

There are many parallels between Scouting and Christianity. Just think of the twelve points of the Scout law. Which of these did Christ follow? He followed all of them. What part of the Scout oath did Christ follow? All of it.

But consider the point: a Scout is brave. What could there possibly be about religion that is brave?

You probably hear at school that religion is only for chickens, sissies, or for those who are weak. It isn't "cool", you know, to be a Christian. At least, it isn't cool to act like one. In fact, the 'intellectuals of society' have told us that man believes in God because he is basically afraid and needs someone or something to protect him. He has dreamed God up just to ease his mind! But it is equally logical to conclude that man rejects God because he doesn't want anyone to be greater than he is, and he is afraid to accept the responsibility that God places on him. He simply refuses to believe what he does not want to believe. You see, in either case, an argument can be made that introduces man's fear.

But only those who are completely ignorant of the Bible can say that religion is for the weak and cowardly. There are many recorded instances of great bravery in the Bible. One that comes immediately to my mind as one of the greatest is the story of David and Goliath. While the entire army of Israel shook in fear of a nine-foot giant who came out every day to challenge them, a boy about the age of some of you here said, "It's no big deal if God is on your side. After all, with his help, I have already killed a lion and a bear." And he went out and knocked the giant out with a stone from a slingshot and then killed him with his own sword!

Then take the story of Daniel. Here is a man who in his old age was told very pointedly that he could not worship His God, at the penalty of death. So, when he heard this, he went straight to his room, opened his window and began to pray, knowing full well that his enemies were watching him so that they could catch him. What defiance! For this action he was thrown into a den of lions, and he came out unharmed. This man believed in God; but can you call him a sissy?

Then there were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. For their refusal to bow down to the king, they were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. On being told this, they told the king, "Our God is able to deliver us if he wants to, but even if he doesn't want to, we still will not bow down to you!" Then they were thrown into a furnace so hot that the men carrying them were killed by the heat. But these three men came back out unharmed because they believed in God: How weak can you get?

The real point that I want to emphasize is that there is no shame whatsoever in following a man like Jesus. Jesus was perhaps the bravest man the world has ever known. Read when you have a chance his period of waiting before he was taken captive by the mob. He knew what was going to happen to him, and he had every chance to escape, but he didn't. He was taken and beaten, abused, and eventually crucified, but he took it all calmly and silently. Jesus did not begin screaming 'I'm innocent, I'm innocent,' like most criminals do. He endured courageously tremendous torture and pain. He was tough. Being a Christian is not for the weak. It is not for sissies. Of course, we aren't tortured for believing in God today. But if we don't have that kind of faith and courage, then we can't claim to be a Christian anyway.

Where can a man get this kind of inner strength? If you read the Bible, you will see. If you give the principles that you have learned in Scouting the significance that Christ gives them, then He will give you the strength to lick the world.

The big thing when I was in Scouts was being tough. If you weren't tough, you didn't exist. No one even noticed you. But there are two totally different ways of being tough: You can be tough at other people's expense, or you can be tough at your own expense, like Christ. In other words, you can treat yourself as a superior and treat others like dirt, or you can be one who can endure the pressures of life without collapsing.

But let me show you what real cowardice is. When someone hides from the world behind drink or drugs that is cowardice. When he doesn't have the guts to face the world without numbing his mind, when he can't hack the pressure from the crowd to do something wrong then he is just plain weak. If he can't stand up for what he knows is right, he is a coward.

Think back to the scripture that was read earlier, Psalms 46:1-3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

Jesus' disciples were at one time in the same type of situation: on the sea of Galilee they sat in a boat in the midst of a tremendously powerful storm. The boat was about to sink and the disciples were scared to death, but Jesus simply said, "Peace, be still," and it was immediately calm. If we trust in God, we do not need to fear. We don't need to have ulcers, heart trouble, or high blood pressure. The Bible tells us that perfect love overcomes fear, or if that word love is too heavy for you, use the words service and respect for others.

Another important idea in scouting is that of conservation. If you have ever seen the Tennessee trash commercial, you know what it is really like to waste. You see a beautiful place like this totally destroyed by garbage and the waste of civilization. Just as unchecked water erodes the topsoil away from our land, if we don't check our actions, our soul will waste away.

Each of us is given a certain amount of talents in our life. Soul and body ecology amount to what we in Scouting try to emphasize in the phrase 'do your best.' All God really asks of you is to do the best you can with what you have, and to not waste any of it.

The solution to the problem of waste and erosion deals with the words conscience and consciousness. We must be conscious of what we are and what we are doing. We need to watch ourselves continually. One of the great ideas of ancient philosophers was that man should 'know himself.' Without this, we are in effect, blind. James tells us in his book, chapter one, vs 23, 24, "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror): For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and then forgets what manner of man he was." In other words, spot checks are not enough, we examine ourselves periodically, but we either can't see clearly or we forget too soon. We have to keep a constant watch on our heart and mind. Our conscience, then, provides us with a way to compare our actions to the truth at all times. It is something like a mirror in which we can examine ourselves, but we must know the truth for it to work right. And you can know that truth by studying the Bible.