

Brazil News



No. 181
16 SEPTEMBER 10

Editorial

Infiltration

Let's do a little test. On a piece of scratch paper, give each question a rating from 0, very negative, to 10, very positive. Be honest. Don't try to be politically correct or dramatic in your answers. When finished add up your scores.

Printed media. In your daily papers or news magazines, how much of what you read do you consider to be fairly true or reliable?

TV, movies and Hollywood productions. Even though you don't watch TV or go to the movies, attempt an honest answer. How much of what is seen on the tube or the screen do you consider to be fairly true or reliable?

Religion. Think especially of all protestant religions and their basic function of pointing out the way of eternal life and nurturing the saved. To what extent do you believe they are being successful in carrying out this mission?

Government officials. This refers especially to the three federal powers: executive, legislative and judicial and the issues they deal with. The framers of the United States Constitution were God-fearing men who based their decisions on solid Old Testament principles. The same doubtlessly holds true for the Canadian Magna Carta. To what extent do you feel these same guiding principles are being preserved and followed today?

Schools and universities. Fifty years ago many secular institutions of learning upheld a relatively high standard of morality and common sense. Lay aside your personal convictions and think in broader terms of what kind of graduates these institutions of learning are spewing out each day, the men and women who will soon be in charge of the nation. How do you rate the success or failure of these institutions?

NGOs, human rights organizations, unions and similar organizations. How do you rate their impact on the nation?

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Now, one more question, which you will not answer on the 0-10 scale. What do all these organizations have in common?

The title is a giveaway: “infiltration.” All these institutions, to greater or lesser degrees, have been infiltrated.

Any major policy or institutional changes, especially in governments, usually occur in one of two ways:

- Through an upheaval in which a small group of plotters stage a coup, usually a violent takeover, as a rule orchestrated by army officials and/or discontented citizens.
- Through infiltration, a long-term project ranging over a period of years, more often than not, decades.

Let’s notice how the American Heritage Dictionary defines infiltrate:

1. a. To pass (troops, for example) surreptitiously into enemy-held territory. b. To penetrate with hostile intent. Infiltrate enemy lines; terrorists that had infiltrated the country.

2. To enter or take up positions in gradually or surreptitiously, as for purposes of espionage or takeover. Infiltrate key government agencies with spies.

The conflict between right and wrong is as old as Cain and Abel. This is true in both secular and ecclesiastical circles. While infiltration is not a modern exclusivity, it is during the last 80 years that it has risen to art form. What we have been seeing during the last decades is a concerted effort to implant a worldwide licentious mentality that rejects divine sovereignty and makes man the arbiter of his own conduct and destiny. While this does not involve a world government per se, the idea is to get all governments and societies to adhere to this ultimate liberty.

During the 20th century, both the extreme left, in the form of communism, and the extreme right, in the form of fascism (Hitler and Mussolini) destroyed tens of millions of lives in an effort to create a new world order through war and violence.

In a world in which human rights have assumed a religious fervor, violence is no longer a universally accepted means of change. Infiltration is the new modus operandi. In the sense we are using the word, infiltration is the gradual and surreptitious introduction of radical ideas and philosophies in an unsuspecting society, secular or religious.

Marxism is rotten from the core. It has no redeeming value. Conceptually, it denies the existence of God and rejects many of the basic tenets of virtue and civilization. Its preferred method of implantation is through the massacre of citizens—often the cream of the land—whom it sees as a possible threat to their form of government.

Evil does not exist because of Marxism. Rather, Marxism is an incarnation of evil (Remember Reagan’s Evil Empire). Even though it has been struck a mortal blow, in a perverse way it continues alive. The desire for a way of life without moral restraints nor accountability to God are today wreaking more moral havoc than communism ever did during its heyday. What communism couldn’t accomplish with an outright assault, it is now accomplishing through infiltration. To understand this, let’s take apart the little questionnaire you answered in the beginning.

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The Press. Anyone who has access to the principle national newspapers and magazines knows many of them—not all—have a Leaning Tower of Pisa tilt to the left. Two prime examples are the New York Times and the Washington Post. News, and especially editorials, consistently defend leftist policies and attack the right. Nowhere does the press exert a greater influence on the nation than during election years. Candidates supported by the press have a distinct advantage over those who have been blacklisted. In a word, the press has the ability of turning scandalous mountains into molehills. And, as often happens, molehills into mountains.

