

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*

*2 Model  
Ships*

*For  
Sale  
to good  
Steward*



## The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekking International, *Introduction*

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The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International, stuff will soon be available, please submit your designs for this new line of paraphernalia and become immortal in shirt, song, or prosaic preponderance.

True wilderness travel, as opposed to most back country camping, is marked by the truth that sometimes unforeseen obstacles make the journey last longer than expected and the simplicity of our nature leads to a much more difficult hike than what you planned. If you convert that wilderness trip into a life long pilgrimage on earth, you then begin to get an idea on how difficult some passages in our lives may become.

In the wilderness you should have been taught to travel light. But if you superimpose that trek over our modern, stuff, oriented culture you have not only the potential for conflict, but some real and tough choices to make on how the journey should be lived. Therefore, this week we will begin a multipart installment plan on how to prepare for such an undertaking. What to take, and what to leave behind, and how to find provisions along the way.

So, we are really going to be talking about stuff management. Since stuff management is a prime concern of mine at this time, this is really a primer for me. You, by your choice to continue to read these next installments, have become my traveling companions: The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International. We are not going to limit our pruning to just stuff stuff, but all natures of stuff, spiritual baggage, emotional jewelry, power trappings, and less we forget, sinful pleasures, to name a few. We might find a few necessities along the way, but mostly we will be looking at how to manage, as stewards, the stuff in our lives. The reasons I have to open this stuff paradox box are varied, but for our encouragement we will limit this week these interactions of stuff to just three.

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At the recent Northwest Pastors Conference and announcement was made concerning the importance of obtaining a facility to hold these, and similar events, keeping the conference fees in house, so to speak. This wise stewardship of financial resources is a very good idea. Me, being interested in all sorts of retreat and conference facilities, I volunteered to do what I might. What is needed is really a place to put, sleep, and feed 500-700 people for a few days economically. No small stuff feat since for the rest of the year, you have to figure out what to do with all that space. That remainder of the time must pay the overhead on the facility, get it fixed up, keep it that way, and a host of other not so small stuff.

Now a few of you know that this weekly undertaking precipitated out of stuff of trying to obtain a ship to perform training, hold retreats, and conferences. The only difference was that particular ship was for about two hundred people. Could there be a reasonable ship out there with a purchase price of nothing, raised to if necessary, next to nothing, to hold a group that size?

Sure enough, in Northern Europe lies a roro night passenger ferry, updated in the early nineties and sitting since 1996. They are not asking next to nothing, but after sitting seven years collecting rust, it might be worth an offer. So to the list of stuff above you would need a place to park 400 plus feet of boat. But if its the Lord's work, stuff stuff is all small stuff, it is just that contrary to worldly wisdom, all is not small stuff. Some stuff is essential.

A month or so ago I loaned out my old truck (hoping this would sell it) to a friend to transport some imported model ships to a wholesale trade show in Seattle and one in San Francisco. I got this call late last week to let me know my truck was now safely back in Seattle, and because of banking error, they could not give me any money for the use of my truck right now, but I was more than welcome to come over and pick out a couple of model ships as interest, for lack of a better term.

Having seen some of the models but not paying too much attention, I picked up one in a big box, and one in a little box and brought them and my truck home. On the way home I began pondering, with all the stuff I have to get rid of what difference would a couple of model ships make. When I got home there was a message on my answering machine that the ships I picked out had a suggested retail value for the big one of from \$300-\$600 and the little one about half that much.

After assembling the two, they are really beautiful wooden model ships, especially the wood on the big one. But I surely don't need one expensive model ship, least of all two. I tried to put the big one on top of my television, but the top of the mast hits the ceiling, so now the little one sits there. The big one sits on the floor or on my dining table depending upon circumstances. I have looked briefly at selling them on eBay, but at least for now, from a stewardship perspective, that doesn't seem as the proper way to go. So for now instead of a real ship with no place to put it, I have two model ships with no place to put them.

