

Looking Back from the Future

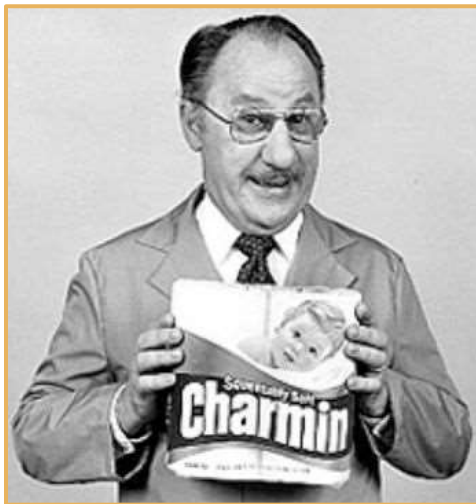
Have you ever wondered what people centuries from now will think about our culture? It, of course, is anybody's guess.

For example, I think people in the distant future will look back on our times and think, "Were people then crazy – to get in metal vehicles and rush at each other driving 60, 70 or 80 miles an hour on the ground? With only a few feet separating them?"

In her book *A Fistful of Fig Newtons*, novelist Jean Shepherd depicts a group of archaeologists in the far-off future who are excavating the remains of New York City. Burrowing under Madison Avenue, the heart of the world of modern advertising, they discover tin canisters holding reels of videotape containing hours and hours of television commercials from our time.

The archaeologists determine these reels must have something to say about what was important to us. They finally find a way to view these tapes (oh, how technology changes!). They grow excited with anticipation.

One of the videotapes contains a scene in which three women move into the foreground. They are pushing carts of some kind. The three of them stop and reverently pick up some mysterious white circular rolls. Their eyes glaze in ecstasy as they handle the rolls.



Suddenly, a stern male figure arrives, clad in a white uniform. He resembles a guard, or perhaps an officer of some kind – definitely a figure invested with authority.

"Ladies," he says, "please don't squeeze the Charmin!"

The three women continue to squeeze the rolls, with even more intensity. The guard, overcome by emotion, himself begins to squeeze a roll.

One woman squeals, "I just can't help it, Mr. Whipple."

Nervously, the guard squeezes even harder. "See, Mr. Whipple, Charmin's so squeezably soft!"

(more)

Amazed at the apparent significance of this archaeological find, the leader of the excavation says, "If we can find out what was on those Charmins, or what they were used for, I believe we would know what their civilization was all about, what they believed in."

Some of you remember those Charmin commercials. I do hope our culture is about more than bathroom tissue.

Life is so confusing. I wish that life was as easily explained as that great philosopher of the comic strips, Charlie Brown, once decided that it was.

Lucy is saying to him, "Life is a mystery, Charlie Brown. Do you know the answer?"

Charlie Brown replies, "Be kind. Don't smoke. Be prompt. Smile a lot. Eat sensibly. Avoid cavities and mark your ballot carefully. Avoid too much sun. Send overseas packages early. Love all creatures above and below. Insure your belongings and try to keep the ball low."

Before he can get out another platitude, Lucy interrupts. "Hold real still," she says, "because I am going to hit you a very sharp blow upon the nose!"



We can appreciate her frustration, can't we?

None of us appreciates a know-it-all who spouts platitudes that miss our real needs altogether. What we really need is a little encouragement at times, don't we?

Maybe recent events have been a little rough for you. Perhaps you need somebody to put his hand on your shoulder and reinforce your feelings about yourself. Or it could be someone needs *your* touch, *your* smile, *your* encouraging word.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing
(1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV)

– Beecher Hunter