

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Tough phase next in path to free Iraq

It was a dramatic event, watching the Iraqi people trying to topple the statue of Saddam Hussein in downtown Baghdad, and eventually it came tumbling down with the gracious assistance from the crew of a U.S. Marine tank-recovery vehicle.

This scene was repeated time and time again, as portraits and other statues were defaced, removed or demolished.

The war of liberation seems to have been won, but as officials keep saying, it is not over. We have now entered into a new phase which may be more deadly and dangerous than the last three weeks of fighting.

What we expect are more of suicide bombers and single-unit incidents as those who are fanatically opposed to the American presence pop up.

The tough part is to keep the peace with military forces, and foreign military forces at that. We may have been seen as liberators last week, but today we are the new power in control, or trying to take control.

Gen. Tommy Franks understands the difficulty of this phase, and is moving with all the best speed to get a new civilian system established that can be the official power that the people will obey.

We were happy our troops did not suffer more casualties than we have had, and that the missing prisoners have been found. We are also sort of grateful to Turkey for being so obstinate in not letting our troops land. It probably would have made some of the effort in the north a bit easier. The forces which were planned to land there had to divert to Kuwait, including the medical unit our Dr. Natalie Griego is attached to.

She may have missed most of the fighting, as the division was late in arriving on the scene, but we are sure that as the peace effort moves forward, her unit will be in the forefront of trying to help the Iraqi people.

It is a bit early to expect the troops to be coming home, but it is good to see the drawing down of forces has begun with the Navy sending some carrier groups home. At least it should make it easier to maneuver in the small area of the Persian Gulf.

Two questions remain to be answered, and no matter what is said, they are both important to the final outcome. The first is, where is Saddam? and the second is, where are the weapons we said he had?

We must be very careful about accusing other countries in the region of aiding or hiding Iraqi leaders. These may be possible, but without real proof, which is something we keep coming up a bit short on, we may find ourselves in a worse political situation than we got by attacking Iraq in the first place.

Time will tell, and there has to be some patience as the events unfold and the new government is put in place. As with almost everything that deals with the Middle East, it is sometimes tough to see around the next corner.

We wish the Iraqi people the best of luck in trying to meld their various groups into a workable government that is more democratic and fair to all. — Tom Betz



Is getting a tattoo a sin?



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

A friend said he had been told God condemns forever anyone who has a tattoo, and he was wondering if I believe that. Is it reasonable for anyone to believe that? Would a loving, forgiving God condemn someone forever for something he did once in his life? Does the Bible command us not to get tattoos?

To answer the last question, God did command the Israelites not to get tattoos. But that leaves us with another question: does that command apply to us today? What was the reason for it?

In Leviticus 19:28, God commands the Israelites: "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD."

Why did God give them this commandment? At that time, tattooing, cutting and piercing were things done as part of pagan religious worship. The Israelites were God's nation, his special people, and were commanded not to mix in pagan worship or even to appear to be a part of it.

This commandment was part of God's law handed down to Moses. Do we have to obey all of those laws?

Colossians 2:13, 14 says, "Furthermore, though you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcised state of your flesh, God made you alive together with him. He kindly forgave us all our trespasses and blotted out the handwritten document against us, which consisted of decrees and which was in opposition to us; and He has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the torture stake."

When Jesus died, he offered one sacrifice for all of mankind's sins. That made the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law unnecessary and opened up a new way to approach to God.

Galatians 5:1 puts it this way: "For such freedom Christ set us free. Therefore stand fast, and do not let yourselves be confined again in a

yoke of slavery."

Many of the principles of that law are good to follow, but following every last detail was no longer necessary, especially details of the law that were just for that nation and applied only to that time period. We have been set free from such details. So how do we know what God expects of us?

Jesus gave his followers many commands. It stands to reason that if the Mosaic Law said something was a sin, and Jesus also said it is a sin, it is still a sin today. In order to know all of those commandments, we need to read and study the Bible regularly.

Are tattoos among the things we are commanded not to do? Not specifically, but it does provide principles to help us decide whether it's a good idea.

1 Peter 2:16 says, "Be as free people, and yet holding your freedom, not as a blind for badness, but as slaves of God."

Just because we were freed from the Mosaic Law by Christ's sacrifice, that doesn't mean we don't have to care what God thinks of our conduct. That sacrifice is not an excuse to do whatever we want and assume that God will always forgive us for everything.

