



# table talk

3/15/26

There have been few things I have enjoyed as much as writing the Life Matters episodes that I did for several years while I was Lead Pastor at Christian Life. There was usually good feedback and the one-minute messages were well-received - except for one. I don't mean I never got push-back or that everyone thought my insights were special, but one listener really took issue with one message. I wasn't offended because I could see he really didn't understand what I was trying to say.

The story was about a safari veteran in the early 20th century who had killed a lion and realized there was a very young surviving cub. Feeling remorse, the hunter decided to raise the little one as a pet. He spent time daily feeding and caring for the animal and developed quite an affection for the cat. As the lion grew, it became painful for the owner as he realized the lick of the lion had changed. What appeared to be playful and affectionate soon began to draw blood - not a lot at first and more of an abrasion than an open wound. One of the guides explained that this was indeed the way of certain big cats. When allowed the time, adult lions would essentially lick the skin off their kills in order to "tenderize and flavorize" their prey. A sort of marinade, if you will. In a short period of time, the owner knew the tender relationship with the animal had ended. The change was at first subtle, then alarming, and both man and beast somehow understood the relationship had changed. With mixed emotions, the hunter eliminated the lion, realizing that in a short matter of time that the hunter was becoming the prey.

**I explained that sometimes things in our lives have to die. That's where I lost him.**

The listener scolded me about promoting such cruelty to animals. He continued writing about the abuse we humans make upon animals in labs, in keeping them as pets and using them for food. It wasn't that he (mistakenly) accused me of various mistreatment of animals that upset me so much. It upset me that he really didn't understand the rest of the message. I don't think it ever crossed his mind.

I was speaking allegorically. My point was that sometimes we hold on to things (I called them 'secret sins' because they bring pleasure, and it seems we can really keep them under our control). I explained that



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when God tells us to get rid of certain things, it's because He loves us and wants only the best for us.

When God speaks to us about these things, it usually results in a fight. But it is a fight we need to lose.

Holy Spirit may speak to us about a relationship...  
or an attitude...  
or unforgiveness...  
or pornography...  
or financial dishonesty...  
or lying...  
or cheating...  
or causing divisions...  
or judging...  
or unkindness...  
or selfishness...  
or... you fill in the blank.

And usually these things we feel fully justified in holding on to. But God is saying that a small thing will become a big thing eventually. It may not be quick or all at once, but that thing **WILL** grow! And you will not be able to control it. It will lick the hide right off of you.

I have no disrespect for my friend who cares for animals, but I pray he will one day see the weightier issue I was addressing.

The question is this: am I harboring anything in my life that is displeasing to God?

**Remember three things:**

1. We can't get away with it.
2. We can't control it forever.
3. God is willing and able to help us get victory over it!

I love you,  
**Pastor Stephen**