

# Kasilof Community Church

Issue 36  
April 2011



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One of the most well known verses in all of Scripture is an emphatic command that you and I go and make disciples of all the nations. Thousands of books have been written on the subject matter of how to do this, but 1 Peter 1:15 provides a good place to start:

*“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”*

After the horrific disaster in Japan, many people, including members of KCC, have begun to think about ways they can better be prepared for natural disasters. Some of you have ordered food that can be kept and stored for months, or even years. Water jugs have been filled and stored away for that day when there isn't any electricity to run well pumps. There are many, many other ways to prepare for hard times, but it takes some forethought and action on our parts. By their own admission, many leaders in Japan now admit they were poorly prepared for a tsunami like that which struck their country.

God has told us to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give a reason

for the hope we have. Are you prepared to do this? If not, why not?

Another disaster recently reported in the news involved people who would say they were acting as Christians in defense of their faith. You may have heard about it. The Dove World Outreach Center in Florida held a mock trial, taking the Qur'an to task. After listening to arguments from both sides, a jury from their congregation pronounced the Qur'an guilty of five "crimes against humanity," including the promotion of terrorist acts and "the death, rape and torture of people worldwide, whose only crime was not being of the Islamic faith." The punishment chosen for the finding of guilt was to have the Qur'an burned. Unfortunately, this resulted in the killing of 12 people in a violent protest in Afghanistan when a mob, enraged by the burning of a Qur'an, attacked the United Nations compound in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Remember verse 15 in 1 Peter quoted earlier? The last part of that verse reads, *“But do this with gentleness and respect.”* 1. Make disciples; 2. Always be prepared; 3. Be gentle and respectful.

## Newton's 3rd Law

*by Pat Shields*

Sir Isaac Newton is famous for opening our eyes to many of the laws that govern our physical universe. One of his most famous discoveries is the 3rd law of motion. For those of you who mentally skipped out on your high school science classes, this is the law that says that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Let me attempt to explain this guiding principal another way.

Throughout my life I did very well in school, well, at least as far as grades are concerned. However, when I “flew the coup” and landed in a post-secondary institution, I found out that my self-acclaimed intelligence meant nothing to the professors who saw many students more learned and possessing greater acumen than did I. I quickly learned that just making it to class did not guarantee that I would earn the grade of A I had been so accustomed to receiving. In my third year of college, I finally settled on a major, after jumping around from communications to geology and from history to psychology. This indecisiveness had left me with a serious amount of catching up to do if I wanted to earn my B.S. degree in 5 years. So, I took on a very heavy load of classes, including a whole year of physics. You have to remember that the year is now 1977 and the HP calculator my physics instructor wore on his belt was larger than most of today's laptops. His glasses were also thicker than the coke bottles of that generation. But, he knew his subject matter well, and I really enjoyed the in-class experiments he conducted to help his students visualize key physical laws. Unfortunately, I often found myself putting off studying for my physics exams until the last possible moment. It was on one of those occasions that I succumbed to a temptation still deeply shames me to this day. It is the “reaction” that Newton so aptly refers to in his 3rd law.



During a study break one evening, I wandered out into my dormitory hallway complaining about not allotting enough time to prepare for an upcoming physics exam. That's when it was suggested that I just have one of the other kids from my hall go take the exam for me. I was reminded that the class was large enough (~150 students) that the teacher would never know the difference.

Well, without a lot of thought at the time, I let it happen. The guy that took my exam was a physics major and he said the test was so easy that he purposely had to miss one question just to make it look less suspicious. He got me a 98% on the exam.

What I chose to let happen that day didn't feel right then and 34 years has not done much to diminish the ache in my stomach. Being an "excellent" student makes it even more difficult for me to rationalize, but even if I had struggled with academics, it would not have changed the outcome of what I did.

Let's look at this sad story through the eyes of Newton. According to his action/reaction principal, the action was that I asked another student to take a test more me, that is, the action was that I cheated. The equal and opposite reaction is how this made me feel afterwards. Perhaps I should modify Newton's law to say that the reaction is not only proportionate to the original action, but that in some cases the original action produces a reaction that does not immediately subside. Put another way, when you cheat, you feel like a cheater, and that is one mighty powerful gut ache.

I think the reason that I am so repulsed and embarrassed by this incident is God's way of reminding me of how ugly sin is. The Apostle Paul said it better in Romans 3:23, *"For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard."* In Newtonian vernacular, that truth (the action) should never be shared without the powerful follow-up (the reaction) penned in verses 24 & 25, *"Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us."*

Why did I share this very ugly story with all of you (you know the proverb, "let sleeping dogs lie). Am I covertly seeking approval by being open and honest enough to confess a sin of this nature in this forum? I sure hope not. I also don't intend to create any new adversaries through my admittance of less than stellar choices. In Christendom, we talk a lot about forgiveness and its power to free us and others from the heavy weight of guilt; it is fundamental to who we are as believers. But, I think that in order to truly grasp how much Jesus has done for me (and for you), we all need to understand how destructive sin can be. When we are able to do this, the powerful "law of grace" will shine in our lives and then we can see that the truth of Grace trumps Newton's law every time. Stated another way, the tomb is indeed empty, our reaction to this can be nothing other than heartfelt thanksgiving. Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed!

