

Robbing Bees of Their Pollen and Stealing Cartilage from Sharks

Things other than ducks go “Quack”

*John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate **locusts and wild honey**.* (Mark 1:6)

It is not hard to figure out why John the Baptist was single.

California is sometimes called the Granola State, the land of fruits, nuts and flakes. I am from California, native born. I guess I could just stop this chapter right now and you would understand why strange things gravitate to me.

Shortly after I formally announced that I was dying, my mail box was flooded. Well-meaning friends and strangers started sending letters to me with all kinds of sincere advice about what I should eat and do to cure my cancer. If you ever get sick, like big time, let me give you a piece of counsel. Leave the country. Immediately! You will be inundated with promised cures that range from interesting to downright off-the-wall looney bin. One definition of a fanatic is a person that you can't change his mind, and he won't change the subject. Welcome to the world of health foods, alternative medicine, and strange things crawling out from under the rocks.

Numerous phone calls, e-mails and letters passionately presented conflicting advice, drove me into my own personal investigation of the mysterious world of alternative medicine. It is a world where you don't just stop and smell the flowers; you eat them. Alternative medicine is a trip to the Twilight Zone of medicine. But like I said, I'm from California. I took the plunge.

If you are one of the millions who follow some form of alternative medicine, I want you to know that this is not making fun of you or being disrespectful of your sincere beliefs. If eating rock slime does it for you, then keep on slurping. I just want to point out that

the number of promised cures are almost endless and can be very confusing to novices like myself. Frankly, it was overwhelming to enter this complicated world which offered everything from derivatives from rainforest insects to exotic grass extracts. If you do find yourself getting a bit miffed, the old blood pressure raising and an urge to send off a quick email, may I recommend some alternative medicine. Just lie down on an herbal tea pillow in a Feng Shui environment with lotus leaves on your forehead and go to the happy place in your mind. There, don't you feel better now.

You have no doubt heard the familiar phrase of the desperate, "Any port in a storm!". My blood was a mess after Chemotherapy. My immune system experienced a complete factory shutdown. There is not much to lose when you have two months to live. Many of us reason that there is a natural cure to disease. It just seems logical. So I started listening to the voices. So many voices.

Promises, Promises, Promises

It was like entering the land of Mondo Bizarro. Here is just a sampling of the things that cure cancer that were promised to me. One e-mail pleaded with me to grow and harvest a certain type of Japanese mushroom which grows best under our kitchen sinks. This one sounded good because I liked mushrooms. But what would our plumber think? A very large supplement company soon sent out what must have been a general alert to their entire sales force to contact me. I can't count the number of folks who told me their natural supplements cure AIDS and every other known disease. I almost wished I had AIDS. Then there was this wonder oil, a deep-sea shark liver extract guaranteed to do the job. It made me wonder why the secret of health was in a shark that lives in deep ocean bunkers where most of the world has no access to the critters? What about the people of Mongolia, Sudan, Tibet, and many others that have never seen a shark? Was I the only one asking this question? I was starting to get a lot of red lights.

One fellow was sure his vegetable juice extract could cure anything and he said he was only sharing it with me because he knew we were in a Christian ministry and had very little funds. His concern was to help save my life and it would only take a small amount

of the heavenly elixir. He assured me that his motive was simply my health and had nothing to do with the multilevel marketing plan that came with the product. I told him how grateful I was that he would be helping the ministry by donating that small amount to save my life. He never called again. One lady called who had read my e-mails that were forwarded by a friend. She told me that I had made a big mistake going with the medical profession. If we had only used a particular type of Middle Eastern grass extract, I would be fully recovered from Leukemia but now I had ruined my chances by allowing doctors to mess my body up. I was very weak and thanked her for her loving concern.

It seemed like the doors of the asylum had flung open and the inmates were finding my hospital room. So I did some research. I did have access to the web and when I could I examined everything from Aardvark kidney powder to Zebra hoof oil. I read tons of claims and read testimonial after testimonial from all over the world. I read and I read. I remember hearing about a man who read about the dangers of obesity so much that he finally gave up reading. Well, I almost gave up reading.

I am amazed anyone is still sick or even dies any more. Do you realize we have access to supplements and pills and programs that will cure AIDS, Alzheimer's, cancers, heart disease, strokes and bad breath in our dogs? All we have to do is attack bee colonies and eat their pollen and our hair will not fall out. We can strip fish of their cartilage and never have osteoporosis. Grazing on Egyptian barley grass will stop high blood pressure and there are enough herbal teas in China to heal our memories and qualify each of us for the Mensa Society. Of course our faces will break out and look like a purple waffle but at least the cancer will be gone.

One supplement I found actually contained coral mixed with manganese, selenium, boron and vanadium. We might as well raise the Titanic and then eat it. You sure wouldn't want to go through an airport metal detector after taking one of those pills. There is an algae advertised all over that is claimed to reverse the polarity of your body. Wow. I didn't know my battery was in backwards. And on and on it goes, everything from

coffee enemas to magnet therapy to crystals and pyramids. Everyone offers a secret cure, a miracle method.

Bark, Bark, Bark

One herbologist states that research has found that the bark collected from the Columbian Pau D'arco tree inhibits the growth of a strain of parasite that cause malaria in rodents. He is very serious. He recommends ingestion of the root. I believe him and if I ever suspect the rats in my house have malaria, you can bet I will I will buy a truckload.