One thought has crossed my mind in that musing, perplexing way, is that they would fit very well in a gift shop on the real Diversity big ship. These are the types of natural stuff issues The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International will attempt to deal with in upcoming installments.

Turning to the more intangible, essential, stuff. A wise man recommended recently the movie "Luther." Fitting with our consumer age, one of the posters on the theater where I went to see it Sunday afternoon, read something like, "Understand the Reformation in only two hours."

Finishing my buttered popcorn at the end of the preview trailers, I was ready for the substance of the movie. For a movie on Luther, it was, as best as I can remember, quite historically correct. However, dumbed down for our catholic age. I was left with the impression that Luther, and the subsequent Reformation was waged on the doctrine of "God (Jesus) loves me, this I know, (not because the Bible tells me so) but because I feel this in my bosom, and He has a wonderful plan for my life, (therefore I will die in my sleep, but thousands and thousands will die for this message.)"

We were supposed to see this Latter Day Saint's concept in contrast to the Roman Catholic plan that "God (Jesus) needs our help, especially a lot of our money, to build His church." Come to think of it, in those terms I guess I really couldn't find in the movie itself any real reason for the hassle, and the blood shed.

Nowhere in the movie was there any mention of salvation based on grace alone. No mention of Luther's Godly insight revealed by reading the Book of Romans. The movie ends with what

Lutherans call the Augsburg Confession, but all we see is a few German princes willing to lay down their lives for not wanting to pay indulgences to get friends and family out of purgatory, or build St. Peters in Rome, but to keep their gelt in the homeland, for self and Germany.

Perhaps, in the post modern world, a few people are willing to lay down their lives over a period of time for stuff, maybe even earthly kingdoms. But most of the time that response to die for something requires a stuff much bigger than the individual and the world of stuff he controls.

Luther's and subsequent doctrines are contained in the "Book of Concord." The Roman Catholic response to the Reformation's premise of Salvation based upon grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, as presented in Scripture alone, is presented in the Canons of the Council of Trent. These doctrines are still in effect for the Roman Catholic Church today.

We haven't space for naming Calvinist, Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, Armenian, and other Protestant doctrinal statements. But needless to say over the years millions of Christians (with many significant doctrinal disputes) have been willing to give their lives for the truth and sufficiency of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. That is truth summarized in the stuff of those solas of the Reformation.

The scary part of this movie, is not its lack of doctrine however, it is in the conversations I overheard as I left the theater, and the reviews I read on the internet. Those reviews can be summarized in the concept that: The movie stuff you saw, was all the stuff there was (and is).

The problem is that, "We ain't been learned nothin' else." From cradle to grave we have been taught that it is really just a consumer issue, what I have seen and hence believe, is the only reality.

What I have learned recently, and more generally over the last year, is getting, or buying the stuff of our baggage is a relatively easy task. Getting rid of it is much more difficult. To put this disposal task simply, we have to separate the valuable from the junk, dispose of the junk, and then in some fashion put a value judgment on the stuff we at first determined to keep. Does it have present, future, or past value, and is the value based on utility, emotion, art, family, religion, or a whole bag of other forms of currency. Then repeat the process.

Now as wilderness pilgrims and members, in good standing, of The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International our Bible passages for this long journey is the parable of the "Rich Young Ruler" as found in Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-22. Now knowing that there is a book in here in this verse relationship, and ignoring it, verses 21-22 in each gospel can be paraphrased, "Jesus told him, 'Go sell all your unneeded stuff and give what you make to the poor.' The man went away in deep moral crisis all bummed out, because he had lots of stuff."

Now I have rarely heard any thing contrary to this paraphrase application, "The rich young ruler, had too much stuff, and stuff (as is money in our legalism) is the root of all kinds of evil."