## **KCC Hosts Seder Dinner**

On the night of Friday, April 15, 2011, KCC was privileged to present Dr. David Sedaca, a Jewish believer in Christ, who serves with Chosen People Ministries (CPM). Centered out of NY City, CPM has been sharing the love of Messiah with the Jewish people since 1894. Dr. and Rev. Sedaca was born into a Messianic Jewish home and grew up in Europe, North and South America. He received his Bachelor's degree summa cum laude from Harvard University. He also attended Biola University, the International Baptist Theological Seminary and the Graduate School of Middle East Studies of the University of Belgrano. He has been a lecturer of Judaism and Homiletics in seminaries across the United States, Canada, South America, Israel and Europe.

KCC invited Dr. Sedaca to come and lead us through the Passover Seder, which is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. While many Jewish holidays revolve around the synagogue, the Seder is conducted in the family home, although communal Seders are also organized by synagogues, schools and community centers, some open to the general public. The Seder is integral to Jewish faith and identity; if not for divine intervention and the Exodus, the Jewish people would still be slaves in Egypt. Therefore, the Seder is an occasion for praise and thanksgiving and for rededication to the idea of liberation. Dr. Sedaca presented and explained the meaning of each of the rituals of the Seder dinner, including the use of unleavened bread (Matzah) and the four different cups of wine (grape juice) taken during the dinner.

Dr. Sedaca had a question/answer session with those in attendance, where he challenged the folks of KCC, and the world, to reach out to God's chosen people, the Jewish nation. He shared that less than 1% of the Jews alive today are Messianic, or Jews that have accepted Jesus as their Savior. That is an astounding statistic, and one that should cause all of us to "always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in us." And in doing so, Dr. Sedaca implored us to prepare ourselves to be evangelistic to Jews by being able to share with them Jesus, as found in the Old Testament. To be sure, it is a challenge to reach Jews for Christ, but how can we turn our backs on the very people group that God our Father has called His own.

Dr. Sedaca explains the meaning and use of the unleavened bread (Matzoh or Matzah) during the Passover Seder.



KCC Seder-Dinner attendees listen attentively as Dr. Sedaca leads them through each part of the Passover Seder.

# DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS

by Brent Johnson

*You who are on the road*

*Must have a code that you can live by*

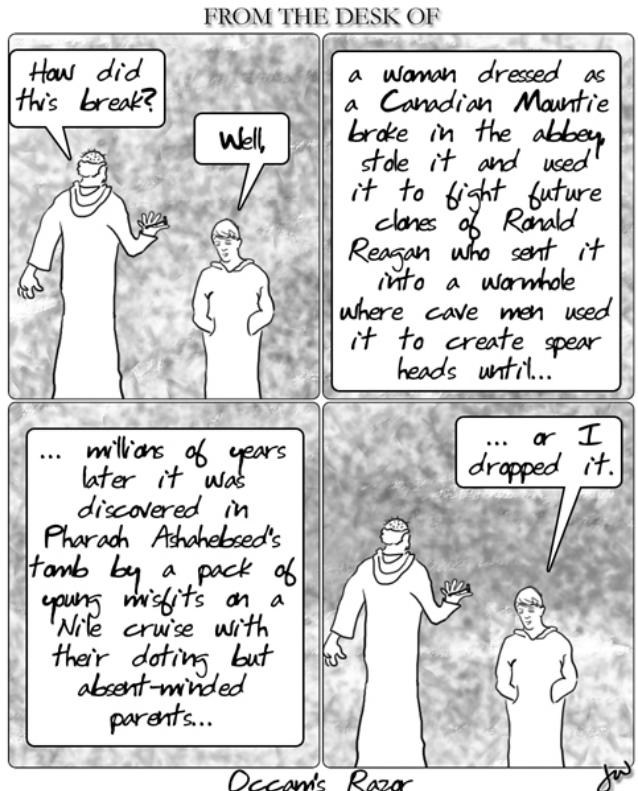
Says the 1970 song *Teach Your Children*, by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young.

As it happens, Christians have loads of codes. Most of these instructions come straight from the *Bible*. “Do to others as you would have them do to you,” “He who doesn’t work shouldn’t eat” and “Honor your father and your mother” are just three examples. If these codes led everybody the world would be transformed into a wonderful place bearing little resemblance to the reality that has existed.

A couple years ago I was introduced to Occam’s Razor and noticed it, too, was a good rule for the road. Since then I’ve tried to learn more about it and in the following pages I’ll try to explain what I’ve learned and how it might apply to some of the great questions that have perplexed humanity.

William of Occam (1288-1348) was an English-born, Franciscan friar. Ockham, the village where William was born, was near London, England. He became a scholastic philosopher and theologian, and he had considerable influence on medieval thought. He was certainly a man of faith. He may be best remembered today for a principle that he didn’t invent, but that he developed and used adeptly. Long after his death that principle was named “Occam’s Razor.”

According to my dictionary, Occam’s Razor is the principle that in explaining a thing, no more assumptions should be made than are necessary. Another popular definition says Occam’s Razor means:



Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily. In other words, if you can explain something without supposing the existence of some entity, then do so.

