

Sermon
Elim Community Church
Bath, Maine

Title: The Ready Christian

Text: Acts 17:11, Luke 8:4-15

Introduction: I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught... After hearing his dad preach on “**justification**,” “**sanctification**,” and all the other “**-ations**,” a minister's son was ready when his Sunday school teacher asked if anybody knew what “procrastination” meant. The boy said, ***“I’m not sure what it means, but I know our church believes in it!”***

Jimmy had trouble pronouncing the letter “R” so his teacher gave him this sentence to practice at home: “Robert gave Richard a rap in the rib for roasting the rabbit so rare.” Some days later the teacher asked him to say the sentence for her. Jimmy rattled it off like this: “Bob gave Dick a poke in the side for not cooking the bunny enough.” He evaded the letter R. There are many useful, committed Christians at church, but it is sad that so many others are evading the **R meaning R-eady: ready to serve, sing, visit, teach and be truly committed**. These believers are saved, we believe, they are good people, accommodating, and are religious, but are just not committed. It is possible to be so religious that we cannot be Christian. Are you handling the letter “R” right?

It’s fun to compare how life today is different from life 500 years ago. Some of the expressions we use, and the things we do, are based on life in the 1500’s. For instance, did you know that...?

- ***Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May. In order to smell pretty, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide their body odor.***
- ***Baths were a big tub filled with water. The man of the household had the privilege of nice clean water, then all the other males could take their bath. Next the women were allowed to bathe and then the kids. The babies were last. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”***
- ***Back then houses had thatched roofs. It was the only place that animals could stay warm so they lived together on the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would fall off. That’s where we get the expression, “It’s raining cats and dogs.”***
- ***When company came over, the host would bring out some bacon and hang it up in order to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man “could really bring home the bacon.” They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat.”***

Don't you feel better knowing what these phrases mean? While many things have changed in the last half century, the message of the gospel stays the same.

Remember the sower of the seed, faithfully sows... no matter what life brings they are sowing the truth of the gospel...

We want to make a difference, we can make a difference. Our mission is mammoth and there is no other plan. We are the plan. When Jesus looks at you and me this morning, He still says, **"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"** (John 20:21).

As evangelicals we like to talk about witnessing but we struggle to actually do it. Evangelism is a bit like strong horseradish – we praise it with tears in our eyes!

Truth #1: People Matter to God

John 3:16 tells us that **"God so loved the world..."** We agree with this one but we don't always own it. We hear it so much that it doesn't penetrate our lives. In actuality, this belief is the hardest one to fully absorb into our value system. Do you believe it to the very core of your being?

Friends, we need to do whatever we can to gain God's heart toward those who don't know Him yet. 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us that God **"is patient...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."** It doesn't matter how old they are, what color they are, what country they're from, whether they have money, education, or a job. It doesn't even matter how bad their sins are. They have great value in God's eyes, and their repentance will bring **"rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God"** (Luke 15:10).

Every person has worth and dignity because they've been created in the image of God. Bill Hybels puts it in very practical terms when he says this, "You've never looked eyes with anyone who doesn't matter to the Father."

Let me illustrate by using this simple drawing. This figure represents someone in your life who deeply matters to God.

Truth #2: People are spiritually Lost

While people have tremendous value and worth to God, the Bible declares a second truth: People are spiritually lost. Romans 3:10-12 spells out this reality: **"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'"**

This is not a pretty picture. But we need to understand this truth or we won't be motivated to become a contagious Christian. **People are lost without Christ.** Applying this certainty on a personal level, it means that our friends, our neighbors, and even our

family members are not okay simply because they do good things and engage in religious/church activities. Let's be crystal clear on this: No matter how "good" people are, if they don't know Christ as Savior and Lord, they are headed for eternal torment in a place called Hell.

This can be shown by adding a chasm to our drawing which illustrates what Isaiah 59:2 states: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

Truth #3: People Need Christ

The good news is that everyone matters to God. The bad news is that people are spiritually lost. The great news is that Jesus died as full payment for our sins and everyone needs Christ in order to be saved.

Our post-Christian culture bristles at the teaching that Jesus is the only way to a relationship with the Almighty. And, an insidious form of religious pluralism is creeping into many churches, which teaches that there are multiple paths to God.

