

Lawful Hobbies That Have An Idolatrous Place In Your Heart

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Some of you have heard the story, Bob wanted me to share it again. I hope I can do so for the glory of God. Several years ago when I was just a young minister I had a parallel interest in my life, that was collecting relics. It was a hobby. It wasn't that I... In fact it started out an innocent hobby. Something of an interest I've had since I was a little boy. Indian artifacts. I started collecting and gathering these things up.

And, of course, even as when I entered the ministry and I was into the Christian life, I was seeking the Lord and I wasn't aware of the Scripture and I didn't know the implications at that time that Satan is very subtle. And if he can't get you down and distracted and diverted with something overtly wicked he will use something very good to do it, or something that's lawful that's why we have that verse in 1 Cor 12:13 that says "All things are lawful for me but not all things are expedient." "All things are lawful for me but I will not be brought under the power of anything." It's when you get brought under the power of something. Let me tell you, as I began to collect these artifacts, slowly by slowly, they began to occupy an idolatrous place in my life. I mean I started setting my affections too heavily upon them. And they began to occupy not only too much of my time but too much of my thoughts because my thoughts ought to be toward employing my time, what? Praising God! Focusing on God! Using my energy seeking the Lord! And here I was getting diverted and pulled away in this lawful hobby. Not that you can't get a hobby such as fishing or golfing or whatever can get out of place, but so easily we are of such a nature that even lawful things can soon slip in and grab our hearts. And that's what would begin to take place in my life.

My collection was growing and I was proud of that collection to have these things hanging all over my wall. I remember one day I was looking up, admiring, and worshiping my relics. Not in a sense of bowing before them really in true worship. Here again, this was a subtle thing that was slipping in that was a distraction, diversion, a lawful bondage. It had me gripped at that time and I remember the Lord spoke to me as I was looking at a frame of arrowheads. I remember the frames and I remember the arrowheads that was on the frame when the voice of God said to me, "Don, you're going to give this up." I didn't want to think that it was the voice of the Lord because how can you give something up, how can you get better, do anything without the Lord unless He helps you and does it for you.

I remember the Lord said you're going to give this thing up. OK. I said... you know how you tend to say well was that the Lord? How do you know whether it was the Lord or not? Is that the Lord or is that just my conscience trying to say something to me that I really don't want to hear. What is it? Is that the Lord? Well, does it come to pass?

About two weeks from that point, a fella called me on the phone and said, "I hear you got a nice relic collection, I'm building a museum." He was a very wealthy man. He said "I'd like to come over and look at your relics." I had a very fine collection. I said "sure, come over." He came over, looked at the collection and said, "how much do you want for them?" I said "I don't

want to sell them.” He said “I’ll give you X amount of dollars for them.” I said “Whoa!” “Um... nah I don’t want to sell them.” And he said “Well, here’s my phone number,” and he said, “you think about it, I’ll call you tomorrow.” I told my wife, I said, “May,” I said, “Mr. Coneester Hodges has offered us, I forgot how much money, for this.” I said “we could [repaint] the house and we could do good with this but I don’t wanna sell them.”

But he called back the next day. You know, my heart was entangled. It’s so subtle how you can be a Christian and go to church and read your Bible and preach sermons and yet your heart be diverted and entangled with the affairs of this life. Some of you are in that condition this very morning. you’re very faithful outwardly but you’re entangled in something. God forbid! Maybe you can get loose. I don’t know what it is, but you know if you’re entangled in something. Well he called me back the next day and said “Don, what did you decide?” And I said, “Mr. Hodges,” I said, “I appreciate your offer but, my wife and I talked about it, I don’t want to really sell them, I wasn’t trying to sell them, and I’ve been collecting these things all my life. But if you will now raise the ante,” I said, “if you were to give me something like five or seven thousand dollars more, because I kind of went through and inventoried them and thought well if he’d give me more than they’re worth I would have to sell them wouldn’t I? And I said, “if you give me”... I thought I’ll get him off my case, I’ll set a price that he’ll just say Oh, forget it. Well I set a price higher.