Initially, those definitions don't explode with illumination, but don't go away. I'll introduce examples later that will help. First I'll look at a way The Razor is often used. Some Christians have adopted Occam's Razor as an evangelistic tool. In so doing, they explain how dangerous it is to assume the *Bible* is false. Hell could be the result. On the other hand, if the *Bible* is assumed to be true, and it actually turned out to be false, the respondent believer would only be inconvenienced by wholesome living and self-denial, with no negative eternal consequence.

I'll agree that the *Bible* has dramatic implications, but I'm not sure that arguing assumptions based on their risk of consequences is the same as arguing assumptions based on their lack of observable proof. Occam himself said, "*God's existence cannot be deduced by reason alone.*"<sup>1</sup> So Occam was perfectly willing to assume the entity of God. And if the existing world is the result of chance evolution, proponents seem to me to be making rigorous assumptions with few clues about process.

In my opinion, a better illustration of Occam's Razor is offered online by a Chicago-based Sean Parnell (not to be confused with Alaska's governor). In a paraphrased version, here are his comments:

Crop Circles were mysteries that illustrate the usefulness of Occam's Razor. Crop circles began to be reported in the 1970s. Two interpretations were made about the circles of matted grass. One was that flying saucers made the imprints. The other was that some people had used some sort of instruments to push down the grass. Occam's Razor would say that given the lack of evidence for flying saucers and the complexity involved in getting UFOs from distant stars to arrive on earth, the second interpretation is simplest. The second explanation could be wrong, but until further facts present themselves, it remains the preferable theory. As it turns out, numerous crop circles have been linked to people who admitted creating them.<sup>2</sup>

Parnell realized competing theories existed for how crop circles were made. He said "given the lack of evidence for flying saucers..." So the existence of flying saucers is an "entity" or "assumption" that Occam would avoid. The other theory involved people using "some sort of instrument" to push down the grass. This doesn't qualify as an objectionable entity because people are known to exist and they could use their feet or shovels or 4-wheelers. The only "assumption" is that they were able to sneak in and push down the grass, perhaps at night. And that they used rope or twine to guide their patterns. It should be pointed out that only by thoroughly understanding both theories is

a person able to categorize the entities that fly afoul of Occam. Average people have the information necessary to put any assumption involving flying saucers in an improbable category.

When speaking of codes another worthy name comes to mind. In some ways he is similar to Occam, but he is remembered quite differently. Rene Descartes (1596-1650) was a French philosopher and mathematician who also disliked assumptions. Descartes (pronounced: day-CART) created analytic geometry and made a host of enduring contributions in the field of math. But Descartes started his struggle toward knowledge by first establishing “existence.” Descartes initially adopted a single principle: *thought exists*. From there he postulated: *thought cannot be separated from me, therefore, I exist*. In this case we see a brilliant use of Occam’s Razor. Descartes, like you and me, had thoughts and knew for sure his thoughts were not just assumed, they were personal and they were real. From there Descartes established a basis for reality and went on to contribute marvelously to philosophy, science and mathematics. What is sometimes referred to as Descartes’ “method of doubt,” was a code for him. With this method he attacked assumptions by casting as much doubt at them as he could. After trial by doubt, his ideas were stripped down to some pretty stable stuff.

Descartes is different from Occam in that his “method of doubt” is kind of lost in the background of his accomplishments. Occam’s accomplishments are lost in the background of his Razor. The two men are linked in being abrasive to assumptions. In fact, “razor” may allude to sharp or shrewd cutting of assumptions. The two men are similar in another way; Occam liked empirical evidence, which is evidence verifiable by observation.<sup>3</sup> Ditto for Descartes.

A quest begins early in a Christian’s life with the goal of knowing God and understanding His Word. This quest can express itself in a thirst for reading the *Bible* and Christian books. Christians learn a principle or they understand a doctrine and it fills them with joy and assurance. And it equips them to be better servants. A similar quest springs from the hearts and minds of science lovers, with a goal to understand nature or to cure a disease or invent a useful machine. Like the Christian, a scientist gains understanding or solves a theorem and his thrill glows effervescently. Proverbs 4:5 rings out “Get wisdom, get understanding;...” and the Christian and scientist strain forward, consumed by the hope that just a little more truth will be revealed to them.

Occam’s Razor is a caution against assumptions, and yet Occam is willing to assume God exists. Descartes’ “method of doubt” buffets ideas, and yet rather than destroy ideas it makes those that survive stronger. With an interest in both God and science, I will



next turn to review a couple theories about earth, which many philosophers, scientists and Christians stooped to make assumptions about. Presumably, misplaced assumptions could have been dispelled by rigorous study, or by simply recognizing one's own ignorance and refusing to base a belief on it.

Long ago many people believed the earth was flat. The Greeks were perhaps the first to realize the earth is spherical, doing so as early as 500 BC. The Chinese were one of the last, converting as late as the 1600s, according to *Wikipedia*. However, the full moon looks down with a round face. Even more, a crescent moon hints at its spherical shape. And the sun, seen through fog or thin clouds, is also round. Given these observations, an astute student of Occam might have been reluctant to assume that the earth was flat.

Numerous people figured out that the earth was spherical and Aristotle, (384-322 BC), a lauded Greek philosopher, endorsed the spherical earth concept, which pretty much cemented it. Eratosthenes (276–194 BC) was a Greek mathematician, poet and astronomer. He realized the earth was spherical. Since he made a monumental observation based on shadows, we can realize that all shadows on a flat earth would have parallel vertical angles. Thus, if a person had two sticks the same height, their shadows would be the same length at the same time, no matter how far the sticks were separated in a north-south direction.