Jesus Himself was unambiguous when He said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Acts 4:12 adds, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." The apostle Paul captures this truth in a short phrase when he says in 1 Timothy 1:15: "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."

Let's admit something this morning: we have an unpopular message and we've been commissioned to present it boldly. While it might not be fashionable, it's the best news we can give to people who are spiritually lost and on the road to eternal separation from God. People need to hear the message of the cross because, as Romans 1:16 says, "It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

Let's expand our drawing to show that the cross is the bridge that leads lost people back to God.

Truth #4: People Have Moved

Before moving on to the fourth truth, for most of us, the first three are nothing new. This is standard Christian teaching that has been taught in various ways for two thousand years. While it's true, we need to ask God to transfer these truths from our head to our heart and then to our hands.

While this picture may have described people in our culture a few decades ago, something has changed. The vast majority of people in our society used to live close to the chasm and had at least some understanding that they were sinners who needed the

forgiveness of God. Most people shared sort of a collective church consciousness. As a result, evangelism could be very direct and confrontative. After all, if people are on the fence, they need a compelling presentation and a push to commit their lives to Christ.

Here's the fourth truth. For the most part, people in our culture have moved. They have disengaged from biblical moorings and can no longer look over the edge and see the depth of their sins. In fact, for many people, they don't even recognize that there is a rift between them and God.

People are further away than we had originally thought – and they're continuing to move in the wrong direction. Here's how we can illustrate it:

Whatever term we use: secular, postmodern, or post-Christian, the fact is that people don't think the way they used to think or believe the things they used to believe. People have taken steps away from Christian beliefs, values and morals. When we say, "**God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,**" many will respond by saying, "**Oh yeah? Which God?**" They may even wonder what they've done that is so bad that they need forgiveness for. To the postmodern person, all people are basically good, even though they may make mistakes here and there.

Because so many people today don't believe in absolute truth, and regard those with do with suspicion and even contempt, we must be willing to try something else. We need to communicate the same message... Remember from our Church History class, It is not that people don't believe in the Historical Christ or even the Spiritual Christ, it is that they don't see Him or His power in the lives of the people in Church (Generalized saying... We have the form of God but not the power); the church has lost its identity and its mission... **We don't need a different approach we need a transparent life...**

Truth #5: People Need Answers

If we're serious about impacting our culture with the life-changing gospel, we must recognize that people have moved. That leads to our fifth truth: People Need Answers. Many have erected roadblocks and walls between them and the Lord. Here's what it look likes in our drawing:

We need the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to destroy the walls setup in the minds and hearts of the people around us, we need to pray that the Lord will soften their hearts... and We need to continue to sow even if we don't see the Harvest.

Beloved, the first step in being ready to make a difference is to demonstrate authenticity in your Christian life, in other words you must live what you believe....

We are to "**set apart Christ as Lord.**" To "**set apart**" means to "**sanctify**" or "**make holy.**" Jesus must be Lord of our lives. The word "Lord" is a title of honor that demands respect and reverence. It's the New Testament equivalent of the title "Jehovah." To say that Jesus is my Lord is to say that He has sovereign power and authority over me and I

submit to Him with reverent obedience, because I am His possession. When Jesus is set apart as Lord, He will deliver us from those things that we struggle with and which keep us in bondage....

To live under the lordship of Christ is a command. It's one thing to acknowledge Jesus as Savior; it's another thing to make Him Lord of your life. Scripture never separates the Lordship of Jesus from his work as Savior. In the book of Acts, He is referred to as Savior twice, but is called Lord 92 times! When the two titles are mentioned together, Lord always precedes Savior. When Thomas finally recognized Jesus as His Savior after the Resurrection, he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" Charles Spurgeon has said, "You cannot have Christ for your Savior unless you also have Him as your Lord."

Is Jesus Lord of your life right now? Have you ever made a decision of your will to decide to live under His leadership in every area of your life? Is Jesus in complete control, or are you deliberately keeping things from Him? It's easy to think that because Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins in our lives, that we are now good enough. Some of us are living under our own leadership, not the Lord's.

