

Dumpster Diving (Sanctification) (A Godly Life) (Purity)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Philippians 4:8

The Basic Bible Truth

We live in a world broken by sin. Its effects are everywhere. In fact, the Bible says that all of creation groans from the repercussions of the fall of man. We must take caution to guard our hearts and our minds as we walk through this world. The degradation around us will work its way into our minds and not leave if we entertain it but for a moment. There is but one solution. The Word of God is the soap and water we need to make and keep our minds pure.

The Object

A Large Black Trash Bag
Assorted Trash And Food Items



I take great care to make this lesson sanitary. But it looks to be anything but that. I fill my trash bag with assorted crumpled papers, empty food wrappers, etc. Also, placed in plastic bags that the audience does not see because it is buried in the trash bag, various food items. For example, a half eaten hot dog, an open can of dog food with a spoon full still there, (actually it is a can of potted meat with its label removed

and now has a dog food label pasted on it), cookie crumbs in the bottom of the bag, a hamburger bun tinted around the edges with a light mixture of green food coloring, and a milk carton with a little cottage cheese in the bottom. I think you get the picture, right?

The Lesson

One of the advantages of having me as your teacher is that I try to make an extra effort to ensure that you receive a well-rounded education. In the world that we live in, you never know when you might need a good hearty meal, but be low on cash. I have an excellent option for you to consider. Dumpster diving. Now, I know that may be a bit intimidating to someone like you, so allow me to show you a few tips that you can use next time you scrounge a meal from the trash bins. I brought an average trash sack you might come across while diving. Let's walk through this together.

First, sift through the paper. It's not very high in protein, and actually of very little food value. Bottles and cans, though, can be saved for liquid storage later. The real gems we are looking for are the food items. Take this half eaten hot dog. Scrape off the crumbly stuff stuck to it and I'll bite off the open end to see if it's still good enough to eat. Yes, we'll keep this one. Hot dogs tend to last a very long time, so don't be too scared of them. Ooh! Now here's a treasure. Most people are not aware that dog food is actually processed to the same quality standards as human food. I find it to be a little less salty, and a little oregano goes a long way in bringing it up to standard. Let's see if this brand is similar to the others. Yes, I would say a bit more salt would be in order. And finally, a word about bread. Most old bread will have a fine tint of green as it begins to age. This mold is actually not harmful, and can be ingested with no health risks at all. As you might guess, the bread does indeed taste a bit funny, but I'll just grab some water later.

As you might guess, this is totally ridiculous, right? Certainly. But as Christians, we sometimes scrounge for a different kind of meal. We must always be on our guard against what the world offers to us. So much of what we see and hear around us is nothing but trash in God's eyes. Taking in the smut and filth found in the average movie today is hardly the way to stay spiritually healthy. Television, commercials, inappropriate music...all of these serve to make us more comfortable around sin. We have another option available to us. It is called the Bible. Why go looking for garbage to fill our minds, when God has an excellent alternative right in front of us.

When I was a young man, I had an amazing summer job. Each year, a day or two after school was out, I left for the summer to work on a custom wheat harvesting crew. We would start harvesting wheat in southern Oklahoma, and gradually move our machinery north as the wheat ripened, all the way into northern Montana. There were six of us high school boys who worked on the crew. It was hard, hot, dusty work, with very long hours, but the pay was great, so we all gladly put up with the discomfort and strain.

During my first year out, I experienced something I would like to recount for you. We were travelling from one small farm town to another. It was so small, it didn't even have a trailer park to place our campers in that we stayed in, but my boss knew of a place where we could hook on to water and sewer near the elevator, so we hurriedly hooked everything up and left for the field. We worked a hard, hot, dusty day, and finished around 11:00 that night. And we came home to no water! That meant no showers, so we brushed ourselves off with our towels and went to bed. The next morning, up at 6:00 and ate breakfast and off to the field again for another long, hard day. We again came home to no water. So we brushed ourselves off again...this went on for 6 days! Let me do the math. 6 high school boys, working in 100 degree temperatures for 6 days with no water, living in 1 camper with 0 air conditioning—even we weren't that tough. So we rounded up as many quarters as we could find and walked across town to a car wash. You know the kind with the spray wands? And we took turns hosing each other off that night. The soap cycle was warm and sudsy, the rinse was downright cold. But, ladies

and gentlemen, you have not lived until you have finished off a shower with a hot wax!

I tell you that story to illustrate this point. We have soaps for our hands and shampoo for our hair and cleaning gel for our hands. The Bible declares that we need to keep our minds clean as well. We live in a very dirty, disgusting world. I'm not talking about the trash in the streets, or anything like that. No, I am talking about the sin that we can see everyday around us as we go about our lives. If we are not careful, the things we see get into our minds, and then we must wash them out before they decide to stay there. God has said that we are cleansed by the washing of the Word of God. As we take the Bible into our minds, it cleanses us from the filth that we come in contact with each day. Things like bad movies, television commercials, people using swear words around us; these are just some examples of the things that we need to clean out of our minds every day.

God has much to say about right and wrong in the Bible. Interestingly, I can find no place where He condones situational ethics in any shape or form. God has a sincere list of right and wrong. It is vividly black and white—clearly detailed and explained, but our sin nature is always looking for an excuse or a reason to doubt God's commands. And they are commands, by the way, not mere suggestions. He has delineated good from bad, right from wrong, and acceptable from inappropriate.

Sometimes we might have the tendency to look at the Word of God as a list of "Thou shalt not's." An honest look through the Scripture does point to a large number of warnings and dire predictions for disobedience. We need the warnings, because we don't heed the warnings. I was taught by my father to be very cautious buying a used car from anywhere very far north. Winter weather results in the application of a salt mixture to the roads to melt the ice and snow, and if the residue is not intentionally washed off regularly, the result is a slow decay of rust. Our compromising with the world around us can work that very same way, slowly creeping in and if unchecked, surely causing eventual catastrophic damage.

Compromise can be disastrous for even the most Godly of believers. We can never claim immunity from the temptation of sin. As I read through the Bible, I find God has recorded both the good and the bad concerning the lives of many of the heroes mentioned in Scripture. God does not white wash their lives, but gives us the entire story as an example to us of what can happen if we are asleep at the wheel in regards to Satan's efforts in our lives.

Satan sets snares to catch the unsuspecting Christian. Snares are, by design, difficult to perceive if the intended target is not constantly vigilant. I have over the years had a few instances of nuisance wild animals around the house. Setting live traps to capture and relocate these creatures is a challenge. They are wary of everything that does not look normal and familiar to them. We likewise, should be so familiar with God's Word that we recognize immediately when something does not look quite right or normal and avoid being caught in the trap. I make my traps as enticing as I possibly can, adding food and placing them as conveniently as possible for the animal to consider. Satan uses the identical game plan. He knows what works and uses the perfect bait for his prey, placing it at a very handy location.

We are especially susceptible to compromise through wrong relationships. We develop friendships with those who can, and will, drag us down. It is a fine balance between showing Christian love and embracing sin. We are told in the New Testament that *they will know we are Christians by our love for one another*. And that is indeed true. But at what point do we identify unacceptable sin in another person's life and say, "I cannot condone, nor accept what you are doing because your actions might be interpreted as acceptable and be imitated by another person who is watching." Paul addressed more than once the sexual sins that were being tolerated in the local churches. We still struggle with that very issue today.

We must be careful where we get the stuff we take into ourselves. Food items from a dumpster probably are not a good idea. But we must be just as careful ingesting the things that we might hear and see all around us each day. They can be just as nasty as a dive in the dumpster.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide