

## Faith in a Fig Leaf

It's not in the Bible, yet Christian people believe that "going to" or "becoming a member of" is something that they are supposed to do ... that doing those things is part of their relationship to God in that He, somehow, requires it of them. In fact, many do so as their primary means of relating to Him: Which is weird. For going to church to do business with God is about like going to McDonalds to develop a relationship with a farmer. It is, in fact, a fig leaf.

Remember the fig leaf? It's what Adam and Eve sewed together to hide themselves from God after they had disobeyed Him and found themselves with reason to try to cover up their lack of an honest, face-to-face relationship with Him anymore. A fig leaf is anything that we put between ourselves and God, that we reason will put us in better standing with Him but that attempts actually to cover up something that we don't want Him to see, and it is clear evidence of a lack in that relationship.

A fig leaf need not necessarily in and of itself be a bad thing nor may it even be present because we intentionally want to hide from God. But its actual function is problematic. It comes between us and God.

So going to church can be a fig leaf.

Praying can be a fig leaf. Really. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," Psalm 66:18 says. The Passion Translation (TPT) says it this way: "Yet if I had closed my eyes to my sin, the Lord God would have closed his ears to my prayer."

Reading one's Bible can be a fig leaf. Is such reading an obligatory check-list item ... or something one does because on the pages of scripture he hears the voice of God speaking to him personally?

What is the message of Matthew 7:21-23? "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not gone to church, read our Bibles, gone soul-winning, sent money to missionaries, started Christian schools, memorized scripture, preached, prayed in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Those who rely on fig leaves had better beware. No fig leaves will survive the passage through the gates of heaven.

What is our motive? Why do we do what we do? Is it really out of love for God, in pursuit and fulfillment of our calling from Him ... or is it to put on a façade before men and somehow (we reason within ourselves) to manipulate God to do for us? A fig leaf is just such a manipulation – to lead the eye of God to not see what is really there. But God's eye sees all, and our efforts would be wiser spent on correcting what might tend to try to be hidden beneath the fig leaf.

How many in "full-time Christian service" operate solely on the basis of the glory of God and not for a paycheck? "God, rebuke those who claim to be 'strong ones,' who lurk within the

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congregation and abuse the people out of their love for money.” (Psalm 66:30, TPT) If there was no more paycheck, would they continue to show up on Monday?  
By Ben Graydon

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Religion and religious practices by and large are fig leaf practices. Denominations, preferred versions of the Bible, practices of tithes and offerings, “standards” like those around dress and hair and music – all are (or easily devolve into) fig leaves.

Psalm 68:22 says: “You’d better come out of your hiding places, all of you who are doing your best to stay far away from me. Don’t you know there’s no place to hide?” You can’t hide from God, so why would anyone try?

Imagine a marriage in which husband and wife always have fig leaves between them. Would that be really a marriage?

God longs for us to know Him intimately, for us to approach Him without hiding behind anything, for us to talk to Him as the lover of our souls. That means no fig leaves – nothing between my soul and the Savior.