

Avoid Getting Snake Bit

Pastor John Hicks

First United Methodist Church

Crikey! That's was a close 'un!" Steve Irwin, the Aussie known as the Crocodile Hunter, loves to stare into the yawning jaws of a large snake, jumping back out of harm's way just as the creature takes a snap at him.

I have no such aspirations. I learned early to keep an eye out for snakes, especially hiking around the woods of Florida. I learned that there are good snakes and not-so-good snakes. I try to avoid snakes, but there are times when I found that I had to deal with them. The good snakes I try to shoo away. The not-so-good snakes that pose a health hazard I try to send to eternal glory. I always try to be careful, and have never been snake bitten – until this summer.

I couldn't believe it. I was snake bit! Me! With blood dripping down my leg, I hiked up to the cabin and shared the news. As you might imagine, they got all excited until I assured them that it was a non-poisonous snake and proved it by showing that what had drawn blood was not fangs but a row of small teeth.

My experience started when I went to the ATV to go look for the girls. Lying across the path was a four foot black snake. I found a long stick and moved her out of the way. She hissed at me, but I thought little of it. It was then I made my mistake.

I assumed that she would just slither off away from me, and I turned my back to her. I got to the ATV, and took a step back when "WHAP!" I looked down to see her slither off and blood trickle down my ankle. "Stupid snake!"

It was a lesson learned. You can't just turn your back on snakes or ignore them, thinking that they are of little consequence. They'll slither up behind you and bite you when you aren't looking or aren't paying attention. It's part of their nature – especially if you are heading somewhere they don't want you to go.

Let me share with you another lesson learned: Satan's a snake. Take my word for it. Be on your guard. He's crafty and cunning. He lurks in every dark corner. He prowls in the darkness. He worms his way into every life and he strikes without abandon. No one is immune. Young, old, rich, poor – it doesn't matter. You turn your back on him or ignore him and "WHAP!" You're snake bit.

Be alert. Be very alert. We never know when he will creep up and strike next. You can see where he has slithered - causing unrest in the world, egotism in our government, and questionable moral ethics within the leadership of some of our schools and churches. Perhaps the most deadly snake-sign however, shows itself in the poison of complacency that has manifested itself in many Christians.

In many ways, we have become complacent and have reached a point where we either don't see the need to go into action or can't see what good it would do if we did. We are living and doing the best we can in our own lives – and the Lord knows we have problems enough of our own. We may not be happy with what we see, but for the most part we remain calm in the midst of the violence, sexual exploits, and questionable morals and ethics that surround us.

The truth is that if something tragic happens, most of us respond. Look at what happened immediately after September 11th, or after Hurricane Wilma visited us last October. But also look at what's happening now.

When we become complacent, when we focus on our own worries, when we turn our backs on the snake or when we don't take the snake seriously enough –is when the snake is most likely to strike. Watch your step!