TV, movies and Hollywood productions. Here we refer to the image of life projected on film. Foreigners who watch American movies believe they are seeing the American way of life. We find this amusing. Americans who watch American movies believe they can sort out what they are seeing. This is not amusing. Behind the obvious discrepancies that are being “sorted out,” there is a far subtler infiltration taking place. On the more innocent side of this infiltration, and what the public is largely unaware of, when a major film is being planned, producers are assailed by the manufacturers of name brand goods, offering money, to have their merchandise casually displayed. To have the leading actress drinking a can of Coca-Cola, for example, yields enormous benefits. When this same actress casually throws out four-lettered words and flaunts an immoral lifestyle as the most natural thing in the world, there is nothing innocent about the message being transmitted to viewers. To say that such films can be watched and “sorted out” is the same as saying one can carefully walk through a pigsty and emerge smelling sweet.

Religion. To say that religion today is in shambles requires an explanation. This does not mean that there aren't scattered groups who, to the best of their understanding, are following the teachings of Jesus. And it doesn't mean that there aren't many sincere souls over the face of the earth, who amidst great difficulties strive to be faithful. We refer especially to mainline denominations, many of which have simply let down the bars, which instead of preaching justification through faith, now practice a hybrid faith in justification through a man-made (im)morality. The keyword in these religions is “Judge not.” The strait gate of salvation found in Matthew 7:13 has been transformed into the “strait gate of intolerance” and the wide gate and broad way of destruction have become a super highway to eternal life for all those who stop at the tollgate and declare, “I believe.” As mainline Christianity loses its ability to produce moral citizens, a salt-less society will fall to new depths.

Government officials. The highest government official is the president or prime minister. We believe that he carries the destiny of our nation. Next in our evaluation of government officials come the members of congress or parliament, the governors and then other state or provincial officials elected by the people. Finally, almost as an afterthought, we remember our courts.

The framers of the United States Constitution used great caution to create efficient checks and balances to safeguard the dominance of one branch of government over another. Under this setup, congress would make laws, the president would implement the laws and the courts would appraise their constitutionality.

Supreme Court and federal judges are nominated by the president and ratified by the Senate. To assure that they be free of political coercion, they are given lifetime tenures. This principle makes sense, but creates an Achilles heel in which the solution is possibly more damaging than the problem.

Since judges cannot be removed from office, except for blatant misconduct, and since they were not elected by the people, but are political appointees, once on the bench they become more powerful than the president or congress. Not only do they have the power to declare presidential or congressional acts unconstitutional, but through an usurpation of power, they now indulge in what is known as judicial legislation. In a word, this means the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, has assumed the role of the legislature and created laws that would knock the framing fathers out cold if they could see the utter devastation created by the nine men robed in black who preside over the Supreme Court.

Based especially on the first, fourth, fifth and sixth amendments of the Bill of Rights, the Supreme Court—not congress—has decreed that...

- Prayer in school is unconstitutional,
- Women have a constitutional right to abortion,
- Suspects detained by the police must have their rights read to them (Miranda rights),
- Freedom of speech legitimizes the publishing of subversive ideas and every kind of imaginable filth,
- The rulings of lower courts in favor of same-sex unions will probably in the near future reach the Supreme Court. Alongside abortion, this will be one of the most important cases the high court has ever heard.

Most of these decisions, and many others, are split five to four. That means that one justice, who casts the deciding vote (known as the swing vote), has greater power than the entire congress.

The Supreme Court today is made up of six Catholics and three Jews. No Protestants. The Jewish vote is invariably ultra-liberal. Paradoxically, it is the male Catholic vote that has kept the Court from letting down all the bars. Female justices, no matter their religious orientation—presently there are three on the bench—tend to be very liberal.

Schools and universities. No explanation is needed. From co-ed dorms, things get worse and worse.

NGOs, human rights organizations, unions and similar organizations. A tremendous amount of power and influence is forced on society by these organizations, all with a strong leftist orientation. It is true that often these organizations are reacting to indifference and abuses committed by both private enterprise and governmental entities. Their reaction, however, instead of being remedial, ends up being far worse than the malady.