The Lord of the universe has given us a command. He needs to reign in our hearts. He is Lord and longs to lead your life. Are you ready to cancel all other engagements so that you can dine with Him for the rest of your life?

Let's face it. One of the reasons we don't engage in evangelism is because we know we're not 100% committed to Christ. While we don't have to be perfect, we do need to have something to share with people. Spiritual seekers want to know that Christianity is not just some stale theological exercise, but a daily relationship with Christ that radically transforms a life from the inside out.

Sadly, according to researcher George Barna, almost half of born-again believers questioned in a nationwide poll admitted they are "searching for meaning and purpose." This is the same percentage as what non-Christians say. If believers are not experiencing meaning and purpose in life, than what do we have to give to lost people? If people don't see us living with love, joy, and hope then do they really want what we have?

The first thing we're called to do is to demonstrate an authentic Christian life by setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts. Evangelism is primarily what we are, not what we do. As someone has said, "Evangelism is what spills over when we bump into someone." When we're living under the leadership of Christ, we have something that appeals to others when it spills on them. Remember we are called to make Disciples... We ought to be the sower sowing everywhere we go the love, hope, peace, and truth of Jesus Christ.

Remember the Sower of the Seed, sows the seed everywhere He goes.... To every person let our lives be a living testimony of His great Love...

THE CLINK The name of a prison which was on Clink Street in the Southwark area of London.

Claudie wrote: I always thought that the doors of the cells went "clink" when they shut behind the prisoner. Maybe a more accurate name would be the "clang".

BLACK MARKET In medieval England there were nomadic mercenaries who wandered the country side and would sell their services to the highest bidder. These were hardened fighters who lived solitary lives in the wilderness. They did not have the luxury of servants to polish their armor and it would oxidize to a blackish hue, and they came to be known as black knights. At local town festivals they would have exhibition jousting matches in which the winner of the fight would win the loser's weapons and armor. The local gentry, softened by the good life, would lose to these black knights. The nomadic knights didn't have much use for an extra set of armor and would sell it back to them immediately after the fight. The losing nobility would be forced to buy back their armor and this after market came to be known as the "Black Market" (submitted by Gonzalo).

Judith interjects: Isn't it kind of strange that if "black market" is a medieval term, the Oxford English Dictionary doesn't show it as having been first used until 1931 in "The Economist." Come on, this is garbage. Fun garbage maybe, but garbage.

SON OF A GUN After sailors had crossed the Atlantic to the West Indies, they would take the native women on board the ship and have their way with them in between the cannons. Some of the women the sailors left behind would have boys, who were called sons between the guns.

PATENT LEATHER After the Patten shoe which the young women wore in the buttery. When the cream spilled on their shoes, the fat would tend to make the leather shiny.

DONE TO A TURN Meat was roasted until cooked on an upright spit which had to be turned by hand.

BEAT AROUND THE BUSH Game birds were scared out of their hiding places under bushes and then killed.

CUT THROUGH THE RED TAPE Solicitors kept their clients papers in a file folder tied with red ribbon to prevent the papers from falling out. Of course, when they wanted to get at the papers, they would have to cut through the red tape.

Note from Glenn Barry: I read that "red tape" came from the Indian Administrative Service practice of tying files with tape, these were moved by "Peons" by hand from office to office. No senior person would move a file no matter how important because of the caste system. Thus the uneducated lower caste would slow down the movement of files, thus the files were tied up with red tape, having been to India in recent times and seen this still the case I can understand where it came from. One official I went to see had the file we were talking

about on the bench behind him but rang his bell for the peon to come, which took some minutes, and then asked him to get the file! This took .2 of a second.

MINDING YOUR Ps & Qs Ale was served at local taverns out of a "tankard" ... you were charged by the angle of your elbow ... half-way up... you drank a pint, all the way up... you drank a quart. Since the Quart cost so much more than the Pint, you were warned to "Mind your Ps & Qs"

Comment from Bill Kling: "Minding one's p's and q's" is a typesetter's admonition. When you handle individual character type slugs, you need to be careful of how you store and retrieve the p's and q's, because they look so much alike.

Sally says: It does stand for "Mind your Pints and Quarts," a saying that came into existence long before any typesetters could be concerned about mistaking Ps and Qs on a typewriter! The expression was intended for people to mind how many Pints and Quarts they drank, or in other words, to behave!

