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## As Was His Custom

By Teresa Hampton

An elderly couple, the Murphy's, were accustomed to going to worship every Sunday. Their neighbor, Curtis, watched them like clockwork get into their car and drive down the street. One Sunday, there came a heavy snowfall. He felt confident the Murphy's would not venture out. But it wasn't long before he saw them slowly walking down the road to the nearby church building. It was at that moment that Curtis dressed and caught the old couple just before they entered the building. He had to find out what was so important that they would go out on such a treacherous day. After a time, Curtis was baptized into Christ.

Are there things you do in your daily routine by which someone could identify you? There are men and women in scripture who were identifiable by their actions. Daniel comes to mind (Daniel 6).

When King Darius considered setting Daniel above all the other rulers, the governors and satraps became indignant and sought to find a charge against him. They watched, but could find no fault in him regarding the kingdom. However, they observed that he knelt down on his knees in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, three times daily, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, *as was his custom* since early days. Ever since he was captured as a young man in Israel, he prayed three times a day to God, looking toward Jerusalem.

The wicked men convinced the king to sign an irrevocable law that whoever petitioned any god or man for thirty days, except the king, would be cast into a den of lions. Daniel understood the law and promptly went to his house to pray.

Of course, we know the happy ending to this memorable account. God preserved Daniel's life, and the conspirators became the lions' next meal.

There were others in scripture who were likewise identifiable by their actions. When the multitudes thronged Jesus, he opened the scripture and taught them, *as his custom was to do* (Mark 10:10). "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and *as his custom was*, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read (Luke 4:16). Jesus often went to various synagogues to teach (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 12:9, 13:54; Mark 1:39, 3:1, 6:2; Luke 4:16, 44, 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59).

It was also Jesus' custom to withdraw to a quiet or deserted place to pray (Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Mark 14:32, Lk 4:16, 6:12, 9:28, 22:39). Despite his short three-year ministry, *He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed* (Luke 5:16).

When the hour of his crucifixion had come, "He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him" (Luke 22:39).

Moving forward to the church of the first century, a woman named Tabitha, who was full of good works and charitable deeds, died. The disciples sent for Peter. He went with them to Joppa, and into the upper room where she was laid. He saw all the widows weeping and showing the garments which Tabitha had made. Peter sent them out and told the lifeless body, "Tabitha, arise." She opened her eyes and sat up. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

It was Paul's custom to go to the synagogue in every city he visited. "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2). There was no synagogue in Philippi, so on the Sabbath they went to the river where women customarily went to pray. Lydia and her household learned the truth and were baptized.

Their actions beg the question: If people observed you and me on a daily basis, what would they see us accustomed to doing? Checking our email? Logging on to Facebook to catch up with old friends? Rushing to grab the best sale items?

Or would they see us reading the Bible, regularly worshiping God, assisting widows and orphans, visiting the sick, or teaching the lost? May this year find us accustomed to doing good for others, focusing on spiritual things!

**Today's Verse:** "Look upon me and be merciful to me, As Your custom *is* toward those who love Your name" (Psalm 119:132).

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