If you have total confidence in all the entities we have just listed, your score will be 60. And if you have no confidence, your score will be 0. Most answers will be in the 30-or-below range. We trust your answer does not reflect an antagonist view toward government or other organizations listed. Rather, and this is the burden of this writing, it should incite us to prayer. Institutions established by God have been infiltrated by

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the forces of evil. We can call this influence leftist, socialist, or even attribute it to a certain political party, but in the end we are seeing exactly what many sincere, dedicated government officials also see: the forces of evil.

As this panorama unfolds before us, we can grow critical of our government, we can lambast politicians, we can attribute our low score to corrupt man. This is unfortunate. By doing so we are playing into the hand of the enemy.

We are living in perilous times. The enemy is attacking not only religious shrines, but positively anything and everything instituted by God, which includes government and government officials.

Over all that we have discussed, there looms a larger picture. For an individual or an organization, religious, secular or commercial to be penetrated or infiltrated, there must first be a breakdown of critical values. Thus, when the courts become increasingly amoral in their findings and decisions, it must be concluded that they are not causing national corruption, as much as reflecting and legalizing a corruption that is already present in the hearts of men.

As one observes the international geopolitical scene, one great truth becomes increasingly visible:

“For not from the east nor from the west nor from the south come promotion and lifting up. But God is the Judge! He puts down one and lifts up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup [of His wrath], and the wine foams and is red, well mixed; and He pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth must drain it and drink its dregs” (Psalms 75:6-8 – Amplified Bible).

If you don't remember another thing you have just read, remember this: It is God who “puts down one and lifts up another.” Just as he holds the Universe in His hands, he holds the election of mortals for public office in His hands. We see men of dubious character campaigning for office and pray that God will put them down. But they are elected and we wonder what has gone wrong.

Nothing has gone wrong, at least not in the way we are thinking. God has exercised His supreme power to lift up a president, a Supreme Court justice, indeed a nation, or people, who will help bring to pass that which He has decreed.

Yes, we should pray for our political leaders. We should be concerned with what is happening in government. But no, we should not feel God's purpose has been foiled if the “Mennonite candidate” is not elected. God makes no mistakes in elections. And no, we should not stick our head in the sand and say that so long as we pray we don't need to know what is going on in the world.

As we view the world scene and see wars and hear rumors of war, as we see men of despicable character coming into power and infidel nations exercising their muscles, we are alarmed. And rightfully so. What we see not only gives us a binocular view of the future, but much more a reading of a moral corruption that has already taken place.

We should pray. The effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man can avail far more than millions of votes. If that makes us politicians, then may we be dedicated politicians and never grow weary in campaigning for the right.

The infiltration of evil in government circles should concern us. But of infinitely greater concern should be the question: Is the Camp of the Saints being infiltrated? ▲

Thinking Out Loud

Three Seagulls

The current wallpaper I am using on my computer screen is of a seagull with outstretched wings, soaring through wispy clouds—and my imagination.

The old seagull. I have read that seagulls are very old birds. Actually, very, very old. This is what I have read and what is being taught in most institutions of learning. The genesis of that seagull on my computer screen actually begins with a big bang billions of years ago. (The people who tell this story can't agree on how many billion years and today it is a number of billion years more than several decades ago. But then we are all subject to mistake. The big difference is the size of our mistakes.)

Anyway, to condense billions of years into just a few minutes of reading, way back there, before anything existed, there is supposed to have been a big bang. (No one seems able to tell me who or what flipped the switch that set off this charge.) As they tell it, the bang took place and stuff flew everywhere and in every direction. The interesting thing is that just a second before the bang there was absolutely nothing. No place. Maybe not even space.

I have always figured that if there is going to be an explosion—after all, you can't have a bang without some kind of explosion or violent impact—where did the TNT, or whatever, come from to create the explosion that would send so much material flying into space (which, who knows, was part of the explosion) that today makes up Earth, the moon, the sun, the Solar system, the stars and planets from other galaxies, millions of light years from earth.