Eratosthenes (er-uh-TOSS-the-knees) knew that during the summer solstice, the zenith sun would be almost directly overhead at Aswan, Egypt. There, the vertical angle of shadows would be zero degrees, as observed by items like poles making no shadow. Eratosthenes lived pretty much due north of Aswan, at Alexandria, Egypt, where he examined the vertical angle of a shadow during the sun's zenith. He noted the height of an object and the length of its shadow. Eratosthenes thought the distance between Aswan and Alexandria was about 497 miles (it is 524 miles). Although Greeks were familiar with geometry, they weren't quite up on trigonometry. Be that as it may, Eratosthenes apparently used a ratio to calculate the circumference of the earth, and got something equivalent to 25,560 miles —a measurement very close to correct.

This experiment could be easily repeated with trigonometry. Using a stick of a known length and measuring the solstice zenith shadow, the vertical angle of the sun could be calculated and should be about  $7.5^\circ$ . Using a ratio, the following calculation could be made:

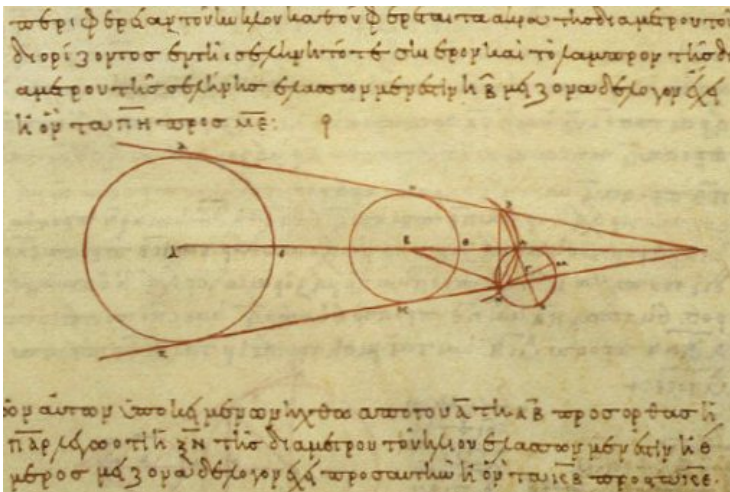
$$\frac{524 \text{ miles}}{7.5^\circ} \sim \frac{x}{360^\circ} \quad x = 25,152 \text{ miles.}$$

The actual circumference measured through the poles is 24,860 miles (give or take a few).

I think these would be just the kind of intimate details that Occam would embrace in reducing assumptions. The flat-earth theory might seem correct, but it would need some pretty exotic assumptions to account for shadows cast at different angles. Occam's Razor would say a spherical earth needed fewer assumptions. The spherical theory was also buttressed by watching ships approach or depart, the mast and sails being visible from greater distances than the cabin and hull. Of course the spherical shape of the earth was very well understood by 1492, when Columbus discovered the New World. The school textbooks of the 1970s (and earlier) contained some very poor scholarship regarding Columbus.

Fundamental understanding of our solar system followed a firm grasp of the spherical earth. And when two central theories emerged, another contest ensued. One theory featured earth as the center of the universe and the other featured the sun as the center of the solar system. Thinkers once assumed the earth stood still and the sun, moon, stars and clouds moved around it. Circumstantial evidence indicated the earth was the center of the universe and the heavens circled it. Aristotle adopted that theory and it flew.

But Aristarchus (310-230 BC) was another Greek who lived a few decades after Aristotle. He was an astronomer and mathematician. Aristarchus (air-uh-STAR-cus) noticed that the moon disappeared in the earth's shadow during eclipses and decided the moon was smaller than the earth. In fact, he knew the length of time it took the moon to travel through a given arc of the sky. And by measuring how long the moon was in the shadow of the earth during an eclipse, he guessed that the earth was about three times the size of the moon. He was in the ballpark. The earth's diameter is about 4 times larger than the moon's diameter.



During solar eclipses the moon passes between the sun and earth. Obviously, therefore,

the sun was farther from the earth than the moon. But Aristarchus noticed that both the sun and moon appeared to be about the same size. Thus, he believed that the distance to the sun was as much greater than the distance to the moon as the size of the sun was greater than the size of the moon. He calculated the sun to be about 20 times the size of the moon and therefore 20 times as far away. In that, he was wrong. The sun is about 400 times the size of the moon and 400 times farther away, but he was correct in the fact that apparent size was relative to actual size and distance.

Aristarchus deduced that the moon systematically circled the earth, separate from its daily rising and setting. He also concluded that the moon was lighter than the earth (it has 1/80th of the earth's mass) and therefore easier to move. He decided that their difference in weight contributed to the moon orbiting the earth. And since the sun was much larger than the earth, it must be the earth that orbited the sun. Aristarchus modeled the solar system with the sun at the center and the known planets circling the sun in the correct order. Aristarchus believed the stars to be very far away and this explained their stationary position compared to the planets, which like the moon, moved through the background of stars as they orbited the sun (and as their position changed perspective because of the earth's orbit). Aristarchus believed that the earth rotated on its own axis, which made the sun and moon "rise" and "set."