My wife and I were in South Korea once and wandered through the huge and fascinating natural food section of the famous Lotte Hotel. I found myself staring at bins and bins of bark and dirt for sale. Incredible claims of healing were posted over each bin. I was blown away at the prices of the magic compost. Some tree barks cost hundreds of dollars per ounce. A very distinguished Korean man standing near me must have noticed my YOU-HAVE-TO-BE-KIDDING look and asked if I knew about the healing qualities of one of the bins. I said, "Uh, no." Without even a pause he reached into a bin and stuffed some bark in my mouth and told me to chew it. I chewed. I looked around to see if anyone was looking. This was expensive stuff. It tasted like moldy tree bark. It was moldy tree bark. If I ran that business, it would come in Vanilla and Raspberry. The man then smiled and walked out the door leaving me with a mouthful of expensive potting soil. Talk about feeling stupid. I walked outside to a trash can. Blah, Blah, Ptooo. Yuck. I could taste that junk all night long. Pla, Pla Pla. Even the next morning my teeth were black. Blaaayaagh (which is Korean for Braaaahagaaa). In my country you go to Nurseryland to buy pots and seedlings not to treat malaria in your rats and eat lunch.

Alternative Medicines. It's a Jungle out there.

Leukemia treatment for me was a very traditional clinical approach. Doctors put tubes in my chest and poured gallons of herbicide into my veins like a plumber floods pipes with Drano. Then they watched me die and come back and die and come back and die and come back. Exciting isn't it? It was for them. But that is how it works. Seven months of

controlled poisoning followed by brief moments of eating tacos. That is the chemotherapy way.

An example of Alternative Medicine in that situation would be for me to put the tubes in the doctors and pour the stinky green stuff into them and see if my hideous laughter could cure me. The Bible does describe laughter as a medicine. I don't think the medical profession would approve of my alternative method nor does it approve of anything in the alternative world. That is why it is called alternative.

When we leave the traditional and start peeking around in the alternative world we come under the suspicion of the professional medical field. I once mentioned I was considering slowing down on meat consumption and trying carrot juices. I thought they were going to send me to psychological therapy. I realized that they often had good reasons for their suspicions of the Homeopathic journey so I decided to do my research quietly and behind the scenes. I tried to be honest with what I was told, what I saw and to use good old common sense. Here are the results of my less than scientific conclusions.

Quack, Quack, Quack

The world of nature cures and alternative medicines may have some strong arguments but it also has some basket cases. During the Civil War a well-known doctor treated deafness by having the hearing impaired sit around and sniff hot tar. I am not even going to touch that one.

Have you ever visited a hot springs? There is a group of people that believe the healing powers in the springs come from radiation emitting from the water. Yes, people actually believe that when you visit a hot springs you are getting an x-ray.

After you exhaust the realm of roots, insects, moulds, and body parts normally deemed repulsive you enter the world of folk remedies and that alone will leave you talking to yourself. If this next section doesn't put a smile on your face someone needs to slap some defib paddles on your chest and shout, "stand back!"

This next section lists actual Folk Remedies (I am not making these up) that people have used. I think those that used them are all dead or maimed. Of course I have added my helpful comments after each one.

ARTHRITIS

A cure for arthritis is to carry a potato around in your pocket. (*ed: You can tell that this is not scientific because it doesn't tell which pocket*)

(By the way when you see the insert "ed:" it means my name is Ed and I am making a comment. I don't know why others use my name when they do that but I am flattered.)

TO GROW A BEARD

The Liquid obtained from boiling old boots has been used to promote the growth of hair on the face of young men. (*ed: This practice alone may do more to promote moral abstinence than all current forms of education*)

BLEEDING

Apply spider's web to a bleeding cut. (*ed: can you imagine an emergency scene with paramedics running through the forest to find spider webs to treat the injured?*)

BOILS AND INFECTIONS

Cow dung has been used as a poultice for boils. (*ed: Why am I glad my mother used onions and garlic?*)

DIPHTHERIA

A Nova Scotia remedy was to get a live trout, put it down the throat, pull it out and throw it back in the pond. (*ed: Someone please help me with this one. How do you stuff a live trout down someone's throat? How would you even convince someone to let you try it? Excuse me, sir, but I can help your pain. Let me take this 4 pound spiny wiggling angry fish and cram it down your throat and you will be cured.*)

EARACHE

Boil an onion, when it is hot remove the heart and place it in the ear. *(ed: Now that we got the fish out of your throat we have this boiling onion we want to stuff in your ear. It will get your mind off your bleeding throat)*

HICCUPS

Put your head between your legs and look at the sun. *(ed: Sorry to keep interrupting and act dumb. I am not a very flexible person but even if you got into that position with your head looking up and the sun in your eyes wouldn't you be scared you might have acid reflux and burn off your trousers? Are hiccups really that threatening?)*

SORE THROAT

Eat molasses candy made with a small amount of kerosene oil. Some people just boiled molasses and kerosene oil (or Minard's Liniment) and took a couple of spoonfuls every few hours. *(ed: Why do folk remedies not mention life expectancy? Now how long will a person live that drinks molasses and kerosene?)*

WARTS (Three remedies)

Rub pork grease on your warts and then scrape it off and give it to a dog. *(ed: Actually my neighbor has a dog I would like to try this with)*

Put butter on wart and have a cat lick it. *(ed: Make sure the dog watches since he is still mad)*

Apply snail to warts. *(ed: Sorry, I am still staring at this one. Even the dog and cat can't believe this one. It is still not clear if you do this before or after the dog licks it.)*

Idea! Wouldn't it be quicker just to combine some of these to save time? Crush a snail and smear it all over your face and while the dogs and cats are sucking off your warts drink kerosene and light yourself on fire; then do the old stop, drop and roll while cramming a trout back and forth down your throat. Quickly smush cow dung in your ears

and swing your flaming head between your legs and stare at the sun. That should just about cure everything. You will never worry about your breath again or getting a date.

Now that I think about it, my leukemia is not all that bad.

When it was all over I did decide that there was program for me and I faithfully followed it for a year.