

## Contempt

Example of my Teddy Bear: He is something given me by my parents when I was a small child.

I came up with a very clever name for him. I have always called him Teddy.

I have had him since I was 4 or 5. My Mother made sure he was preserved when I lost interest in him and gave him to me to take care of when she thought I was old enough.

Sometimes I forget that I have him. But he has always been with me and I will probably always have him.

My parents – and other significant people in my life gave me other things too when I was a small child.

They did everything possible to make sure that what they gave me was preserved.

When they thought I was old enough, they turned those things over to me to preserve and keep with me always – just like Teddy.

But these things are not things at all.

They are the cultural values and practices, beliefs and behaviors, that were instilled in me from the time I was very small and repeated many times until they became part of me.

Some people say that these things are “hard-wired” into us. That means that these cultural values and practices are trained into us so we cannot choose other values or change our practices.

Just like Teddy, Sometimes I forget that I have these too.

My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, people from church and people from school, my playmates, and others instilled the values and trained these practices. They did so with the best of intentions.

They wanted me to believe what they believed and behave as they behaved, because they thought their beliefs and practices were the best.

I'll share three things like this that my parents trained into me:

Especially, my Mom, stressed being clean and wearing clean clothes. But style was never an issue, I wore blue jeans and a broadcloth button type shirt, white socks, and brogan shoes, every day, year in and year out. They were never stylish, but they started every day clean. She was also big into scrubbing as the means to get me clean. When I was in first grade we read a story about a woman who scrubbed the features right off the faces of her children. My hand shot up, because I wanted them all to know where she lived.

The training took. My wife, who had training of her own, tries to improve stylishness but I still a plain dressing person, but clean.

They also taught me not to waste anything. They had some strong reasons to teach this, that I suspect most of you would not understand, so I won't even try. But the training took. This makes it

tough on me to live in a time and place where people seem to be in competition to see who can waste the most.

My parents spent a lot of time training me to be a diligent worker. My Dad was what you might call a motivational speaker when it came to doing work. Both my parents worked hard themselves and insisted I did too. When I was a teen, my dad told me that if he found me doing something that needed to be done on the farm, he would not need to find me something to do. He also told me that I might not like the job I'd be doing if he had to find it for me. Indirectly, he defined "work". Work is activity that produces something useful or of value.

Their training seems to have worked. Sometimes I try not to be industrious, but I am not very good at it. The older I get the more I want to stop and rest, but doing nothing becomes uncomfortable pretty quickly. It just feels like I should be doing something that produces something of use or value.

Beyond that, instilled in me is the value that everyone should pitch in and do their share of the work. Yes, that's right, not only am I not comfortable when I am not doing something, it makes me uncomfortable when you are not !

Well, La de Da – you might say.

But let me tell you some important reasons why people who can work should work:

The first is that, the wages you earn provide for you and your immediate dependents.

The second is that in the United States, a more than half our population cannot work. The largest group are children, followed by the elderly, then the disabled, those seeking employment but currently un-employed, and finally prisoners. All of these people depend on those who are working to support them.

Third, it is unfair to expect those who work to support the others who can, but do not work.

Fourth, is that able people who are not working tend to turn their energy into illicit behavior. As the saying goes "Idle hands are the Devil's workshop".

Fifth, work is good for you – not working is bad for you. Work keeps all your parts working – physical, mental, psychological, social. Inactivity leads to all sorts of problems. Goodwill Industries knows this. They create jobs and training to help disabled people to feel better about themselves through work. The American Disabilities Act makes sure disabled people are not excluded from employment for the same reason.

Sixth, the Bible teaches that everyone should work.

**2 Thessalonians 3:10-11** For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

**1 Thessalonians 4:11-12** and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

**1 Timothy 5:8** <sup>8</sup>But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

**1 Timothy 5:13** <sup>13</sup>At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.

I get riled up just thinking of those who my generation called “bums”; I think the current generation calls them “slackers”, who spend more effort to avoiding work than doing work.

By now you should have figured out that someone trained me pretty thoroughly to believe that every able person should work to provide for themselves and others.

Like Teddy here, sometimes I forget that these cultural values and the behavior of earning and keeping a job are hardwired into me.

