He commissioned to take the Gospel to the whole world. Before the Holy Spirit transformed them, they were constantly seeking personal advantage and arguing about which of them was the greatest. Only a few days before Calvary this issue came to a head when the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus and asked that her boys receive positions of honor on the right hand and the left hand of His throne. Of course, when the other ten disciples found this out they were filled with indignation against the two brothers.

It was on this occasion that Jesus pointed out the great contrast between His Kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Earthly rulers exercise authority over their subjects, but Christian leaders would not. Earthly leaders gain power by force, but Christian leaders gain power by service. Jesus set the example. He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Greatness in His Kingdom is not conferred by fiat, but earned by service. Jesus said: **“whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—“ (Matt 20:26-27)**

The problem faced by Christ two thousand years ago is very relevant today. Self centeredness and consumerism do not happen by accident. After the hardships of the Great Depression, and the rationing and shortages of World War II, America was ripe for a self serving change. First, the factories began producing “consumer goods”, and then there came an advertising blitzkrieg to convince people to buy them. As advertisers became more sophisticated hundreds of social scientists and psychologists were employed to understand and manipulate the public. Gleem toothpaste, for example, doubled their sales by simply advertising that theirs was the special toothpaste for people who couldn’t brush after every meal. Touche! The “shrinks” had discovered an “itch” that needed to be “scratched”.

So, during the “Cold War” the psychologists suggested that freezers be marketed as “frozen islands of security”. It worked! Forty years ago lingerie companies figured out that a woman’s need for self approval was stronger than her romantic need for a man. This insight led them to produce an ad showing a woman admiring herself in a full length mirror. It was a strong sales booster and promoted that company two years ahead of market trends.

As we have already pointed out, the thousands of dollars spent on these ads was not done carelessly or by accident. Ads were produced after extensive research and investigation. Motivational analyst, James Vicary, installed hidden cameras in super markets to analyze shoppers. He used the number of times that women blinked as an index to understand their levels of interest in various products. To his absolute amazement, instead of becoming excited, many went into the first stages of an hypnotic trance (14 blinks a minute). These woman were so glassy eyed that some even passed by neighbors and friends without even noticing them. After the “shopping” was done the eye blinks increased to 25 blinks per minute at the check out counter. At the sound of the cash register the eye blinks went to 45 and many women woke up to the fact they had “purchased” more “things” than they could pay for.

The devil, as you know, is the ultimate manipulator and deceiver. We should not be ignorant of his devices. When people choose bibs over aprons it is not an accident. The wicked one has run the numbers and done his research. That’s why so many people take the wide road that leads to destruction. The road to life, as you know, is straight and narrow and only a few will find it. Those who do, of course, will be wearing aprons and following in the footsteps of Jesus.