

## Debris in the Gutter

It seems like every time I feel compelled to sit here and write something, God sees fit to erase my memory and clear my mind...it's like He inspires me to sit here then hits CTRL-ALT-DEL, thus clearing whatever it was that I felt inspired to write.

Today was, more or less, a good day...I woke up and listened to a sermon on connecting with the Holy Spirit, then I walked Abby and as I did I felt a little bit of peace...and as I walked with her I felt something telling me I should just disconnect from the world and spend some time with God and perhaps do a little self-assessment.

So, of course, I had to get on my computer one last time and make sure the online world could live without me. And, of course, I noted that none of the Flash objects were playing properly and so, an hour later, I could hear the voice saying "you're not doing what you were supposed to do" and I promptly got off the internet and headed to the gym, then to the grocery store and so it ended up that I failed to disconnect...I mean there are calls to make. People to talk to, errands to run...and of course the internet is always calling.

But as I sat down to embark on another online round of email and social networking, something inspired me to go clean my gutters out. So I pulled out the trusty old ladder and climbed up to the roof and peeked inside...and I could not believe what I saw! The gutters were completely full of debris...and at the far end there was even a plant growing in the gutter. With the rainy season coming this just would not do...so I embarked on the tedious process of scooping out the muck with my hands and a gardening tool (I had never cleaned out a gutter before, obviously) and then spraying out the remaining debris and finally making sure that the water was draining properly. After about an hour or two of standing on a ladder with my leaky hose spraying a fine mist of water on me, covered in debris, muck and mud...my gutters were finally clean.

Until this time, I had never considered what was going on...that these gutters were slowly but surely filling with debris and, with enough time, unable to do what they are supposed to do - protect my home from rain. If more time had passed, perhaps my house would have been damaged...I mean, gutters are put in for a reason, right?

And as I stood there looking at the mess, I heard a voice telling me that this is how life and our relationship with God is...we don't actively avoid nurturing our relationship with God, we simply allow other things to get in the way. We simply fail to assess where we are and where we are going. We fail to make the effort to pull out that ladder, to climb up where we don't want to climb and look into something we don't really want to look into...and it is far easier to just allow all the distraction that the world so readily presents to eat up our time as meanwhile we become full of debris and muck that ultimately keeps us from our truest purpose.

It is so much easier to meet a friend for drinks, or run errands, or go on a date with that cute girl or guy or surf the 'net than it is to dive into Bible study or spend time alone assessing where we are going and how we are getting there.

When I am home alone, the computer beckons me...social networking, email, news, information, videos...the world is available in every way on my 19-inch LCD screen and it is welcome comfort from the pain of a recent break-up or the boredom of not having plans on a given evening. It promises to satisfy my curiosity about the world and the people in it...perhaps even those that are in my life...but in the end the time passes and I have little

or nothing to show for it.

I'm not knocking the Internet, the Internet is a great tool...it's simply an example. Whether things are bad or good, the world is full of distractions: going for drinks or watching TV or surfing the 'Net or doing anything where I put the activity above relationships - both with God and with those who mean the most to me, or that stand to displace the activities that will lead me to grow and experience the life I so much want to experience...serving only to pass the time.

Life is time...it's all we have...and it passes all too quickly. Our lives should reflect our priorities...and we shouldn't be afraid to take a close look. To pull out the latter and make the effort to climb where we need to climb and take a good hard realistic look at where we are and figure out what we need to do to get from where we are to where we want to be. If we don't do this, then life will deposit its "muck" one leaf, one stick, one pine needle at a time until our gutters are filled and unable to function. Just as a relationship is eroded away, not by abusive behavior (although this happens all too often), but so often by one missed opportunity at a time, one missed "good morning", one missed "I love you", one missed "you mean so much to me" at a time until there is nothing left.

I was recently challenged to spend some time figuring out where I've done things that have hurt other people and hurt my relationship with God. I don't really want to because 1) it's a lot of effort 2) there are things I'd much rather do 3) it isn't something that will make me feel good about myself.

The motivating factor is that doing so is the only way to get past all of it, to dig it all out and wash it down so that functionality can be restored...the only way to heal is to go through the process of healing, the only way to build a relationship is to go through the building process, the only way to grow is to pursue growth, the only way to live is to go through the process of living...with intent, with purpose, with a sometimes wavering perhaps but mostly steady eye on the goal.

It doesn't mean I will not diverge, that I will not become distracted or neglect the nearly intangible but oh-so-important things, but it will serve as a reminder of what it is I am pursuing. And when the world throws all the distraction and all the worry it can muster my way...when I am on my way to the Bible study and that girl I really like calls me, when I am on my way to the gym and an intriguing show comes on, when I see a relationship I am in slowly eroding away and I know that shining a light on our issues will be a difficult and perhaps painful process I will think of my gutters and the individually tiny particles that added up to so much...and hopefully it will inspire me to step up the ladder, make the climb, and do what needs to be done...