As the years turned into hundred, thousands, millions, and finally billions, something really interesting happened. On one of one of the enormous chunks of matter spewed out by the bang, there was a “little bang,”—a microscopic bang, if you will, in which a tiny cell, a live cell, showed up. This cell divided into two cells. Those two cells each divided into two more cells, and on and on and on...

You all know this story. Over a period of billions of years these little cells reproduced and behold! simple little plants and animals showed up on the chunk of matter today called Earth. (These same people believe, or believed, that something similar might have happened on Mars, and very likely on other planets millions of light years from Earth.) These simple little plants and animals reproduced and with the passing of millions of years evolved (that's the word they use) until...well, until on my computer screen there is a beautiful seagull that took millions of years to create, I mean, evolve.

The young seagull. After talking about billions of years, six thousand years hardly qualifies as a blink of the eye. The story we have about this young seagull that graces my computer screen is totally different from the story of the old seagull. To begin with, there was someone to flip the switch. This was no ordinary switch, like the switch that is flipped to set off a charge of dynamite that makes a big bang.

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And contrary to the story about the old seagull, in which the “facts” keep changing and one is not sure about anything, the new seagull story is documented. We know that during six days the heavens (all the chunks of matter hurled into space during the “big bang”) and the earth were created. We know how and when (right down to the day) the plants and animals came into existence. We know that in this whole process man was not an overhauled or modified version of chimps. (Fortunately, we are sure of this.) And I know that the seagull that stares at me on my computer screen didn’t swim in the ocean like a fish a few billion years ago.

The mechanical seagull. This is what really got me thinking. When I look at my seagull on the screen, I see what is called advanced science. The conical, elongated head of the seagull, culminating in a sharp beak bears an uncanny resemblance to the now-retired Anglo-French Concord supersonic passenger plane. The outstretched aerodynamically contoured wings look like the blueprint to the wings of modern aircraft, complete with ailerons and flaps. The body of the bird conjures an image of the fuselage of the passenger planes in which we quickly and effortlessly are transported from point A to point B in a matter of hours. Aft, clearly visible, is the tail, the bird’s stabilizer. The bird’s feet are in a semi-lowered position, looking just like a landing gear either being lowered or retracted. And, I suspect, they are very efficient air brakes.

One foolishly asks if the creator of the seagull looked into the future, saw modern aircraft and fashioned his handiwork by what he saw, or if modern aeronautical engineers spent time with binoculars watching soaring gulls and then went back to their drawing boards. Really, that is sort of a dumb thing to ask—the answer is obvious—but as my mind flicks between bird and plane, I can’t help but do a bit of comparing:

Planes are loaded with instruments, with sophisticated navigational equipment. Birds don’t have radar, dials or gauges, no altimeter, to know how high they are flying, no GPS. Yet migrating species can fly thousands of miles, day and night, with no maps, radios or compasses, without being driven off-course by contrary winds, and end up exactly where instinct told them to fly.

Planes must take on fuel. They can fly only so far without refueling, when they must either land at an airfield where there is a supply of fuel or refuel in midair. Birds can land most any place and find “fuel.” Some “refuel” in flight by merely opening their beak and catching flying insects. Birds do not pollute (they fertilize—and are adept at producing graffiti),

Planes need a crew. Even pilotless drones require a ground crew to fly them. Birds do their own thing; they make their own decisions and need no tower clearance for takeoff and landing. When they land, no one waves some paddles or flashlights to show them where to park; no need for a maintenance crew to swarm over them, to plug in power cables and remove waste.

Planes carry passengers. Birds don’t. Gotcha! Nope. Contrary to human beings, all birds own their own private plane. So why carry passengers when they all carry themselves? They don’t carry freight. What for? Planes carry bombs and defend their

nation in time of war. Birds don't. Yes, they at times squabble among themselves, but have you ever heard of a full-blown bird war?

Planes today cost millions of dollars—up to a billion. Birds don't cost a cent. Modern planes are designed by thousands of high paid engineers and built and assembled by a myriad of skilled workers. That is the only way to come up with a new plane. Unlike birds, they don't lay eggs and have little ones, which admittedly is a cheaper and more efficient way to keep the fleet in good condition.

Evolutionists say it took birds millions and millions of years to learn how to fly. It took man nearly six thousand years to understand that if he wanted to fly, he would have to copy the aerodynamic contour of bird wings. But when God made a seagull and held it on His finger, it took off flying. Just like that!

