

Dearly Beloved of God,

It's been a while since I've written something to you, other than to announce something. Today I have a couple of announcements, and some insight from God, revealed in a very unusual way. If I've cluttered your in box, please feel free to delete. If you think there is something here that would bless someone else, please pass it on.

First the news. The lead guitarist on our worship team, affectionately known as "Duke", and his wife had a baby boy this morning. His name is Raymond. No other news to report concerning that joyous event as yet. I can tell you that the parents were hoping to have the baby before I left for India. Well, they made it.

That leads to the second bit of news; Monday evening Art and I leave for India. We leave Boston at 8:25 PM on the 4th and arrive in Bangalore at 4:00 AM on the 6th. Conversely, we leave India at 7:00 AM on the 14th and arrive in Boston at 6:40 PM on the 14th. It is a long trip, but not as long as it used to be with international flights directly into Bangalore now. We are excited about this opportunity to bring encouragement to the saints in India. Please pray that God would use us to the full extent of His purpose.

Now for the insightful lesson (it probably comes as no surprise that it comes from tennis.) A couple of weeks ago I was playing tennis. As much as the game of tennis mirrors life at times, nothing profound was gleaned from the match. I think I lost that day, so you could say that I learned that I was not invincible; but I already knew that. A reminder of our state as fallen humans is good once in a while.

The real lesson came after the match was over and I was in the locker room. As I kicked off one of my tennis shoes, it rolled over and it looked like something had spilled out. Closer examination revealed two or three little sea-green colored pellets on the floor. I tried to think of where I had seen them before. "Aha! I know - they are pellets from a box of D-con (mouse poison). But how did they get here?" I picked up the shoe to see if any had been caught in the tread, and as I did that, more fell on the floor. It turned out that there were at least two tablespoons of the stuff inside my shoe. The fact was that I had played tennis for an hour with that stuff inside my shoe and I wasn't even aware of it.

One of the things I have learned to live with since this thing called Guillain-Barre Syndrome hit me 9 years ago is some neuropathy in my feet. At times they are on fire with pain, with no noticeable cause; other times they are insensitive to pain (much like when your foot falls asleep). That morning playing tennis, I was not aware of the stuff in my shoe. Normally just one or two of those pellets would have caused some serious irritation.

So, that was odd. I deduced that during the two weeks prior, when I played no tennis at all, my bag with some of the gear in it lay idle in the basement. During that time some of the mice that like to invade our basement in the winter had taken dozens of those pellets, and rather than eat them, had stored them in one of my tennis shoes. As I reflected on this incident, I was aware that we all suffer some degree of spiritual neuropathy at times.

Sometimes we are overly sensitive to others and to the world around us. Every little thing seems to set us off. At times like that, we have a hard job seeing any value in Scriptures such as:

Proverbs 27:5 (NIV)

⁵ Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Proverbs 27:6 (NIV)

⁶ Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Other times our insensitivity causes us to lose all manner of good sense. We become the givers of offense rather than the recipients; in which case it is not more blessed to give.

Matthew 18:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

The better part of Romans 14 is an exhortation to the believer to not be a stumbling block (offense) to his brother. If one of us has the maturity to not be offended by certain things, then surely that same one is mature enough to refrain from that very thing.

Not being sensitive can cause problems. Those pellets probably would have started wearing away some skin had I played another set of tennis without noticing them. And being too sensitive can cause me to not be able to play the game just because of a small wrinkle in my sock. Let us ask God for the grace to be sensitive to those around us, while not being too sensitive ourselves. This calls for some very un-common sense.

God bless you this day and always.

Yours for His Purposes,
Pastor Les

1/30/08 Sense and Sensitivity and other good stuff