I am sure that each one of you have things like this that are just as instilled in you and this example is in me.

The European part of that culture has a strong history of training children to make them all think and act the same way. This system has served European or “Western” culture very well for the last thousand years. This is the backbone of Western education.

Training children in schools, causes them to think and act as a unit and be controlled by whoever controls what they learn in the school. Like schools of fish, they all swim together.

That part of our culture instills things like nationalism, patriotism, social justice, role models, and respect for authority. It force trains things like groups of people sitting quietly to listen to one person speak. We even used to call the schools where teachers were trained to train children to believe the same things and behave the same way Normal Schools. Implying that they were being trained in what Normal should be. The schools teach national myths that serve to magnify it's past leaders and encourage obedience to the current ones. The legends of past heroes are taught to

condition the young to want to become heroes. For Western civilization, it has worked very well. The countries that operate this way control nearly all the World's wealth.

But these things are from the culture that trained us and not from God. They are Human inventions, created for human purposes.

Often these purposes are not what is best for the people trained. Often they are not according to the will of God.

One of the strongest tools in the arsenal of culture trainers is the use of punishment and negative reinforcement. Not conforming comes at a price. The most common price paid is the disapproval of others. In the extreme, this disapproval becomes so strong that the non-conforming person is held in contempt or despised by his peers. This is the child that is ridiculed by his teachers and harassed or bullied by other children because he or she believes or behaves differently.

Like Teddy here, sometimes I forget that this too was instilled in me. – this idea that by holding others in contempt I can influence them to conform to the beliefs and practices that I hold.

Yes, the Bible does say explicitly and in proper context that each of us should work to provide for ourselves and have enough that we can share with those in need.

But it also teaches just explicitly about holding others in contempt.

**Luke 18:9-14** <sup>9</sup>And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

<sup>10</sup>“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>“The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ <sup>13</sup>“But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ <sup>14</sup>“I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be

#### **Luke 7:38-39**

and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.”

Story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15:

**Luke 15:1-2**

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

**Luke 16:15**

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

Also see **Rom 14**.

Just like Teddy here, every one of us here has something given to us when we were young - strongly held opinions about what right belief and behavior is.

I am not saying that those opinions are wrong.

It is important to know the difference between our opinions and God's commands but ...

You are probably better off because you live by them

You may even have a Biblical basis that supports them.

You probably know someone who would be better off if they lived by the same rules someone trained into you.

What is wrong; is holding others in contempt

It violates the teaching of Jesus. It just doesn't work.

Have you ever heard someone say that we should do things that are right so that we could hold ourselves up as an example?

This is a corruption of Jesus' teaching in Mt 5:14 - where he told his disciples that they were the light of the world.

Verse 16 does not say "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify you."

It does say "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

When we look down on others and hold ourselves up as an example, the only people who are impressed are other people like us.

The people being looked down on are not inspired to be like us.

They walk away thinking "I may not be right but I am sure glad I am not like that self-righteous person"

They may even list some of our other shortcomings for anyone who will listen.

This "look at me" attitude does not draw people to us, it drives them away from the church.

Jesus showed us the attitude and behavior toward others that changes lives. He was the greatest man who ever lived, but he humbled himself to live as if he were the lowliest. He cared more about the person than he did about letting them know how wrong they were and how right he was. He showed not contempt, but compassion.

We should not do what is right to exalt ourselves before others.

Righteousness is not a burden, not something we must do to earn salvation, or prove ourselves to others.

We should do what is right because ...God taught us what right is.

We should do what is right because ...we are obedient to God.

We should do what is right because ...righteousness is a gift God has given us,

We should do what is right because ...God made us for that purpose - to do good works

**We should do what is right because it glorifies God.**

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If we do what is right for these right reasons we will be the light of the world and God will be glorified.

Are you shining God's light in the world today ?

If you have not yet accepted God's gift of redemption, being made righteous by putting on Christ in Baptism, the church stands ready to help you begin your journey down the path of light.

If you have stumbled in your walk, the church stands ready to pray with you and help you back up.

If the burdens you carry are weighing you down and you need to call on the church in any way, the Bride and the Spirit say come.