

**Small Talk – March 3 2021**  
**Required Facial Covering When in Public – Day 224**  
**By Michael Small**

While my father was at sea my mother and sisters would spend evenings at our grandparents home. They had an acre of land which through a child's eyes seemed to be enormous and never-ending. Across the road was an overgrown vacant farm field. After a delicious supper, often with homemade apple pie, we kids would wander through those fields seeking hidden treasure and surprise. I will never forget running back to the house with breathless excitement to describe what we had discovered. There was an ancient, rusting vehicle, with broken windows. With excitement we described our discovery to the adults – we had found an old “wind-up” car. The adults chuckled and told us the crank coming out the front of the car was to start it.

Shortly after our discovery heavy equipment moved in, leveled the fields, and quickly carpenters begin to build many new homes. There was a building boom going on right before our eyes. At night, after the workers were finished with their days work, Linda and I would wander through the unfinished homes. We would climb the temporary stairs and avoid the gaping hole that led to the basement. We would try to imagine what the rooms would become and look like. In some of the homes we discovered newly installed windows – and I will confess, with much regret, we removed some the soft gushy stuff from the edges and formed them into a ball for each of us to take home. With shame now, I realize that we had removed the putty that sealed the windows in. I wish I could apologize to the workers. We thought our behavior was harmless and innocent. Kids will be kids and we learned lessons that night.

In my mind, I can clearly see those homes. As an adult I understand that before completion, first the building has to be framed. The first thing that happens, before any of the rooms are crafted, is the framing of the exterior. The carefully designed and built frame will make for a home that will safely stand for years.

Think about and name the frames that build and shape productive and healthy individuals, families, and community. Included in that list would first be loving parents and family. Safe homes and plentiful food would be a part of the framing. In addition to this safe and healthy schools, community centers, churches and institutions who provide resources needed. When the framing is solid, healthy, safe - then communities can thrive and grow. Likewise, if the framing is poorly thought out or constructed and the resources are limited there will be struggles and communities will not be safe or healthy. I think of the damage done by the recent freeze in Texas.

This coming Sunday I will be focusing on Exodus 20:1-17, the Decalogue, or the Ten Words, or as we know them The Ten Commandments. These seventeen verses can be approached as framing for community life. So too, much of what is in the bible and in our faith can be seen as framing that helps us as individuals and community to survive

grow. Conversely though, too often the bible has been used to control and diminish the human spirit and the potential of community through judgment and control, through tearing and breaking apart.

Here is the wild card. In these days, the framing is less predictable. It comes from television, social media, failing institutions, uneven and multiple resources for both information and misinformation. We need to carefully choose the materials we will use for framing. Are they true? Are they solid? Are they tested and long-lasting? Do they promote life, happiness, and freedom for all? Are the fruits of our labor sweet and just? Do they create possibility? Do smiles and love abound?

To this day, I wonder whatever happened to that wind-up car, a “treasure lost”. Its time had passed, and it was discarded. New and better framing has created better and safer cars. May our frames be well built and lasting. And may we be willing to rebuild when necessary.

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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