And so, when I look at the seagull on my computer screen I am inspired. ▲

Readers Contribute

Show Him Your Badge

(Translated from Portuguese)

A DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) officer made a visit to a ranch in Texas. Crisply he informed the aged owner, "I've come to inspect your ranch for illegal marijuana."

The rancher replied, "That's fine with me. Just don't go into that pasture behind the barn."

The officer was visibly irritated. "Do you realize that I work for the federal government and no one tells me what to do?"

He then removed his badge from his jacket pocket and flashed it to the rancher. He continued: "This badge gives me authority to go where I want to when I want to. I can inspect any property I please without anyone's permission. Have I made myself clear?"

Courteously the rancher assured the official, "Yes sir, you have made yourself perfectly clear. You may inspect my entire ranch, including the little pasture behind the barn."

A while later the rancher heard the federal officer yelling at the top of his lungs. Dropping his work, he ran to the back of the barn to see what was happening. There, in the middle of the little pasture, was the federal officer running at breakneck speed with an enormous Santa Gertrudis bull rapidly gaining on him. Trying to make himself heard above the frantic shouts of the officer and the thundering hooves of the bull, the rancher hollered, "SHOW HIM YOUR BADGE, OFFICER! SHOW HIM YOUR BADGE!" ▲

Statistics

We live in a statistical society. There are statistics to explain just about anything under the sun. We know what kind of food will cause us to have a heart attack, a stroke. The nice thing about statistics is that if you don't like what you are reading today, wait a little and new statistics will come along that agree with what you believe and instead of having a life expectancy of only a few years, you now have a reasonably good chance of living to fourscore years and ten all in one piece if you eat several eggs a day, or whatever.

Here is what a reader gave me recently:

PICKLES LINKED TO EVERYTHING

Few people realize the deadly, terrifying ability of the pickle to kill or injure a person for life. Pickles are associated with all major diseases of the body. They can be related to most airline tragedies. Auto accidents are often caused by pickles. There is a positive relationship between crime waves and the consumption of pickles.

If you don't believe this, consider the evidence:

99.9% of all people who die from cancer have eaten pickles;

99.7% of all people involved in air or auto accidents have had pickles within 14 days preceding the accident;

93.1% of juvenile delinquents come from homes where pickles are served frequently;

Nearly all sick people have eaten pickles;

Of all people born in 1896 who later dined on pickles, there has been 100% mortality;

All pickle eaters born between 1881 and 1901 have wrinkled skin, have lost their teeth, have brittle bones and failing eyesight—if the ills of eating pickles have not already caused their deaths.

Even more convincing is the report of a team of researchers: Rats force-fed with 20 pounds of pickles for thirty days developed bulging abdomens.

And so, folks, until new research on the fatality of pickles comes out, go easy on them. ▲

The choices

John is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, John was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up and asked him, "I don't get it! How can you always be so positive about life?"

He replied:

“Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood.

“Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it.

“Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.”

“Yeah, right, but it’s not that easy,” I protested.

“Yes, it is,” he said. “Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It’s your choice how you live your life.”

I reflected on what he said. Soon hereafter, I left the Tower Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that he was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, he was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw him about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, “If I were any better, I’d be twins. Wanna see my scars?”

I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place.

“The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon-to-be born daughter,” he replied. “Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live.”

“Weren’t you scared? Did you lose consciousness?” I asked.

He continued, “The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read ‘He’s a dead man.’ I knew I needed to take action.”

“What did you do?” I asked.

“Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me. She asked if I was allergic to anything. ‘Yes, I replied.’ The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, ‘Gravity!’”

Over their laughter, I told them, “I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.”

He lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully.

Attitude, after all, is what makes the difference.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

After all today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.



America the Beautiful

The following is a poem written by Judge Roy Moore from Alabama. Judge Moore was sued by the ACLU for displaying the Ten Commandments in his courtroom foyer. He has been stripped of his judgeship and now they are trying to strip his right to practice law in Alabama. The judge's poem sums it up quite well.

America the beautiful,
or so you used to be.
Land of the Pilgrims' pride;
I'm glad they'll never see.