Seleucus of Seleucia (190 BC -?) was a Babylonian astronomer who also promoted a heliocentric solar system. Seleucia was a city on the Tigris River, in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Seleucus (si-LOO-cus) made a connection between tides and the moon and reasoned that the moon was responsible, at least in part, for the tides. He believed the spinning motion of the earth to also be responsible, and he was right. Unfortunately, time has destroyed most of the records relating to Seleucus' work.

In spite of the "cus" guys (Aristarchus and Seleucus) the ideas of Aristotle prevailed. And were adopted by a prominent Roman mathematician and astronomer, Claudius Ptolemy (AD 90-168). In fact, so great was Ptolemy's influence that the earth-centered model became known as the Ptolemaic (tall-uh-MAY-ick) system. The Christian church and Muslim astronomers both latched on to the Ptolemaic system in warm embrace. Perhaps the Muslim embrace was a little stronger. Their civilization saw the main gains in mathematics during the period after the fall of Rome (about 500 AD) and the rise of the Renaissance (about 1500).

Andrew Bernstein, a modern writer and doctor of philosophy gauges the importance of Aristotle this way,

"Aristotle's writings were lost in the West during the Dark Age of the 5th-9th centu-

ries—and that, not accidentally, the Medieval Renaissance of the 12th and 13th centuries largely coincides with the recovery of the full Aristotelian corpus from the great Islamic centers of learning in Spain. It is an historical truism that the significant intellectual advances wrought by Albert [Magnus], his brilliant student, Thomas Aquinas, and their peers of the early Scholastic period, were under the monumental influence of Aristotle.

Even today, the profoundly beneficent influence of Aristotle is not fully appreciated. It was not merely (or even primarily) Aristotle’s writings that were lost to the Dark and early Middle Ages; it was his spirit, his approach, his orientation, his cognitive love affair with this world. If one studies the writings of Aristotle—and the history of them being lost and, centuries later, rediscovered by Western man—one sees clearly the enormously positive and reciprocal causal relationship between the recovery of Aristotle’s works and the Medieval Renaissance.”

Well, Bernstein’s opinion of Aristotle is a tad bit more sanguine than my own. Aristotle was indeed a great thinker with a monumental influence. But his solar system was wrong and therefore Ptolemy’s was wrong too. Various scientists and astrologers continued to ask why the Ptolemaic system failed to explain some observations, like the occasional retrograde (apparent backward) motion of planets. This happens because the view of the stars seen as background to other planets changes as the earth progresses in orbit. That causes the stars to give the appearance that the other planets move backward at times. The illusion is the result of the nearness of the planets against the vastly distant stars. The same thing happens when you raise your finger and touch its lowest knuckle to your nose. Close one eye and look past your finger to a wall. Without moving your hand, open your eye and close the opposite eye. Your finger will appear to have moved to a different place in front of the wall. It actually didn’t move at all. If the planets all circled the earth, how was this motion possible? It wasn’t, but Aristotle and Ptolemy invented some wild assumptions to explain this phenomenon.

Centuries passed until Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was born in Poland. Since his name ends with “cus,” you probably already realized that he would be one of the guys on the cusp of figuring out the solar system. Names are often fun to examine. Copernicus’ only ends in “cus” ‘cause Nick Latinized it. He actually had the same name as his father, Nicolaus Koppernigk, who had set up a business trading in copper. The Koppernigk name originates in the town from which Copernicus’ paternal grandfather came. Since grandfather Koppernigk became a citizen of Krakow, Poland in 1396, my first guess is that his former town was somehow involved in the copper trade.

Copernicus' father died when the boy was 10 or 12. A rich uncle responded by taking in the lad's family (mother and three older siblings). Copernicus received a good education through college, and his uncle allowed him to also study abroad, in Rome. Particular to his studies was astrology, and though this art is often linked to nonsense, it is also linked to some very complicated math. Astrology was popular in Arabian / Islam cultures and they learned math from the Greeks and made advancements of their own, all so they could predict locations of planets and stars. And all still erroneously believing the earth was the center of the universe.

In 1514, when Copernicus was 41, he wrote out a small book called the *Little Commentary*.<sup>4</sup> He distributed handwritten copies of it to some of his friends. In it he laid out seven axioms as follows:

- 1- There is no center in the universe.
- 2- The earth's center is not the center of the universe.
- 3- The center of the universe is near the sun.
- 4- The distance from the earth to the sun is imperceptible compared with the distance to the stars.
- 5- The rotation of the earth accounts for the apparent daily rotation of the stars.
- 6- The apparent annual cycle of movements of the sun is caused by the Earth revolving around it.
- 7- The apparent retrograde motion of the planets is caused by the motion of the Earth from which one observes.

It was obvious in the *Little Commentary* that Copernicus intended to publish these axioms or findings in a larger book, for he wrote "Here, for the sake of brevity, I have thought it desirable to omit the mathematical demonstrations intended for my larger book." And it is also obvious that his mathematical and astrology/astronomy abilities were well known. The Fifth Lateran Council decided to improve the calendar, which had fallen out of synch with the seasons. In 1514 the Pope appealed to various experts for this project, including Copernicus. He, however, answered only by a long letter.<sup>5</sup>

For many years Copernicus worked on his book, apparently reluctant to publish something likely to raise controversy. I think Copernicus may have had another problem. He expected circular orbits and the actual elliptical orbits of planets and our moon were

messaging with his math. His ideas, however, whispered their way across Europe. In 1533, Johann Widmanstetter, secretary to Pope Clement VII, explained Copernicus' heliocentric system to the Pope and two cardinals. The Pope was so pleased that he gave Widmanstetter a gift. Copernicus was very much Catholic and once said regarding the size of his solar system, "So large indeed is the divine workshop of the Almighty."<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, Pope Clement VII was the pope who denied King Henry VIII of England his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. That refusal led Henry to divorce both Catherine and the Catholic Church. He married Anne Boleyn and started the Anglican Church.

