

## The “tame” lion ...

An African lion, accompanied by its owner, arrives at a newspaper office. The animal leaps up onto the reception desk, while the owner, a hunter and safari guide, inquires about running an ad.

This was a televised fictional scene. The “hunter” was an actor. The animal, on the other hand, was a real five year old tame, trained lion named Johan, with which there had been no previous problem.

However, shortly thereafter, Johan appeared on the news, after he mauled a woman to death who had entered his cage to feed him.

The woman was a cook on the estate where the owner kept Johan. Little by little, as she lost her natural fear of Johan, she ventured to enter his cage despite the owner's prohibition.

On the day of the tragedy, it seems that the lion did not like the way she gave him his food. He had become accustomed to a certain routine, which the cook ignored. The animal became aggressive and attacked, killing her almost instantly.

“It was incredible considering how tame it was!” said the owner. While the lion enjoyed playing with the owner, it still had wild instincts. It had not ceased being a lion.

Every day someone dies due to their own carelessness in some traffic accident. Many others die as a result of disregarding the basic rules of hygiene or safety, or by ignoring a doctor's advice. None of them do it on purpose; Everyone thinks “nothing will happen to me.”

Although fear is a negative emotion, it is good to be afraid in certain cases. It is unwise to disregard the advice of experienced people. The laws of God, for example, are to protect us from tragedy.



He knows more about our physical and emotional makeup than we do.

When God says “Thou shalt not kill,” for example, He is teaching us about the value of human life. His commandments against lying and stealing emphasize the importance of living in truth and respecting the private property rights of others.

When God says “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” He wants to free us from emotional turmoil and from causing unnecessary suffering for our loved ones.

We, for lack of wisdom, cannot foresee all the dangers. Nor is it reasonable to think we are wiser than God.

As a matter of fact, living according to the Bible as a general rule prevents us from being victims of common dangers, or unsuspected murderers.

Salomon said in Proverbs 14:12: *“There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way to death.”*

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# Deceived by dilution

A friend of mine was hired to paint a house. While making preparations, he accidentally dumped some green paint into the bucket of white paint.

Right away he tried to remove as much of the green paint as he could. He hoped to salvage the white paint because it would have been a great loss to throw all of it away. He mixed the remaining



paint in the bucket, hoping that in such a large amount of white paint the little bit of green paint would not be noticed.

Diluting can sometimes be the recourse when an unwanted element is present. There is a similar effect in the human conscience.

From time to time, a person is troubled by a mistake he has made. Suffering from excessive guilt, he cannot forgive himself in order to find peace of mind. If he visits the psychiatrist, he may

be treated by what is called "dilution therapy". It tries to alleviate guilt by convincing the patient that what he did is the same as what everyone else is doing and therefore universally acceptable.

Though we may not be aware of it, dilution therapy is quite common among us. If a practice is accepted by the majority, it then seems correct. We see this daily in clothing, hairstyles, vocabulary and civility.

In addition we avoid many acts that society says are bad, to be accepted by others and gain their approval. Over time, we believe that these desires are legitimate and that we are the good people that others believe us to be.

Sometimes this fear of public opinion saves us from moral disasters, but it can also be a barrier that separates us from God. People seem to be very close and God quite far away, because the immediate benefits seem to come from relatives, teachers, peers and neighbors. Deep down we know that it is important to obey God, but this does not seem as urgent as earning a living, doing well on a test, or maintaining a friendship.

The Bible has much to say on this topic. When we find in this book the term "heart," we know that God is speaking of the real inner person and not what one appears to be. When He requires that we turn to Jesus, it is not the artificial, superficial personality that he wants to transform, but the inner person.

St. Paul says in Romans 10: 9, "If you believe in your heart, you will be saved." Putting faith in Jesus does not mean doing something good because our friends are doing it or because it suits us. It is the response of the "heart"; the most profoundly intimate personal act you will do in your entire life.

You can give yourself to Jesus right now, without regard for the opinions of others. □

# Can we live forever?

**T**hat's what we all want! However, that depends on the condition of our present life.

Strangely enough, most people are not satisfied with how they live now and, perhaps, thinking about living forever does not excite them much, especially as they grow older and the aches and pains increase.

Those who have few economic resources think that if they lived "forever", it would be good if they had no financial worries and were never sick.

Again we ask ourselves: "Is it possible to live forever?" The answer is yes, it is possible. But there are certain inescapable requirements.

Jesus Christ affirmed that His coming to this world was so that "whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Bible tells us that when Jesus Christ came to Bethany to comfort Mary and Martha because of the death of their brother Lazarus, He said to Martha: "Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die; do you believe this?" (John 11:26).

Believing in Him means recognizing that you are a sinner, that you can do nothing on your part for God to forgive you, that Jesus Christ



died to pay for your sins and that you must repent and accept the forgiveness He offers you.

If you believe it, the promise of God is that ... you will live forever! **Do you believe it?**

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# ¡No my fault!

**T**he printer assured me that the work would be ready by the due date.

However, when I went to pick it up, it was not ready.

He told me the paper had not arrived in time. Across town, the manager of the paper supply store said that although they had received the order, the secretary had misplaced it, causing a two day delay.

The secretary would not accept responsibility, either. Apparently, the breeze through an open window created havoc in the office, and consequently the order became lost.

In the end, they proved their innocence, concluding that it was just bad luck.

Blaming someone else is a favorite game. We find it very difficult to admit that we forgot or that we did not feel like doing something. That would bring to light a weakness leaving us vulnerable and at the mercy of being judged by others. This blam-

ing attitude becomes second nature and we believe that it is the truth.

We say, "The plate fell," because we do not want to admit that "I was careless and dropped it." The student complains that he does not get good grades because he is a victim of discrimination by the teacher.

The young man justifies not believing in God by claiming that the church is full of hypocrites. The man apprehended for a crime rationalizes his actions pointing to the bad example of a Christian.

In fact, every time we justify ourselves, claiming that it is not our fault, it's just an excuse.

This compulsion to avoid responsibility for our actions is simply evidence of a spiritual cancer. When we pretend to be better than we are, we reveal a deep uncertainty that produces even deeper fear.

When we make mistakes, we must admit them and learn not to repeat them. We must recognize our shortcomings in order to move forward.

The first man lost touch with his true identity, thus separating himself from his Creator. We have inherited that separation. Our relationship with the Creator cannot be recovered until we turn to God. Jesus Christ is the bridge between us and the Creator who can restore to us all the privileges of a child of God.

*"Jesus Christ Himself suffered death for our sins once for all. He was good, but suffered for us the wicked, to bring us to God"* (1 Peter 3: 18).