



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Routine Living

Unfortunately, like 200 million other Americans, I am a creature of routine. Despite the constant interruptions, the changing schedules, the trips out of town, and the midnight demands, I live my life by routines.

Most of these are good routines. I like to brush my teeth as soon as I wake in the morning. A Sunday afternoon nap is so much of a "must" that I invariably get sleepy as soon as we finish the Sunday noon meal — even if we are at someone else's house. I take off my shoes when I sit down at the typewriter. I like to sit in an aisle seat in the non-smoking section of the plane. I resist all Saturday night invitations, preferring to spend a quiet evening at home with the family — or by myself.

But there is a problem with routines. They soon become a habit. And a habit is but one step removed from a rut. And everyone knows a rut is nothing more than a grave with both ends knocked out.

So I've been looking at these

routines in my life — and have come away more than slightly disturbed.

I'm getting ready to travel to the mid-east for a two-week camping trip in the Sinai desert. Over there you don't brush your teeth every morning when you get out of your sleeping bag. So, I've tried putting off brushing my teeth until after breakfast — just to break the routine. I'll tell you, it's been one difficult task. Last week we had visitors all Sunday afternoon. I tried my best not to go to sleep on them, but I finally did. Sitting in a stiff chair in the living room. I can't understand it, I never get sleepy on Tuesday afternoon — why Sunday? Routine, that's all.

Then last Saturday night Jackie insisted I take her out for Chinese food — since I had been out of town all week. I had forgotten how mean I could become when I don't get my way. Finally my 14-year-old daughter had to pull me aside and say, "Daddy, I think I need to pray for you. You sure are grumpy."

The prayer helped — but the realization that I was so routined that I had become rutted in my Saturday night pattern was mighty painful.

Psychologists talk about "adjusting" to unpleasant situations — like having to sit in the smoking section of the plane when you wanted up front, not getting your morning cup of coffee, or having to sleep on an uncomfortable pillow in the motel — without screaming about your rights being violated. Adjust is a good word, but I prefer the Biblical concept of being "transformed."

The problem with being transformed, however, is you lose your rights. That means you can't complain any more — even if you're in the right and the other fellow is taking advantage of you.

Some few will dare to break the routine and move on to this higher level. Most will become rutted. And die. Probably blaming it on the folks who stayed all Sunday afternoon and kept them from getting their rest.