Copernicus was finally persuaded to publish his book, but the finished product reached his hand on his deathbed, in 1543. By then, his ideas were readily known throughout Europe. And his book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* was received by a curious world (that fraction who were literate). Imagine hearing for the first time that the earth went around the sun!

Copernicus' fears of criticism were well founded. Protestant writers were the first to criticize his heliocentric system. Readers may remember that Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* were published in 1517. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was among the early, outspoken critics of putting the sun at the center of the solar system.

Here is what Andrew White, history professor at Cornell University said about this subject in 1892:

"Doubtless many will exclaim against the Roman Catholic Church for this; but the simple truth is that Protestantism was no less zealous against the new scientific doctrine. All branches of the Protestant Church - Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican - vied with each other in denouncing the Copernican doctrine as contrary to Scripture; and, at a later period, the Puritans showed the same tendency. Said Martin Luther: 'People gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth.'"<sup>7</sup>

In Martin Luther we have a curious parallel to Copernicus. Luther was smart and schooled in the Scriptures. And Luther brought Christianity back to Grace, which, like the heliocentric solar system, had been lost for a long time. Luther was, perhaps, consumed by his own revelation and impatient toward distractions. Had Luther only been a practitioner of Occam's Razor, he might not have made this mistake. Familiarity with concepts is a prime tenant of the Razor because only then can a student gauge assump-

tions. When it came to Scripture, Luther was a scholar. When the topic was astronomy, Luther was weak. He assumed the Scriptures said something they apparently did not mean. Copernicus, on the other hand, understood the solar system. He probably yearned to convert the world to the truth, but could not. In fact, he knew the truth for at least 30 years, but didn't publish until he was 70 years old and in poor health.



Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was an Italian mathematician, astronomer and philosopher. In 1589 he was hired as Professor of Mathematics at Pisa, Italy. Early in his career he broke with Aristotle when he demonstrated that objects of different weights fall at the same speed. Aristotle had developed a theory, which became known as Aristotle's Law of Falling Bodies. It said the rate of the fall of a body is proportional to its weight: the heavier the body the faster it falls. Breaking 2,000 year old laws doesn't go over big with everybody and Galileo wasn't rehired to teach the class. Not to worry, he was appointed to the chair of Mathematics at the University of Padua, Italy, where he remained until 1610.

In 1609 he heard about a spyglass invented in Holland. So he made a better one himself and gave one to the Doge of Venice. Venetians were seafarers and the Doge immediately recognized the value of the spyglass for sailors. Galileo's salary was doubled and his tenure secured. Using his spyglass / telescope he studied the heavens. Armed with it he discovered Saturn's rings and Jupiter's four largest moons. Being a mathematician equipped with one of the first telescopes probably contributed to Galileo's understanding of the solar system. Aristotle had said the heavens were more perfect than the earth. Therefore the heavenly bodies would be smooth. But Galileo saw mountains on the moon. In 1610 he wrote *Sidereal Messenger*, a book describing his observations. "Sidereal" means "about distant stars." Galileo preferred the Copernicus model of the solar system. It may be that Galileo actually liked proving Aristotle wrong.

In 1610 Galileo took up the cause for Copernicus' heliocentric solar system, which was still being debated in science and church circles. For 67 years the Catholic Church had remained silent about Copernicus' work. In 1615 they denounced Galileo to the Roman Inquisition. Galileo promised to quit espousing the heliocentric theory and in 1616 the Catholic Church condemned heliocentrism as "false and contrary to Scripture." When Galileo later defended his views in *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, published in 1632, he was tried by the Inquisition, found "vehemently suspect of her-

esy,” forced to recant, and spent the rest of his life under house arrest.

Why did the Catholic Church object to the heliocentric system after first embracing it? Perhaps, this can be attributed to the contest between the Protestant and Catholic

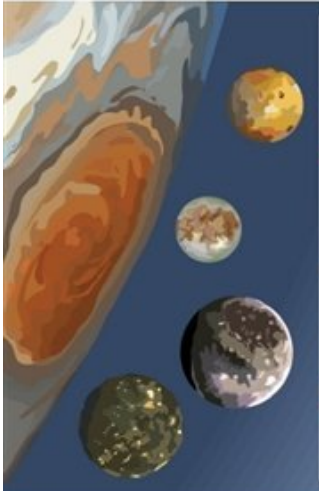
churches. Since the Protestant Church was so strongly denouncing the concept, the Catholics may have felt they risked losing parishioners to the Protestants if they didn't also take a strong position against heliocentrism. Big mistake! By the middle of the 1600s it was difficult to find an important astronomer who was not a Copernican; by the end of the century it was impossible.

