

Instincts

In Matthew, chapter 8, verses 19 and 20, a man came to Jesus and said, "...I will follow you wherever you go" (NIV). The man is identified as a scribe. Scribes in Old Testament times played several very important roles. It was their job to complete the tedious check-and-recheck process of transcribing the scriptures for future generations, and it was the duty of scribes to decide who had access to the thrones of Kings and who did not. It was also the role of scribes to muster and number military troops. Their roles were determined by the priesthood and included such necessary tasks as reading the Law before the nation of Israel. By the time Jesus came, however, their roles had changed considerably. They began their studies at age 14. If they continued to study until the age of 40, they could hold administrative positions in justice, government, and education and could even serve as Judges. The interpretation of Jewish law became the duty of the scribes, and their interpretation was considered more important than the law itself.

So, when Jesus responded to the man's question in Matthew 8, he knew he was talking to someone who placed great emphasis on earthly learning and knowledge. Notice his reply: "...Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (NIV). The obvious lesson here is although foxes and birds have a home in this world, Jesus does not! But it is important to note that Jesus referred to himself as "the Son of Man." We know he was the one true God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16), but he was also, as the "Son of Man," completely human. He was saying that he, even in his humanity, had no dwelling place in this world. Is it possible that he was telling this scribe that the intended dwelling place of man is not in this world? That if you are going to have a complete understanding of the human experience, you will have to reach beyond the knowledge this world offers and enter into an area where the only way you can know it is by faith.

Consider this, every animal that God has made has been fully equipped. As Jesus pointed out, foxes have an inherent knowledge of how to dig

a hole and provide a dwelling place for themselves. Birds, on the other hand, build nests, and it is a joy to see the birds going to work in late winter because it lets us know that the beauty of Spring is at hand. How do foxes know to dig a hole? Or birds to build a nest? Or, for that matter, who has taught the bear to hibernate in the winter, or the nocturnal animals to sleep during the day. What a beautiful and diverse creation God has put all around us! And all this life around us is instinct-driven. The fox lives by the instincts God gave him, and therefore digs a hole, while the bird, by instinct, builds a nest. Consider the animals and the diverse instincts God has put in each of them.

Years ago, I read an article in National Geographic about an eaglet that had fallen from his cliffside nest to the forest floor. He was unhurt, and to the observer's surprise, his mother made no effort to bring him back to the nest. She stayed close, ready to protect him from any predators, even brought him food and water, but made no effort to return him to the nest. For nine days, this eaglet lived like a chicken on the ground. Chickens and eagles are made pretty

much the same. They each have feathers, beaks, wings, etc., but the essential difference is that an eagle is an eagle on the inside, and a chicken is a chicken on the inside. Why? Instincts. God gave the eagle instincts that make him an eagle, and the same with a chicken. So finally, on the 9th day, after several test flights and almost reaching the nest, the eaglet realized that he was, after all, an eagle, and the mother eagle brought him back to the nest.

But what instincts has God given to man? Certainly not anything to do with our habitat. Man has survived in the desert, the ice, the mountains, the valleys, and there is no instinctive drive to live in a certain climate. Nor is there any instinct driving us to build certain dwellings. Man has lived in igloos, huts, tents, caves, dug-outs, tree houses, brick houses, wood houses, even glass houses! We make food out of just about everything God has made, while the animal kingdom only eats what their instincts allow them to.

There is, however, one instinct God has placed deep within the heart and soul of every man, and that is the instinct to seek a higher power. Every

civilization and society that has ever existed has followed their instincts to seek and worship their creator. Where they did not have the Word of God or the name of Jesus, they worshipped everything and anything from their ancestors to the Sun, the Moon, totem poles, animals, even Kings, Queens, and each other. They, because of their instincts, made for themselves gods. As driven as a fox is to dig a hole; as driven as a bird is to build a nest; so we are, if we will listen, convinced by our instincts to seek the Lord.

“...foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.” This world is not the home of the human family. We were made for heaven, and God was kind enough to give us a road map; the Bible. The first Panda bears brought from China to America died because their keepers did not know to recreate their habitat and satisfy their instincts. God knows how to satisfy our instincts, how to create our habitat, and how to fulfill that drive within us to seek him. So, this is one time we can say for certain, “Follow your instincts!”

Elder Steven Kerr