See, that’s amazing how God in His infinite goodness can be curing you of something on one hand and helping you in another. Isn’t He smart? Well, he called me back and I’ve told him I’d raised the ante, he said “would you let me come and look again?” I said “Uh oh.” I said “sure come over.” And he brought an appraiser and they came over and they looked at my relic collection and he said, “How do you want your money?” My heart. (slumped impression) I said “I don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.” He started carrying those things off the wall and carrying them out in boxes. They were my babies. They’re going. I began grieving. Mourning. I had to go up to my brother in law, Henry, who’s sick with bone cancer right now, wish you would pray for him. I went up to my brother in law’s after he got all my relics out of the house. I had to go up there because he and I hunted together. We dug a lot in the Indian caves together. He had a good collection. I had to get some from him to have a fix, you know. Really! That’s how bad it was.

And so I got me some to look at so I wouldn’t be completely without any, and I was moping around and here it was, this happened about, it was in February in the winter, back in, what, the mid 80’s, May(his wife’s name)? And I was down, I mean I was discouraged and here’s the thing: I knew the Lord was working on me. My wife rebuked me, she said Don, you wouldn’t be more upset if one of our children had died. I was really grieving of the fact that I’d got rid of my relic collection. But the Lord had told me you’re going to give this up.

Well I had. It was coming on Sunday and I was pastoring a church that I was preaching in weekly, and I was so out of tune with God and so grieved and so overthrown in this matter in my soul, I couldn’t prepare anything. I couldn’t get a message. I couldn’t pray. I couldn’t sleep. I was sick. And what made me sick was that I knew that all of this... that my inordinate affection towards these things was wrong. And I was sick about my spiritual condition. I was sick that I got rid of my relics. I was sick because I, what, the money at that time: So what? But here’s the thing. I was... couldn’t eat hardly. Couldn’t drink. Couldn’t prepare a sermon. I was low, buddy, I was overthrown. I was defeated.

And we had a group at that time that had come back from Bentley, Louisiana that I hadn't been with that week, God was doing other things with me. But they came back and they were just as filled with joy, and here I am grueling as low as you possibly could be, overthrown in my heart, and these people come back from Bentley, Louisiana and praising the Lord and rejoicing and happy and I'm defeated. It's not a very fun feeling when you see people around you that's got the joy of the Lord and you're defeated. You're down. And that's the way I was, I was down.

It was cold, and I went to the church that morning to turn the heat on. I had an old army jacket on, blue jeans, and I was so discouraged and down and sick and I walked into that church and turned the heat on and I'll never forget. God gave me the grace to fall down before Him and at the front of that Church I fell down and I said "Oh God!" He granted me repentance. He granted me the capacity to acknowledge my idolatrous relationship to that particular hobby, I confessed it to Him as sin and I asked Him to forgive me. I truly from the bottom of my heart repented of it and asked the Lord's forgiveness and I'm telling you that burden, that grief, that oppression, that bondage just lifted off of me like a cloud. Just lifted off. And I was free in my spirit.

And I worshiped God in Spirit and in truth and folks I'm telling you to this day, I really, I don't know what Paul saw or what Paul heard, he couldn't say what was unlawful, but let me tell you in just a matter of split seconds God revealed to me, into my spirit things about the next world, things about heaven, things about the reality of life and death and heaven and hell and all things Godly. I couldn't comprehend all the things that God was pouring into my soul! I've never been the same since! I was free. I saw the brevity of life. I saw, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." I saw there was only one purpose of living.

That morning in the city, I didn't have a sermon, but I had a testimony. And I began to share that morning in the service what God has done in my soul in setting me free from a lawful hobby that no one would've expected had entangled itself around my heart and defeated me as a Christian. And God moved that morning! There were people standing up here and there saying I've had this in my life and I've known it's wrong. I've been caught up in this particular sin and I've been trying to keep it a secret. It's an amazing thing how the LORD blessed that morning! Such a spirit of awakening and reality took place that day. Praise the LORD! It's proof! I would've never done it but the Lord God omnipotent saves! And He reigns. Is He your God? Do you know Him as Lord?