How we treat our bodies shows whether we respect the Creator, who made us the way we are. A French novelist wrote, "Vanity is the quicksand of reason."

We should use judgment as to whether something we do for appearance's sake is reasonable or not. Just because something is the hottest trend doesn't mean we need to do it. As the

Apostle Paul said, "quit being fashioned after this system of things."

Getting a tattoo puts you at risk for hepatitis and HIV if the needles are not sterile. Some people have been known to get skin disorders from the dyes used. Each individual considering getting a tattoo needs to decide whether these are risks worth taking.

And anyone contemplating a tattoo should consider what others will think. Do you want to be identified as the "type" of person some people may think you are if you have a tattoo?

Christians especially need to be concerned about the image they portray to others.

1 Timothy 2:9, 10 says, "Likewise I desire the women to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind, not with styles of hair braiding and gold or pearls or very expensive garb, but in the way that befits women professing to reverence God, namely, through good works."

Christians should seek to have a modest appearance rather than to spend unreasonable sums of money on fancy clothing or excessive time styling their hair and should show soundness of mind in their appearances. Does spending hundreds of dollars to have ink applied under the skin, risking a possible infection, for something totally unnecessary show soundness of mind? I wouldn't think so, and probably a lot of people don't.

What if someone already has a tattoo? Does that mean he is condemned by God? No. Matthew 26:28 says, "for this means my blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins."

Even if getting a tattoo were a sin, the individual who has one could be forgiven on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. But the Bible does not even say getting a tattoo is a sin, just that it's not really a good idea.

Some mistakes are self-punishing



cynthia haynes

• open season

The day turned out all right, despite my having a case of the stupids in the morning.

I can only plead that I was tired. I don't do well on less than eight hours of sleep, and I had been going on six to seven for the last three or four days. Things were beginning to catch up with me.

Still, that doesn't excuse the total stupidity of what I did. And, as usual, stupidity offered its own reward.

Friday, we attended the first day of the Kansas Press Association convention in Topeka and returned to youngest daughter's home in Lawrence.

We decided to stay with the kids in Lawrence for two very important reasons — we really wanted to see them, and it was a lot cheaper than a motel.

Now, staying with the kids means youngest daughter.

Son has a two-bedroom bachelor pad, which he shares with a roommate. The couch is what's left. Even if we should commandeer his bed, it's not big enough. Besides, he's a college student. The place isn't a wreck, but getting up to go to the bathroom during the night, you could stumble over snoring friends crashing on the

floor.

Youngest daughter, on the other hand, is a teacher. She has a two-bedroom pad all to herself. The second bedroom has a nice set of twin beds and the only thing you would stumble over in the middle of the night are one of her cats. Except for the twin beds, this is just like home.

Saturday dawned entirely too bright and early. Steve had been drafted to help fix breakfast for the convention goers. Breakfast started at 8 a.m. and he was supposed to be there by 7:40 a.m. This meant getting up at 6:10 a.m. and getting out of Lawrence by 7:10.

We also had to have all our stuff packed up and stowed in the car, because after the convention we were heading for home, which is west of Topeka, while Lawrence is east of the capital city.

I got the first shower and turned on my curl-

ing iron as I got in. When I got out, I brushed my teeth, curled my hair and let Steve have the tiny bathroom.

I grabbed the curling iron on the way out because I was afraid I'd leave it behind.

In the bedroom, my clothes were laid out on the dresser but there was no where to put the hot curling iron.

STUPIDITY NO. 1 — I laid it on the bed. I figured as soon as I had the clothes off the dresser, I would move the curling iron up there to cool off and then put it back in my bag.

STUPIDITY NO. 2 — I sat does on the bed. Yep, you've already figured this out. I decided to put on my pantyhose and as I rolled to put my foot in the right side I felt like a hundred bees had stung my on the left thigh.

I'm now the not-so-proud owner of a four-inch-by-one-inch second-degree burn — and no I'm not going to show it to you. I can wear shorts without it showing, but not a swimsuit.

It hurts a little, but not as much as you'd think. My pride, on the other hand, suffered massive damage.

Ah well, as I said, stupidity provides its own reward — a maxim I remember every time I sit down.

garfield



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