Babies piled in dumpsters,
Abortion on demand,
Oh, sweet land of liberty;
your house is on the sand.

Our children wander aimlessly
poisoned by cocaine
choosing to indulge their lusts,
when God has said abstain.

From sea to shining sea,
our Nation turns away
From the teaching of God's love
and a need to always pray.

We've kept God in our temples,
how callous we have grown...
When earth is but His footstool,
and Heaven is His throne.

We've voted in a government
that's rotting at the core,
Appointing Godless Judges;
who throw reason out the door.

Too soft to place a killer
in a well deserved tomb,
But brave enough to kill a baby
before he leaves the womb.

You think that God's not angry,
that our land's a moral slum?
How much longer will He wait
before His judgment comes?

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How are we to face our God,
from Whom we cannot hide?
What then is left for us to do,
but stem this evil tide?
If we who are His children,
will humbly turn and pray;
Seek His holy face
and mend our evil way;

Then God will hear from Heaven;
and forgive us of our sins,
He'll heal our sickly land
and those who live within.

But, America the Beautiful,
If you don't—then you will see,
A sad but Holy God
withdraw His hand from thee.

—Judge Roy Moore

(I hesitated for some time before including this poem—not because it doesn't tell the truth, but because it possibly does it too graphically. I have not printed it because I have any desire to criticize the American government or its judicial system. Those of you who have read BN for a number of years know I hold the United States on a very high pedestal. I sincerely believe that God has raised up this country and that it has played, and continues to play, a crucial role in His overall plan for humanity and His people.

Nevertheless, as the editorial mentions, we should not place our head in the sand and ignore what is happening in the world, and more specifically in the United States. Judge Moore's poem should cause us to take to heart that God's judgements are sure and that they can come upon a nation "as travail upon a woman with child." cb) ▲

The Voice of Authority

These are actual comments made by 16 Police Officers. The comments were taken off police car videos around the country:

1. "You know, stop lights don't come any redder than the one you just went through."
2. "Relax, the handcuffs are tight because they're new. They'll stretch after you wear them a while."
3. "If you take your hands off the car, I'll make your birth certificate a worthless document."
4. "If you run, you'll only go to jail tired."
5. "Can you run faster than 1200 feet per second? Because that's the speed of the bullet that'll be chasing you."

6. “You don’t know how fast you were going? I guess that means I can write anything I want to on the ticket, huh?”
7. “Yes, sir, you can talk to the shift supervisor, but I don’t think it will help. Oh, did I mention that I’m the shift supervisor?”
8. “Warning! You want a warning? O.K, I’m warning you not to do that again or I’ll give you another ticket.”
9. “The answer to this last question will determine whether you are drunk or not. Was Mickey Mouse a cat or a dog?”
10. “Fair? You want me to be fair? Listen, fair is a place where you go to ride on rides, eat cotton candy and corn dogs.”
11. “Yeah, we have a quota. Two more tickets and my wife gets a toaster oven.”
12. “In God we trust; all others we run through NCIC.” (National Crime Information Center)
13. “Just how big were those ‘two beers’ you say you had?”
14. “No sir, we don’t have quotas anymore. We used to, but now we’re allowed to write as many tickets as we can.”
15. “I’m glad to hear that the Chief (of Police) is a personal friend of yours. So you know someone who can post your bail.”

AND THE WINNER IS...

16. “You didn’t think we give pretty women tickets? You’re right, we don’t...Sign here.” ▲

Reflections

Still Waters

In a visit some years ago to a small fishermen’s village on the Atlantic Ocean in the state of São Paulo State I realized how different their life is from ours. I saw small children laughing and playing on the beach as incoming waves lapped at their feet. To my landlocked mind the amazing thing was that there were no adults nearby shouting, “Be careful! Get away from the waves or you’ll drown!” These children were just as at ease—and possibly safe—in the water as our children are on a terra firma softball diamond.

On the beach of the same village there were little fishing boats anchored several hundred meters from shore. To reach their boats the fishermen would stand upright in a tiny canoe-like affair with gunnels only inches above the water. As they approached each incoming wave, with incredible dexterity, the fishermen would time their assault and slice through the breaker with sure strokes of a single oar. Even though water would tower several feet above the boat on either side, somehow the fishermen would emerge from the wave without a boatful of water. Upon reaching their fishing craft, they would crawl aboard and the smaller boat would be tethered with a rope. The day’s work would now begin. To be able to accompany such a fisherman for one day, I believe, would be like going “down to the potter’s house.”

