

Stuff About Things: Singing My Song

by Robert F. Turner

Once in northern Arizona, a huge Indian woman visited our Bible class. She gave no indication that she could understand a word of English and apparently came only because several of her children were enrolled there. But my wife wanted to welcome her, and so she sat beside her and talked with her for some time, using an older daughter as an interpreter.

Vivian would say, "We are so glad you could come to our Bible study." The daughter would then speak to the mother in the rumbling, softly explosive language of the Navajo, mother would reply in kind, and daughter would say to my wife, "She is happy that you are trying to teacher her children."

This went on for some time until my wife asked, "How many children have you?"

The daughter answered, "Eighteen!" This caught my wife a bit off guard. She hesitated a moment, and then said to the daughter, "Tell her it must be wonderful to have such a large family."

Without waiting for translation, the large Indian woman leaned over and spoke directly to my wife, "You think so?"

Apparently the Navajo mother had her own reasons for not "understanding" English until interests and emotions arose that overshadowed the first consideration. I can almost sense her thoughts: "What does that two-child pale face know about having a large family?"

And I think I have seen this philosophy at work among people who just "can't understand" the word of God. They understand the daily paper, the trade journals, football statistics, etc. -- enough to argue with you about any point of difference there. But through the sermon or in Bible class they are politely indifferent, with an attitude of "I'll take you word for it -- it's all over my head."

Until you hit close to home -- something that really matters to them -- then they come to life with feelings hurt or swinging their pet scriptures about as though they were full time debaters. They need your help on everything except money, marriage, and masonry -- or whatever touches home. Then, "Forget the translator, Sir, you are singing my song."

-- *Stuff About Things*, p. 85

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