

Hypocrisy

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W. C. Fields was known as a heavy drinker. He famously was known to say, "I never drink water because of the disgusting things fish do in it."

I had a small aquarium when we were newly married, until I figured out that it was hard to keep the fish alive and the tank had to be cleaned more than we were willing to do.

I was listening to the news while driving earlier this month when I heard a news story about a man arrested for animal abuse after he abandoned his pet fish. I'm not making this up; this really happened! So I looked it up to learn more. This happened in New Hanover County, North Carolina. It is over on the coast, and the county seat is the city of Wilmington. Fifty-three year old Michael Ray Hinson was evicted from his home on March 22. I couldn't find out if he came home and found his possessions on the curb or if he was given time to pack—I don't know. In any event, he left behind his fish tank with one lonely Oscar fish.

Three days later, on March 25, sheriff's deputies found the fish and it was "in poor health and swimming in a dirty tank." I'm glad they never came by my apartment in Jackson, Mississippi. The story doesn't say how the deputies knew to check in on the fish. It could be the fish was able to phone 911; I really don't know. But the fish was suffering from "hole in the head disease," which, if left untreated, can be fatal. The fish is now recuperating at the Fish Room, a local pet store. The man was charged with 3 counts of cruelty to animals and one count of abandonment of an animal, and taken to jail.

The District Attorney was forced to drop the charges because "fish are not protected under the statutes relating to the cruelty to animals." Ben David, the District Attorney, said, "We take a very dim view of anyone who would abuse any creature, great or small, and appreciate their enforcement [speaking of the police] of the laws to protect vulnerable animals."

Now, let me read a few verses to you:

Exodus 23:5 (*Contemporary English Version*) If a donkey is overloaded and falls down, you must do what you can to help, even if it belongs to someone who doesn't like you.

Proverbs 12:10 (*Contemporary English Version*)

Good people are kind to their animals, but a mean person is cruel.

Deuteronomy 22:6-7 (*Contemporary English Version*) As you walk along the road, you might see a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground. If the mother bird is in the nest with either her eggs or her baby birds, you are allowed to take the baby birds or the eggs, but not the mother bird. Let her go free, and the LORD will bless you with a long and successful life.

This is a major principle of conservation and stewardship of the earth. You can take of its bounty, but make sure it can replenish itself.

Genesis 1:26 (*Contemporary English Version*) God said, "Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures."

Does this give us the right—this last verse—to mistreat animals? Of course not—look at the others we just read. Do we have the right to use clean animals for food? Yes, absolutely.

As some of you know, we recently lost one of our pets. Our black lab, Gibson, was hit by a car. It was sad, we cried, and we buried him. He was irritating at times, but we loved him. But he was an animal. He did not have human spirit, and his spirit did not go back to God when he died. He will not be resurrected. He was treated well, especially by Phyllis, and I'd like to think he lived a happy life as much as animals can.

This, however, is not a commentary on animal rights. Let me read some additional verses. I read Genesis 1:26. Verse 27 is very similar. It says we were created in God's image. As beautiful as a running horse can be, or a dog or cat—as beautiful as they are, God does not look like that. He looks like us!

Psalms 127:3 tells us that children are a gift from God!

King David writes in Psalm 139:13,

Psalm 139:13 (*Good News Bible*) You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb.

Job 10:8 (*Good News Bible*) Your hands formed and shaped me...

Job 31:15 (*Contemporary English Version*) After all, God is the one who gave life to each of us before we were born.

We were alive BEFORE WE WERE BORN! We were like God, created in His image, while STILL IN THE WOMB! Yet in Ezekiel 16:20-21, God says, "you have slain MY children and offered them up"—meaning, in child sacrifice. God personally made each and every one of us. We are alive in the womb and made in His image. Yet we, as a people, kill these babies.

This, however, is not a commentary on abortion.

This is a commentary on hypocrisy. Or maybe stupidity—maybe we could call it that. Could be the same thing. In many cases it is. Or better yet, this is a commentary on how Satan has totally blinded the majority of this world.

Let's go back to Wilmington, NC for a moment, to New Hanover County. Approximately 20% of pregnancies in this county end in abortion—one out of five. New Hanover consistently ranks in the top five counties in North Carolina for abortions. So, on the day Michael Ray Hinson was taken to jail for abandoning his pet fish, is it reasonable to assume a child—or more than one—was aborted, was killed by a pregnant woman from New Hanover County? I think that is a reasonable assumption.

Let's go back to what the County District Attorney, Ben David, said. Isn't that an interesting name? "Ben [son of] David," a man who should respect life. What did he say when he was forced to drop the charges against Mr. Hinson? "We take a very dim view of anyone who would abuse any creature great or small..."

This is the hypocrisy of which I speak, the sheer and utter stupidity of the words coming from this man's mouth.

There is a lot of controversy in the state of Georgia right now over the Fetal Heartbeat bill that the governor is expected to sign by Mother's Day, May 12. It basically says if a heartbeat is detected, you are not allowed to abort. "It's horrifying," one headline read. Women's rights are being trampled, we're told. Hollywood liberals—if I can be redundant there—are passing around petitions to boycott this state. If only they would! I

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think my life would be better if Sean Penn and Ashley Judd stayed away. The bill will end up in court. We know that. I might never make it into law. The bill still allows abortions up to six weeks. You can still sacrifice your baby, you just cannot do it as easily as before.

In Matthew 18:4, Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." A little child is the weakest among us. We are to pattern ourselves after them. They are totally defenseless. They are made in God's image. And yet we kill these children of God by the millions.

But, under no circumstance, can you ever forget to feed your pet fish.