

## A Pointer or Two (So to Speak)

There have been some gruesome but useful stories in the news recently, that's for sure. There's at least one memorable moral to each one.

For example, do you remember that woman in California who was so horrified to find part of a human finger in her chili at Wendy's? With shock and indignation in her voice, she recounted how she nearly vomited when she realized she had bitten into a human appendage. We were all duly appalled, naturally, and yet more than a little skeptical about the story. As facts came out, we saw how well-founded our skepticism had been.

It turned out that no one who worked at that Wendy's on that day was missing a finger, and nobody who worked in the industries that had manufactured, packaged, or shipped the chili had reported a finger-forfeiting accident. It also turned out that the finger, in a bowl of twice-cooked chili, was itself uncooked. What is more, forensic science eventually proved that the woman had never actually bitten into the finger. In addition, it was found that the woman had a history of filing bogus lawsuits, seeking damages from various companies for herself or her children.

The final chapter was composed just a day before this was written. The woman was sentenced to spend at least nine years in jail for conspiring with her husband to steal millions of dollars from the fast-food chain and their insurance company. The husband, who had paid a friend \$100 for the fingertip after it was severed in a construction accident, was sentenced to serve twelve years in prison. The judge who sentenced them remarked that the two had "lost their moral compass."

I should say so.

Wendy's claims it lost at least \$2.5 million from the scandal, and was forced to lay off several workers in its northern California stores because sales were hit so hard. Wendy's employees, including the man who prepared the chili, testified that they were dismayed and ashamed when the news broke, fearing what others might think of them. They were glad to be cleared of suspicion, and all too willing to testify against the couple.

The prison terms begin immediately.

The moral of the story? Well, one surely is "Be sure your sin will catch up with you." (Numbers 32:23, HCSB) Here's another: "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains." (1 Timothy 6:9-10, HCSB)

Perhaps one more would be useful. "'It's worthless, it's worthless!' the buyer says, but after he is on his way, he gloats." (Proverbs 20:14, HCSB) In other words, people can communicate alarm, outrage, and revulsion in almost gut-wrenching terms, when it suits their need. But what they really feel will come out sooner or later – especially when money is involved.

Back in March of 2005, the woman pretty convincingly expressed disgust, alarm, and moral outrage at having been served a bowl of chili with a finger in it. She said, "There's no words to describe what I felt. It's sick, it's disgusting. Just knowing there was a human remain in my mouth is tearing me apart inside."

A clip of her speaking those words to the television cameras was played at the sentencing hearing. The judge threw the book at her.

The moral? Beware of believing people's dramatics and their hysterics. Find out the truth, and believe that. Then do what Jesus wants you to do in response, for the joy that He promises to those who follow Him.