

T-SHIRT THEOLOGY

GRAND VISITATION

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MIZPAH CHAPTER #5, SLC

Last summer I had the joy of visiting with a friend from Illinois. Natalie and Ken are retired Air Force and were traveling to California to visit their married daughter. We reminisced about shared family memories; brought each other up to date with pictures of grandchildren. When I asked Ken how many t-shirts he had bought while traveling, we all started to laugh.

Over the years how many t-shirts have you collected? We all have collected company t-shirts; travel t-shirts; or organization t-shirts. How many times have we heard the phrase “been there, done that, got the t-shirt”? For those who love t-shirts there is almost a T-Shirt Theology.

When we lived in Illinois it was obvious that Ken was definitely addicted to T-shirts. He had quite the collection. 9 to 5 Ken looked the distinguished professional that he was. When he got home, and on weekends, he was almost always in blue jeans and a t-shirt. If they were shopping for business shirts, Ken would wander over to the “cashhhh” stuff and invariably come back to Natalie with another t-shirt. Among his favorites was an official commemorative “50th Anniversary of Spam” and “When all else fails, manipulate the data.” Some of his shirts would crack you up.

Natalie and I had tea together every other day, and it was obvious that she wasn't thrilled with her husband's obsession. We decided to record the phrases from the t-shirts we saw on other while we were out and then once a week we would give them to Ken. He thought it was a hilarious exercise - and he admitted there were a few he would like to have. We saw t-shirts: “Behind the Swinging Door” - Was that from the Red Dog Saloon - Alaska's favorite saloon?? “Flat is Beautiful” - “Everything is better in Cabo” - “Of all the things I've lost - I miss my mind the most” - “Wyoming - not for wimps” - “Hug a Tree” - “I am somebody special - God don't make no junk.”

Ken gradually came to the conclusion that Natalie wasn't thrilled with his amusing tees. She didn't come right out and complain, but there were a few subtle nonverbal cues, such as the day he came home and found his “Mr. Bubble” shirt had gotten caught in the garbage disposal. When he realized how overboard his reaction had been to what truly had been accidental, he took the hint and gave Nat veto power over his shirts. However, he did reserve the right to first discuss the issue in a calm and rational manner, and, if that did not resolve it, to plead, beg, snivel, whine, beseech and make a fuss.

I think message shirts are so popular because not only can they be quite funny, but they can also tell you so much about the person beneath the shirt.

A few years ago I saw a teenager wearing a shirt that featured the message, “Be your own God.” Though he apparently had bold aspirations, I was skeptical of his ability to achieve his stated goal. I don't think this adolescent could create so much as a carrot, much less an entire planet. But his underlying message was clear: “Answer to no one but yourself.” It may have been arrogant, but at least it was honest.

I recently saw another very honest shirt that Ken would probably like to own, but I know it wouldn't pass the Natalie test. I'm sure she would think that the message could be easily

misunderstood, but I appreciate the honesty of a shirt that proclaimed, "Sometimes I like to be bad."

I think there is a little bit of mischief left in all of us and many of us, although not proud of the fact, could admit that there is some truth in it. When I mentioned this t-shirt to my nephew Doug, he said he was going to have it made up for everyone of the guys in his summer camp Bible study group. Doug is a minister, and I would like to have been there to hear his sermon - "Sometimes all of us like to be bad."

I believe the more we admit this fact, the less bad we actually will be. Nothing is quite so humbling as admitting that even though we are committed to the teachings of our faith, or to the standards and lessons portrayed in Eastern Star, there might still be a time when we forget our obligations and do, or say, something we regret. "Sometimes I like to be bad" doesn't have to imply something equivalent to the Hindenburg zeppelin, exploding and raining down wreckage on your life as bystanders gasp in shock; it could be a good way of acknowledging that chocolate is your weakness and temptation.

Years ago while attending Church, a woman stood up, loudly interrupted the minister during the sermon, and screamed "I'm leaving this congregation - it is full of hypocrites - you don't live up to your own rules." The minister calmly said: "Thank God they have found their way here." I've never forgotten that incident and the message of tolerance. The next week the message on the bulletin board outside said "Hypocrites welcome". Nobody made a t-shirt, but a few talked about it.

One year at Job's Daughters Supreme Session, we saw a shirt that said "I must catch up for I am their leader." Another said "Mentally confused and prone to wandering." Another, "You can't fire me, I'm just a volunteer."

If, instead of wearing a beaded top, or tux shirt, we were to wear a t-shirt - - - what would be the message you would want on it. Would it be one word - Proficient - Security - Vicissitudes - Family - If - - or would it be a phrase? Would it be humorous or serious? What would the message tell others about us? What would be your T-Shirt Theology? Let me know - it could be do-able.

Thank you to each of you for venturing out on this cold snowy evening. Your T-Shirt for tonight would have said "For Snow Stars - the Weather is *always* **Do-Able**". If you are fed up with yet another wet, dreary, snowy Winter's day, this Arabic saying will surely put your thoughts into perspective: "All sunshine makes the desert."

On a serious note, I'd like to leave you with a simple thought to keep in mind at the start of a new week: Even more important than a friendly meeting is a friendly parting.

THANK YOU