In our gnostic material culture, the stuff is the application. However, in God's culture stuff is stuff, it is spiritually neutral. If you truly believe the creation account in the Book of Genesis, stuff is good, it is just when stuff adversely affects our communion with God that it becomes sinful. Hence, at least in theory, stuff could enhance our goodness. It depends on how the stuff is utilized.

Therefore, an alternate application could be: The rich young ruler knew he was richly blessed with stuff from God. He got all bummed out because he knew how extremely difficult it is to get rid of blessing stuff. Because the exhortation was not to give the stuff to the poor, as implied in most preaching, but to sell the stuff and give the proceeds to the poor. The poor need stuff for subsistence, not the stuff of blessing. Blessing is incompatible with subsistence, but can follow after the subsistence need is filled. The difficult, if not impossible task, without God's divine wisdom, is to be a good steward of the disposal of those blessings to achieve the desired objective: To provide subsistence and blessing to the poor, relative to the poor's situation and culture.

Now, fellow members of The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International, where it really hits our trekking path is that, since stuff is spiritually neutral and essentially good, blessings must be sold to others with the capability of being blessed by our exchange of our blessings for their money. Hence, those funds given, or perhaps better illustrated by investing in the poor, are to be generated by fruitful enterprise. This investment includes the preaching of the gospel. (Far too often funds just given to the poor are used for blessings or dependencies, rather than necessities.) This is the essence of missions work.

Put another way, Western culture says, “Make it, sell it, dispose it. Recycle the principle, but not the product, and hoard the principal forever.” At the level of western consumption even the necessities are luxuries, and much of that consumption produces capital for necessities in the “developing world.” With, of course, the major cut taken by the middle men who add nothing to actual value. Our Order’s members goal, as part of our culture, is to live within that system but be part of recycling the product and the principal, but not the principle. For the products (fruit) of Godly life are not consumed, but are eternal. Stewardship then becomes a way of growing, manufacturing, or producing eternal fruit, or stuff with eternal capital.

The blessings of my two model ships are the product of such a worldly endeavor. Their cost in Viet Nam are about one fifth to one tenth the retail value. But at least that is closer to true market enterprise than most of the imported stuff we buy, and we never look at this stuff as a blessing. That is the reason that contemporary preachers teach that the stuff is the problem. But as you can see, the problem is much more complex than that. My problem is to take this fruit of some person’s toil and use it to bring glory to God in some way. See how difficult it can get? As much of the time in this neighborhood, I just can’t make a sign that says free and put the ships and the sign on the lawn and wait until someone driving by picks them up. That is not ship stewardship.

What Jesus was teaching in the parable of the rich young ruler is that stuff is a problem, because of our “Bondage of the Will,” as Martin Luther put it. As we will see as fellows of The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International, getting a shirt now, will be a wise investment in the future. Just think of how much really not important blessings we possess, and how difficult it is to unload them. As a card carrying member you will soon discover the wealth of all your worldly possessions, and by getting this book when it is finished and selling it to all your former friends, neighbors and absolutely everyone you meet, you can change the world one person at a time. Alas, revivalism at its best.

As we will learn, God works through our wilderness experience (solitude and isolation) in harmony with our stuff, to understand the true blessing received by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. That spoken Word of creation, spoken into the chosen vessels of God, gave us the written Word. That Word testifies, of the grace that brought that eternal Word, to take on fleshy garments, and to become fully human. Through that incarnation we may receive by unmerited grace by faith, and receive the adoption of sons and daughters of the eternal living God. That is the Good News of freedom from stuff, and also the freedom for our sin bound will.

I have in a box in the basement the “Book of Concord” as well as a book containing the “Canons of the Council of Trent.” Even if you have read both chances are you will not readily discern the significant differences between either Lutheran (and Reformational Protestant) or Roman Catholic doctrines concerning grace. As sojourners of the Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International, we will sort this out in weeks to come, for it is important on how we treat our stuff, not just in Reformation times but as we make tough stuff decisions every day.