Occam probably would have endorsed the heliocentric system because it better explained all the motions of the planets. The earth-centered theory needed complex assumptions to explain the periodical backward motion of some planets. And it needed more assumptions to explain why a heavy sun would orbit a light earth. Descartes probably would have cast doubt at both theories and the heliocentric system would have survived while the earth-centered theory would have crashed.


These examples about the shape of the earth and center of the solar system aren't so different than the doctrine of the Messiah. Jews expected a triumphant king and they got one. But they assumed that they understood way more than they actually did, and therefore didn't recognize Him because He hung on a cross. After His resurrection, the truth was plain to see. Today, a spherical earth slinging elliptically around a central sun is first grade stuff. For more than 1900 years a resurrected Messiah has been the foundation of Christianity.

My dad was surveying one day in the 1960s. He came across a car with a hose from the

## The tool that changed the universe



*400 years ago the universe was turned on its head... by the telescope*



- 1 On August 25, 1609 Italian inventor Galileo Galilei presented a telescope with 8x magnification to the Venetian Senate
- 2 With an improved 20x version of the telescope, Galileo discovered four moons orbiting the planet Jupiter
- 3 This observation proved Greek philosopher Aristotle wrong -- that all things in the sky orbited Earth
- 4 Galileo presented this as evidence to support the heliocentric (sun-centred) view of the universe -- first proposed by Polish priest Nicolaus Copernicus more than 60 years earlier
- 5 The Spanish Inquisition of the Catholic Church disagreed -- they forced Galileo to retract and put him under house arrest
- 6 It wasn't until 1687 that Isaac Newton finally established the Solar System as fact, with his theory of gravity

Source: The Galileo Project/NASA/IMHS 250809 AFP



tailpipe into the window. The man inside was dead. As details came out a tragedy unraveled. The man's wife was in a hospital with heart problems. He apparently assumed she was going to die. Actually, she recovered and lived for years.

In 1979, when I was about 24, I found myself riding in the bow of a skiff driven by a wizened old mariner. At the time a storm was lifting huge breakers and throwing them ashore. As our skiff approached the beach I saw a rope, called a "running line," stretching from shore into the sea. We had used this very rope to help launch the skiff half an hour earlier. I as-



The author with a Cook Inlet king salmon.

sumed my wizened captain remembered the rope. When the outboard hooked it, I realized my assumption was wrong. An instant later the skiff was upside-down...

Assumptions are dangerous, whether they involve communications or are foundations for theories. Occam demonstrated how poorly-understood assumptions make a shaky base for theories. Assumptions should be based, when possible, on intimately known details. Today, the Christian and the scientist hurry to study because they thirst to know. A love for truth propels them both. The following lyrics could refer to Jesus or to the principles on which a theory is based. Oscar Hammerstein invented them for a tune set to the music of his partner, Richard Rogers. The song was featured in their 1951 musical, *The King and I*:

It's a very ancient saying,  
But a true and honest thought,  
That if you become a teacher,  
By your pupils you'll be taught.

As a teacher I've been learning –  
You'll forgive me if I boast –  
And I've now become an expert,  
On the subject I like most.  
Getting to know you.

And, as Frederick Oakeley translated the Christmas carol, *Adeste Fideles* from Latin to get our English version: *Occam, all ye faithful...*

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## **Christian Quotes On Being A Teacher and Having A Teachable Heart**

Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty... acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours.

***James I (J. I.) Packer***

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If I had my choice in selecting teachers for any activity of a local church, I would not first seek those who have the greatest academic credentials. I would seek a person who is open and responsive, who loves Jesus Christ, and who is growing.

***Larry Richards***

**[The Reason for our Hope Foundation](#)**

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Those who teach by their doctrine must teach by their life, or else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other.

***Matthew Henry***

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The times we find ourselves having to wait on others may be the perfect opportunities to train ourselves to wait on the Lord.

***Joni Eareckson Tada***

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Too often we say, "I have no talent to teach a Sunday school class." "My home is not nice enough to have a Bible study here." "I don't cook well enough to help with Meals on Wheels." "I'm a businessman, not a carpenter. I wouldn't know the first thing about building a house for Habitat for Humanity." When we step out in faith and offer all we have, God will use it in powerful ways. How much is enough? Just what we have when God is with us!

***Jane Douglas White***

## 2nd Annual Soup/Dessert Gala

On April 10, 2011, a small, but rowdy bunch of folks gathered at KCC to have a bite to eat as well as to see if the saying really is true, “men can’t cook.”

The night started out with everyone in attendance being asked to share something about themselves that no one else in the room knew. Well, I’m here to tell you that you should have been there because this bunch of folks sure has a colorful past. I’m sorry to report that nothing said that night will be divulged in the KCC Newsletter, as this might be construed as gossip, and if the Newsletter is going to gossip, then what is said has to be believable. These stories don’t fit that criteria, so you’ll just have to corner one of the attendees and beg them for details.

Speaking of beyond belief, there were a half dozen desserts prepared by very brave men, and to date, no one has perished from consuming the entrees. I think that is a good thing. This year’s winner hails from the village of Cabin Avenue and goes by the name of John Lofquist. His winning dessert was a cherry pie. Coming in second was none other than Rod “no tooth” Mattox, with his berry parfait. Finally, the third place award went to Nate Smith’s triple chocolate cake. Pulling off the coup de gras for the evening was John Lofquist, by getting the biggest laugh during story telling time.