Jon wrote: I've always been taught that it's just a shorthand way of saying 'mind your pleases and thank yous' -- something you tell your kids when they go off to spend the night at a friend's house so that they will be polite. Maybe this is a colloquial definition, because the pints and quarts thing sounds more like a general 'take care' kind of warning.

Jim added: Some 20 years ago I was visiting Williamsburg, VA. Specifically I was in Raleigh's Tavern. The derivation of 'minding your P(int)s and Q(uart)s' was deemed to have come from the necessity of the 'barkeep' to keep accurate disbursement records of alcohol for the purpose of paying the tax on alcohol. Don't know if they are still telling that version.

William wrote: I'd heard this stood for Price and Quality, two things that are worth minding.

Joe wrote: The best explanation of "minding your P's & Q's" I've heard came from the fact that the barkeep would keep track of how much you drank on a chalk board. This admonished you to keep track of how much you had to drink so that the barkeep couldn't add a few pints to your tab and charge you for something you hadn't consumed. I was told to pay for each drink as I got them to avoid this problem while on a business trip to Spain in the 70's. Tourists were known to wind up in jail over bar tab squabbles.

Another obscure explanation: It came from the hobby of coin collecting. Old coins had to be treated very carefully so as not to harm them. To clean a coin expertly was called "frazing". The coin had to be immersed in a liquid named "pease", then it was bathed in another liquid known as "kyuse". It was essential to get the order of these two baths correct Hence: "Be sure to mind your pease and kyuse" -- to fraze a coin.

GETTING TANKED When you drank too much out of the above "tankard" you were said to be "tanked" ... if you got so "tanked" that you passed out, there was a chance that somebody might think you had actually died. Since back then they didn't have experience with taking pulses, they often buried people alive who were actually in a drunken stupor or otherwise comatose.

PITCHER A leather jug treated with tar pitch to help it hold its shape.

GETTING BOMBED A bombard is a leather jug which holds 8 pints or 4 quarts. A full bombard of ale would make you drunk.

WET YOUR WHISTLE Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim or handle of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used to blow the whistle to get some service.

TUMBLER & TIPSY Glasses were hand blown, thus flat bottomed glasses were difficult to produce. Those with curved bottoms would tend to tumble over when placed on the table, and too many tumblers of whiskey would make you a little bit tipsy.

SAVED BY THE BELL When our ancestors realized that they were burying a great deal of people before their time had actually come, they came up with a solution. They tied a string onto the "dead" person's hand, buried them, and tied the other end of the string to a bell and then tied it to nearby tree branch. If the person revived enough to ring the bell, their survivors would rush out and dig them up. Hence... "saved by the bell"

From Pete Hustwayte: Your definition of "Saved by the bell" more closely applies to the term "Dead-Ringer". After several coffins were excavated and found to have scratches on the inside, morticians began the process of tying a string to the finger of the corpse. If that person was alive and they pulled the string, they were called a dead-ringer. This is also the origin of the term Graveyard Shift. The person from the mortuary who was assigned the task of sitting at the new grave sight to listen for the bell to ring was said to be working the Graveyard Shift.

Comment from Michael: "Are you kidding? Where did you get this? From Poe? The expression is from boxing, where a boxer being counted out is "saved by the bell" if the round ends before the count."

Paul wrote: Bells have a long tradition of being used to scare away evil spirits. It was said that ringing a church bell would cause witches flying on their brooms to fall from the sky. Perhaps the ringing of a bell to scare away evil is the source for this saying?

Craig wrote: Saved by the Bell did come from the graveyard bells. People were dying in great numbers from disease, so there was a rush to bury them before disease spread. However, some people did not die, but only fell into comas, and when a person revived in the middle of a funeral, people started to take notice that this may be the case. Special bell ringing devices were put above graves so the buried person, if they revived, could bring help to unearth them.

Another voice: This now refer to a boxing match, but that was definitely a use which evolved from the original meaning which you outlined above. People need to realize that these are the origins we're talking about, not the later developments of the phrases!

THRESHOLD The raised door entrance held back the straw (called thresh) on the floor.