We frequently compare experiences in our lives to seascapes. Times of happiness are referred to as calm seas. When overwhelmed by problems, we talk about turbulent seas. To use the seas to describe our emotional or spiritual feelings can quite accurately portray what we are going through. This is true not only for adults, for teens and children too.

Children's problems are children-size—that to them are mountains. This is especially true once they begin going to school. When the Bible teaches us to become as little children, this refers to their ability to forgive in the blink of an eye. Children have another side. Otherwise two she-bears would not have torn 42 children apart who were mocking the prophet. Children can be cruel. They have the ability to agitate the waters on which their classmates must navigate. The distress felt by their innocent little victims can cause them to clam up, to cry, or to become belligerent themselves.

Needless to say, the storms through which small children pass are not limited to school. They can be fears of thunderstorms, of sickness, accident or even death. Whatever it is that causes the waves in their lives, how wonderful when they can come home into a quiet harbor. After a difficult day in school, mother meets little son or daughter at the door and asks, "How was school today?" The little one bursts into tears and then, snug in mother's arms, blurts out the story of everything that happened. And when there is no more to tell, the child suddenly smiles. Mother says, "How about a snack?" The *still waters* of the 23rd Psalm have become a reality in a little heart.

Youth are neither children nor adults. Their problems are no longer children-size problems, nor are they adult problems. The problems they face often are not nearly as difficult as the ones they will face later on in life, but since they don't have the experience to help them cope, the waves they face seem mountainous. It is a period of new assertiveness, a nascent desire to take active control of their own destiny. Increasingly, decisions made by others in their behalf—especially their parents—are resented.

Peer relationships are sometimes volatile. The distance from being a very good friend to a not-so-good-friend can be amazingly short. Let's just say that this period of life is a time of misunderstandings, a time of tumultuous seas.

Of all the gifts parents can give their teenage children, probably none is equal to providing them with a quiet haven. Even when youth feel a certain rebellion toward their parents, even they won't admit it, they can sense when love is present. And what a blessed day when they return and thank dad and mom for tugging on the reins. We repeat: the greatest gift parents can give their children is a home with *still waters*.

In a time in which storms toss over half of all marriages on the rocks and homes are characterized by a microwave oven, TVs, beds and bath, and a triple car garage, the concept of a safe haven from storms hardly applies anymore. Of all the values we as a people must conserve at all cost, the haven-home is right at the top of the list.

The haven-home can only exist when parents, or the parent, make it such. When home to them is a safe haven from the storms of life, children will also find it to be a refuge (although there may be periods in their lives in which they reject this safety, but in most cases the fond memories will return and they will reintegrate themselves).

On the face of the earth, there is no place of greater freedom than in a God-fearing home. Those who feel they must visit a bar or a pub after a hard days work to wind down fail to see that there is no better place anywhere than one own's home to find the *still waters* that bring life back to its proper perspective.

Some homes are structurally damaged. We refer especially to homes in which there is not a shared conviction on basic principles. Taken to an extreme, in mission congregations it isn't unusual for only one spouse to get converted. The unconverted one may deliberately do everything possible to upset the routine of the home. For the wife, her husband coming home inebriated may be a routine occurrence. For her, the *quiet waters* may only come during church services when she gathers with her spiritual brothers and sisters.

Again in our mission congregations, it isn't unusual for young people to get converted from homes in which neither of the parents are believers. For such home may be anything but a safe haven. The *quiet waters* may be found in the woods, in a friend's house, in church activities, or maybe just walking the streets.

A haven-home need not be a safe port only for parents and children. It can be a place where others who don't enjoy the peace of a Christian home can stop by and drop anchor for a short time, for precious moments. It is wonderful that a home can be thus shared with those who must spend most of their life on stormy seas.

If you are part of a functional home, thank the Lord. Enlarge the anchorage to your home so that others can stop and have a respite, however brief, from their turbulent seas and enjoy the *still waters* you enjoy. ▲

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