



March 7, 2010

What Good Is It

Over the past several weeks I have been going through newspaper articles that I have saved over the years. As I went through them I realized that many no longer held any significance to me. I believe some of them have some value but not enough to warrant cluttering the attic with them any more. I had newspapers from Desert Storm, the beginning of the Iraq war, 9/11 and the launch of the shuttle after so many years following the Challenger disaster. As I looked through them I started making decisions about what would be kept and what could go. Most of it really made no sense. I ask myself questions like, "When are you going to read this?". The answer to that is still a mystery. Invoking my five year rule, a lot of paper became fireplace fodder and the unread became a great thermal comfort. One of the things that stood out was how some things appear to be important, and they are, and although they may retain some value in the future, it has diminished significantly enough that it does not justify holding onto it. Like many other situations, I began to compare the collection of local and world history in newsprint, to the scriptures. The one brings up a distant memory of events while the other brings to mind a life and vibrance that is unique. I realized that I had become a collector of newspaper stories etc. and really did not have a useful purpose or reason to hold onto them. I have ample resources that contain the same information in other places including the library and articles that I have scanned and committed to digital media. What started out as a good reference library becomes a pile of yellowed and forgotten paper. The Bible sometimes takes on the same role in folks lives. Like the newspaper, you need to have one, just in case you may want to look something up. I realized that I had not consulted my newspaper references in over ten years on average. When I saw the articles I could recall the day I cut them out or bought the paper. Folks perhaps take a look at their Bibles and remember the day they received it, or purchased it, but haven't spent much time using it. Some of the more important articles were preserved and placed back in storage because they had more meaning to me than others, but they still went into a dark corner where they are out of the way. Some have shown me Bibles that were purchased by them, or for them, and have their names written in the hand of a loved one, or engraved on the cover by a well meaning relative. Treated as a treasure, it has a special place, on the book shelf in the back next to seldom seen photo albums and memorabilia from vacations and events past. My Bible, unlike preserved newspapers, is a mainstay of my activities. I have around a dozen or so, and even though I have my favorites I am never far from at least one or two of them. I compared the Bible to news and current events and see how the scriptures are alive. There is a dynamic that never seems to fade, even if the paper starts to. I realize that I collect Bibles just the same as I do newspapers, with one very significant difference. The newspaper articles are tucked in the attic in a box under a stack of other boxes. My Bibles are at my fingertips, in the bookshelves, on my desk and even at work. When we look at what we collect, where we store it, how often we interact with it and what we do with it, we might find a way of identifying what is important to us. We might even understand why these things are significant to us as well. Generally if I haven't used something in five years, I ask what I think I might do with it. Is it taking up room that could be put to better use. Too many times we discover that the things that once upon a time appeared to be so important, really aren't. The scriptures however are timeless. They contain, embody and empower the saving grace of God. They are dynamic and provide new discoveries at every reading. The familiar becomes unfamiliar and unfolds with more depth and power. When read and used they can save and guide. Sitting on a shelf, they can do nothing but watch as we become dated and fade away.

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