Bill says: Thresh (to beat grain) comes from the Old English and has the same root as thrash (to flail about). Tread is also from the AU with a similar root and has kept the meaning of step on or walk. Hence thrash out (in the sense of discussing), threshold (one word, one h, never two), thresh (separate grain by beating -- and on to the relatively recent construct thresher), threshing floor (the obvious), and treadmill (treadmill -- too obvious). Our threshold then carries the stepping connotation from tread, and while it may have been installed originally to keep out the grain, I think it more likely that it was an attempt to keep out wind and water...

CHEW THE FAT A host would offer his guests a piece of bacon, which was stored above the fireplace in the parlor, so they could chew the fat during their visit.

GETTING THE SHORT END OF THE STICK

Candles were expensive to make, so often reeds were dipped in tallow and burned instead. When visitors came, it was the custom for guests to make their exit by the time the lights went out. Therefore, if your host didn't want you to stay very long, he would give you a "short stick."

George wrote: In the days of outhouses, often there were outhouses with multiple "holes" so that more than one person could relieve him(her)self at a time. Before the time of toilet paper, Sears catalogs and corn cobs, a stick shaped like a shoe horn was used for "hygienic cleaning." It was rather a short spatula device with a longer handle. Well, if one person was done, he could request that the person using the adjoining hole pass the stick. Of course the person with the stick would pass it holding onto the other person by holding the long end of the stick. The recipient would therefore receive it holding the "short end of the stick."

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS If they REALLY didn't want you to stay very long, they would light "both ends" at the same time!

Bill comments: This had nothing to do with getting rid of guests. When a clerk worked at night, it was hard to see by candle-light. they did not have two candles, they would turn the candle on its side, and light both ends. This gave twice as much light, but burned out in half the time. The phrase, therefore, came to mean someone who worked very hard, but would wear themselves out (what today we call 'burn-out') very quickly.

Rob Flynn says: The phrase is actually 'burning the candle at both ends of the day' i.e. getting up early in the morning (and burning a candle) and going to bed late (and again burning a candle). Which is why we say that someone looking tired and haggard from overwork (or overplay) has been burning the candle at both ends...

NOT FIT TO HOLD A CANDLE TO A menial household task was holding a candle for someone while they completed some type of activity. Some people were not held in much esteem, therefore they were "not fit to hold a candle to."

GETTING THE BUM'S RUSH A short rush, which would burn for a short time, would be used when company came over rather late; when it burnt out, you would want to see the hind end of your guests out the door.

Paul wrote: What utter twaddle! A bum is/was a bum-bailiff, and "getting the bum's rush" was being helped on your way by a couple of officers.

Tim wrote: Rushes, attached to a stick, were used as a broom. Women in a home or inn where a bum came in would chase, or sweep, the unwanted, out of the place with said broom. Thus, the bum's rush.

GIVING SOMEONE THE COLD SHOULDER When a guests would over stay their welcome as house guests, the hosts would (instead of feeding them good, warm meals) give their too-long staying guests the worst part of the animal, not warmed, but the **COLD SHOULDER**.

GETTING A SQUARE MEAL Your dinner plate was a square piece of wood with a "bowl" carved out to hold your serving of the perpetual stew that was always cooking over the fire. The kettle was never actually emptied and cleaned out. New ingredients were simply added to the muck. You always took your "square" with you when you went traveling.

From Tommo, MIDN, RAN, Royal Australian Navy: Another Naval expression, correctly described by the second person as being to efficiently fit more plates on a sailors' table. A square plate allowed a larger amount of foot on a relatively smaller plate. So a square meal was a larger meal than they would otherwise be having - a good square meal being a favourable thing.

From BBC program about antiques: The British war ships of the time of Nelson and Trafalga had square plates to fit the tables slung between the cannons below decks. So many sailors were from such poor and under nourished backgrounds they saw this as a "Square Meal" - meaning the only good one they had had.

From John we get this version: Food was cooked in the kitchen in a big kettle hanging over the fire, and things were added to the pot every day. People would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes it had food in it that had been in there for over a week. Hence the rhyme: "Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old."