Many, many thanks to Melissa Smith for her getting this event kick-started last year and keeping it going in 2011. Melissa, we are going to miss you around here, that is for sure.



**John Lofquist accepts his “Golden Mitt” award.**



Rod and Sheila Mattox can't control their laughter as Pat Shields shares some of the funniest stories ever told in public.....or something like that.

Background: Melissa Smith, Dot May, Darlene Rozak, and Nate Smith.

Foreground: Sheryl & Perry Neel & John & Lynn Lofquist all wonder when Pat Shields is going to quit telling the dumbest stories ever shared in public.....or something like that.



Melissa Smith awards the “golden spoon” to the runner-up dessert of the night. The “golden-mitt” went to John Lofquist (left).

## Hutchison as gracious as good (Wrestling)

<http://www.alaskasportshall.org/blog/?p=3415>

Raised to be humble and stay modest, it's no surprise Michaela Hutchison of Soldotna doesn't consider her star-studded wrestling career to be a big deal.

But everyone else does.

The 21-year-old, 121-pound junior at Oklahoma City University is a two-time reigning national champion for the NAIA school and one of the toughest pound-for-pound wrestlers in the country.

Hutchison, of Skyview High fame, has won 95 of 102 career matches, a remarkable .931 winning percentage. She is so good, in fact, that she has wrestled for the Oklahoma City University men's team at 125.

"There have been several that have tried it over the years, but I think she's the only one to ever win any matches," longtime head coach Archie Randall told me.

Of course, Hutchison is used to beating the boys.

In 2006, as a 103-pound sophomore, she became the first female in U.S. history to win a high school state wrestling title against boys when she defeated Aaron Boss of Colony in a 1-0 thriller. The roar and reaction of the crowd that night actually shook the ground at Chugiak High School. I know because I was there.

Today, Hutchison is rocking opponents at Oklahoma City University.

She didn't always plan to go there, though. In the beginning she wanted to join her older brother Eli (a four-time Alaska state champ) at Boise State University. But the OCU coaches were persistent in their recruiting.

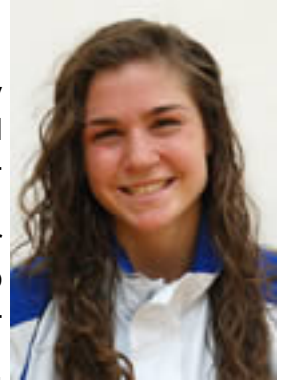
"Coach Davis would call me at 5 in the morning, trying to get me to come," Hutchison told me. "I was pretty annoyed. But he coached me at Fargo and I liked the way he coached. I didn't even talk to my dad. He was like, 'What are you doing?' 'Sorry dad. I think it's a good thing,' " she told him. "They have a really good pre-med program. I like the teachers. It's really good for school."

Plus OCU boasts the country's No. 1 women's wrestling team in the nation.

"If you have the best competition in the (practice) room you're going to get better more than if you're the best on the team," she said.

Turns out, though, Hutchison is the best of the best.

"She's a coach's dream," Randall said. "Works hard, doesn't get in trouble, does



her school work. She does whatever you tell her to do. She's not an issue like some of the other kids I got."

There have been times, too, when opponents have called out Hutchison with hopes of making their name by taking down the champ. It happened recently at a national tournament when a woman challenged Hutchison to an exhibition match.

She would later regret it because Hutchison threw her to the mat with a belly-to-back move, a difficult and devastating maneuver comparable to a suplex you would see on TV.

But there is nothing fake about Hutchison.

"She's the real deal," Randall said. "There's not a whole lot that bothers her when she wrestles."

As expected, though, Hutchison played down the situation.

"It wasn't a big deal," she said.

"She was just like, 'I want to wrestle you.' She wasn't really trash talking. Afterwards she said good job and we were laughing."



In many ways, Hutchison was born to wrestle. She is one of 10 children in her family and they keep a small mat in the front room to settle disputes. The competition is fierce, too, as at least four have placed at the state tournament.

But just because the sport dominates the household doesn't mean it's on her mind 24-7. In fact, when she talks to Eli on the phone the conversation always drifts to other things.

"We try not to (talk about it) because our life revolves around wrestling," Hutchison said. "We're like, 'Yeah, practice sucked.' Then we talk about something else."

## TO REALIZE THE VALUE OF

*Author unknown*

*To realize*

The value of a sister/brother  
Ask someone  
Who doesn't have one.

*To realize*

The value of ten years:  
Ask a newly  
Divorced couple.

*To realize*

The value of four years:  
Ask a graduate.

*To realize*

The value of one year:  
Ask a student who has failed a final  
exam.

*To realize*

The value of nine months:  
Ask a mother who gave birth to a still-  
born.

*To realize*

The value of one month:  
Ask a mother  
Who has given birth to a premature  
baby..

*To realize*

The value of one week:  
Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

*To realize*

The value of one minute:  
Ask a person  
Who has missed the train, bus or  
plane.

*To realize*

The value of one-second:  
Ask a person  
Who has survived an accident.

Time waits for no one.  
Treasure every moment you have.

You will treasure it even more when  
You can share it with someone special.

To realize the value of a friend or fam-  
ily member:  
LOSE ONE.

Time waits for no one.