

Itch

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I itch. I itch therefore I am? Or which came first – the itch or the scratch? Do I itch because I scratch or scratch because I itch? It's amazing the deep philosophical questions one can come up with when they are up at night because their itches are driving them towards a scratching explosion.

I forgot just how itchy my existence can be in Thailand. After an evening at the church in open air, my feet and legs are covered in mosquito bites. Add to that the odd spider bite, the mosquitoes living in my room that prey on me while I sleep and some heat rash, and you get a pretty itchy picture (that's not even counting an allergic reaction from a band-aid that I used to cover a new-shoe blister and a mysterious rash under my wedding ring – but one doesn't want to overwhelm the reader do they?)

Come to think of it, I was pretty itchy during my last visit to Canada as well. After living in near 100% humidity for the past couple of years, you can imagine the kind of dry skin problems I had while in my home and native land. So...itchy in Thailand and in Canada...maybe I'm just an itchy kind of guy.

Have you ever wondered why itches even exist? I mean, you're not supposed to scratch them, so why do they exist? Is it just some extravagantly designed torture method? It's like having cake and ice cream, Bonnie and Clyde or sweet and sour. Itching and scratching are supposed to go together. After all, no one wants to hang out with Clyde eating dry cake after a tidy meal of sour chicken.

The problem with itches is that the more you scratch them, the worse they get. Scratching seems to spread the poison so that it takes even longer for them to go away. But sometimes in the late night madness of Itch Insomnia (commonly known as the Double "I" Syndrome) you just don't care. Driven to the edge of my sanity I have an extremely gratifying scratching session that usually ends without any real relief. But it feels good in the moment – oh yes it does!

The metaphor seems unavoidable. It must be true that not every pain that cries out for relief should be answered; not every need should be satisfied. In short, just because there is an itch doesn't mean that it should be scratched. Yet in the thick of the discomfort or pain, nothing seems more important than some kind of resolution. Almost anything can seem justified in this moment.

I wasn't just speaking "tongue in cheek" when I said that I am an itchy kind of guy. One might say that I have an addictive personality. If there is an inner itch or desire, I scratch it, but good. When I find something that I like, it is hard to tear me away from it. I often overuse or overindulge in it and am left feeling kind of gross afterwards. Lately I've been trying to discipline myself so as not to

overdose on the pleasures in my life. I make grandiose commitments to fast from this or stop doing that and then rarely meet my goals.

I think that many addictive personalities are passionate people waiting to be set free. We get super-focused and excited about many things – often which are harmful to us. We are the product evangelists. If we find something that we think is great, we will share it with all our friends and try to get them excited as well. I can't tell you the number of books, foods, movies, websites, methods, etc. that I have recommended over the years. I can usually stir up a group to do something if I am excited enough about it. When that passion gets returned to a Higher frequency, I could be a powerful weapon for the Kingdom.

I think however, that I am usually so focused on the itches in my life that I can't tune into anything other than them. When I came to Thailand, one of my fellow teachers gave me some eucalyptus balm to use on my insect bites for relief. It works like a charm after about 5 seconds. However, sometimes I still don't use it. I forget, or I would rather scratch because it is more immediately gratifying.

It is the same in my life. My relationship with God offers everything that I need to heal me from the poisons inside and satisfy my needs. Yet sometimes I forget to turn to Him in the busyness of my life. Other times I would rather do something that brings immediate comfort and gratification. In the end, those things never satisfy. More often than not, they leave me with a greater hunger or problem than I had before. I want to learn to wait upon the Lord, not for relief from my itches, but for the relationship that I know will ultimately satisfy me and make me whole in His love.