FROG IN YOUR THROAT Medieval physicians believed that the secretions of a frog could cure a cough if they were coated on the throat of the patient. The frog was placed in the mouth of the sufferer and remained there until the physician decided that the treatment was complete.

UPPER CRUST Visitors to the Anne Hathaway's cottage (near Stratford upon Avon) are given this explanation while looking at the bread oven beside the fireplace in the kitchen: "The bread was put, as a raw lump of dough, straight into the bread oven. No bread tin, it just sits on the floor of the oven. The oven is heated by the fire and is very hot at the bottom. When the bed is done baking and taken out to cool, the base of the loaf is overcooked black and also dirty. The top of the loaf is done just right, and still clean. The bottom of the loaf is for the servants to eat, while the upper crust is for the master of the house.

EATING HUMBLE PIE Servants at "umble pie" which was made from deer waste while their Master and his guests had the better cuts of meat.

TURN THE TABLES Tables only had one finished side. The other side, less expensive to make, was more rough. When the family was alone, they ate on the rough side to keep the good side nice for company. When company came, the whole top lifted off and was turned to its good side.

CLEAN YOUR PLATE BEFORE YOU HAVE DESSERT The square plate (above) was never washed either. After your daily dose of stew, you wiped your plate clean with a piece of bread. Then you flipped it over which provided a flat surface for your dessert portion (if there was any, that is)

ROOM & BOARD An apprentice would journey to another village to learn more about his craft (journeyman). There he would pay someone for his room, and food for his board.

From Tommo, MIDN, RAN, Royal Australian Navy: A Board was a table on board ship. Having little room, one or two timber boards, otherwise used by the carpenter for general tasks like fixing the ship, would be set as the sailors' table. Room and board was some room to sling your hammock, (not A room) and board was your scran. [SCRAN = food, from a supplement sailors were once fed at sea; Sultanas, Currents, Raisans and Nuts.] Today, part of the Officer selection process involves "going before a board", being half a dozen or so senior officers at a table facing you on your own, as a group interview. The board is not the Officers, but the table itself. The Naval disciplinary process, at the lower end of seriousness, involves a going before a "Table". This is going before the CO (Commanding Officer); a little bit like a small court proceeding. This distinguishes it from a 'Board', as the Table was something only the CO would have. The table it was not long enough along one side to hold a "Board" interview, as the Officers would surround it during their meals, and it tended to be only large enough to hold the ship's Officer company.

Julia says: More to the point, the term "board" comes from the eating table. Before power tools, it was a great and lengthy effort to make smooth-hewn tables; people would make do with as few pieces as possible. Usually a table was just one board, sometimes two, set on trestles, making a long narrow surface to eat from. Coming to dinner was called "coming to the board," a table cloth was referred to as "board clothes," and when hired help or an apprentice came to stay, they paid in cash or service for their room (where they slept) and their "board" (what they ate). Note: the American colonials hated making boards suitable for tables so much that they often used split apart shipping crates; there are still examples to be found which have the painted names of the master of the house and the shipping agent/company on the underside.

RULE OF THUMB An old English law declared that a man could not beat his wife with a stick any larger than the diameter of his thumb.

Comment from Lance: When brewing beer, the temperature at which the yeast is added is important. Too cold and the yeast won't work, too hot and it'll die. Before the days of

thermometers, a brewer would determine temperature by simply sticking his thumb into the mixture.

Another possibility: As an artist, I always thought that this saying applied to the act of using one's thumb as a judge of scale. You literally use your thumb to act as a ruler to determine the scale of an object in your painting.

Peter wrote: the French word for an inch (pouce) is the same as for a thumb. I wonder if the thumb was used as a rough reckoner for inches? Just a thought.

Anthony wrote: this has nothing to do with painting, nor is it anything to do with wife beating, which is just plain old down home American stupidity. It was used by bakers in judging flour, the flour being rubbed between thumb and fingers.

GETTING YOUR GOAT This apparently refers to an old English (Welsh?) belief that keeping a goat in the barn would have a calming effect on the cows, hence producing more milk. When one wanted to antagonize/terrorize one's enemy, you would abscond with their goat rendering their milk cows less- to non-productive.

Comment from Angel: This explains the expression in modern America: "Don't tell people where your goat is tied up --- then they can never get your goat". Meaning if another doesn't know your weakness s/he can't use them against you.

