

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

LutheranRenewal

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Garbage Makes Good Compost!

by Paul Anderson

As a student at UCLA I worked with Campus Crusade for Christ and a guy named Hal Lindsay. Through his influence I went to Dallas Seminary, much to the embarrassment of my father, a Lutheran pastor. After an intervening year in Israel, I finished up at Luther Seminary. At Dallas I was given the answers; at Luther I got the questions, but they didn't match the answers, and I struggled emotionally. Fears replaced confidence. At times I thought I was going crazy.



I attempted to get close to fellow students, but they rode on a different track. While at a reception, I was introduced to a young pastor they all considered cool. He said to me in front of them, "Oh I know you. You're the guy who's a good basketball player—and a little weird." They laughed, while I died inside. Someone had just exposed me. Had I not been operating at such a fragile level, I might have responded, "Hey Pardner, I am even weirder than you suspect." But because I heard truth in his unkind comment, I couldn't manage a response.

Some people enjoy collecting garbage, then dumping it on people. I had a load of garbage unloaded on me that night at seminary. So have you. It doesn't feel good, but the good news is that garbage can serve a good purpose—if you have a compost pile.

Garbage is waste material. People don't store smelly garbage; they throw it away. Garbage collectors come by and haul it off. I came home after a trip once and found maggots enjoying the remains in my trash container. Not a pretty site. But even garbage can be used productively. Compost piles thrive on the most putrid garbage, the kind that insects infest.

**"FOR WHEN I AM WEAK,
then I am strong."**

2 Corinthians 12:10

Gabriel and Israel Anderson

The apostle Paul did. He wrote the strangest thing: "*I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Cor. 12:10). I don't know many people who enjoy insults. But Paul had a compost pile, and he found that when insults came his way, it made him go low. And grace can only be found in the lowlands, never in the altitudes. So the insult actually brought strength to him. The compost pile caused healthy fruit to grow in his life. Amazing!

I lacked the maturity as a seminary student to know how to handle the garbage. I just internalized it, where it did me no good. Years later I realized that it had attached itself to my soul, and I needed to extract the smelly stuff through a process of forgiveness toward the garbage collector who dumped on me.

Garbage in the soul festers, poisons, infects. It causes diseases like depression. It clogs up the emotional system. Some people have had garbage dumped on them all their life—from parents, siblings, employers, and relatives.

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They assume that they are dirt because that is the way they feel. They conclude that because people have always offloaded garbage on them, they must, therefore, be garbage. Some never recover from such abuse, while others are able to come to a true, God-inspired picture of who they are. Friends help them get rid of the garbage and replace it with emotions appropriate for a child of God.

Most people don't possess compost piles, but those who do have beautiful flowers and fruit growing out of their lives. Rather than being victimized by garbage, they know where to put it. Are you acquainted with any people like that? Those who own compost piles know that

"...FORGIVE EACH OTHER, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32

- God doesn't waste anything
- God uses all things, even insults, to accomplish His purposes
- Maturity means overcoming evil with good
- Waste products makes the best compost
- Being a victor is better than being a victim

Reacting to people who dump garbage on us means that the garbage makes its way into our souls rather than into the compost pile. Responding to God enables us to put the garbage where it belongs and where it can do some good. The difference between reacting and responding is about ten seconds, long enough to offer up a quick prayer and take deliberate action.

Here are some scriptures to help in properly disposing of garbage:

- *"Now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips" (Col. 3:8).*
- *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13).*
- *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:31,32).*



We are commanded to *"get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger."* Negative emotions destroy the health of the body and spirit. Anger works like manna—it lasts for only a day. If it stays around longer, it turns putrid. Moses told the Israelites, *"No one is to keep any of it (manna) until morning.' However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell"* (Ex. 16:19,20). We must deal with destructive emotions, the garbage of the soul, in order to maintain emotional and spiritual health. Forgiveness toward others serves this purpose. Forgiveness does not mean that people didn't dump on us. It does not mean that we let them off the hook by saying that they didn't hurt us. It does mean that we turn them over to the love and justice of God rather than trying to punish them ourselves by staying angry with them.

Do you have a compost pile? Are you dealing properly with garbage that gets dumped on you? If so, you are a good gardener, and the fertilizer is developing healthy fruit in your life. Garbage in the heart poisons us, but garbage properly used brings forth a rich garden.

Interested in connecting with others who are considering simple church, house churches and missional communities?

- If you are ready to investigate missional communities and want to hear what others are trying...
- Maybe you don't want to start by yourself, but would consider coming alongside those who are ready to launch out...
- If you've been trying to start something, but realize it's tough going and need some encouragement...

For more information contact Dan or Denise Siemens

God'sHouseNow (GHN)

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God'sHouseNow invites you
to the second gathering of

The ClearingHouse

Saturday, November 3, 2007, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
Hilton Garden Inn
1050 Gramsie Rd., Shoreview, MN 55126
I-694 & Lexington

We have scheduled it especially for those who
are further away and would like to attend!

GHN is the exploratory vehicle of the LR network for alternative missional communities.

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