SAVING FACE OR LOSING FACE The noble ladies and gentlemen of the late 1700s wore much makeup to impress each other. Since they rarely bathed, the makeup would get thicker and thicker. If they sat too close to the heat of the fireplace, the makeup would start to melt. If that happened, a servant would move the screen in front of the fireplace to block the heat, so they wouldn't "lose face."

MIND YOUR OWN BEESWAX This came from the days when smallpox was a regular disfigurement. Fine ladies would fill in the pocks with beeswax. However when the weather was very warm the wax might melt. But it was not the thing to do for one lady to tell another that her makeup needed attention. Hence the sharp rebuke to "mind your own beeswax!"

STONE COLD Slate floors were often cold enough during the winter months that any bare skin coming in contact with them would "stick". The slate floors were covered with a layer of hay to provide some warmth. The kitchen was the only room kept heated during the winter. All of the family spent the day cooped up in this one room (often 10 kids or more)... also the family cats and dogs who served important functions of "mousing," "garbage disposal," and etc.

BABY'S HIGH CHAIR

with holes in the seat (a.k.a. "drainage chair") During the winter months, young babies were strapped into their chairs and were never allowed to crawl around in the hay on the stone-cold floor. They didn't wear any diapers of any sort. They sat in that chair all day... and you know why there were holes in their chair!

SPRING CLEANING The layer of hay in the kitchen, was finally hauled out of the house when the weather turned warm in the Spring.

BON(e)FIRE The discarded "bones" from winter meals were piled outside and a bonfire would be set to get rid of them.

Comment from Jeff Parsons: The term Bonfire originated in Scandinavia (Denmark specifically) and was the celebration after a battle victory. The bodies of the dead were piled and burned. The fire provided warmth and light for the aftermath party. The term was later (about 600 years) used for any large celebratory fire.

From Randy: The word Bon Fire is taken from Tudor History. In 1555, Edmund Bonner was the Bishop of London. Acting on his orders, over 300 English men and women were burnt at the stake for their faith. Because of Bonner's actions we now call them Bon's fires.

SLEEP TIGHT The bed frames were strung with ropes on which straw mattresses were placed. After some time the ropes would loosen and one of the young men would pull them tight.

From Bob Vila's tour of famous American homes: In Colonial America (and, presumably in Europe as well) the beds were not of the box spring variety that we enjoy today. The mattress laid on top of a web of ropes. There was a tool - an iron type of gadget that looked somewhat like an old clothes pin but larger - which was used to tighten the ropes when they became too slack. Thus, the expression "sleep tight."

GET OUT OF BED ON THE WRONG SIDE An old superstition said that it was bad luck to put the left foot down when getting out of bed.

TIE THE KNOT Tying the knot of the ropes in the marriage bed.

James in Japan writes: ... the priest performing the wedding would bind the bride and grooms hands with rope during the ceremony. In modern day, you will often see the priest place a sash around their hands rather than rope, and it is from this that the saying comes. Although the practice is not as common as it was, depending on your denomination it is still done.

Karen: This is also from the old marriage custom of actually tying the couple's hands together as part of the ceremony. They were not allowed to untie it until they had consummated the marriage.

Claudie wrote: A Swedish exchange student told me that illiterate sailors and soldiers of yesteryear would send a piece of rope to their sweethearts when they wanted to get married. If the rope came back with a knot in it, that meant she said "yes" to the marriage proposal. He demonstrated this by tying two ornate knots in a length of rope. When the ends were pulled, the knots came together in the middle. Even if this isn't the origin of the expression, it was a charming demonstration.

Mike wrote: Having recently attended a Hindu wedding it would seem that the phrase is a quite literal one where the bride and groom each tie a necklace of flowers to consummate the marriage.

HONEYMOON It was the accepted practice in Babylonia 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer, and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the "honey month" or what we know today as the "honeymoon".

REASON FOR CANOPY BEDS Most English homes of old had "thatched" roofs. Canopies were placed over the beds to keep bugs, mice, dirt, rain, etc. from disturbing your sleep! Of course, I think I would want to stay awake because I'd be so afraid of having to be "saved by the bell"!