

Carving Ducks and Christians

During my teaching days, I often invited speakers to come and tell students about their field of expertise. After teaching bird identification, habitat, habits, and all things birds, I invited Ned Conklin to visit. Ned has carved hundreds of exquisite birds that grace many homes.

As Ned shared his passion, one student asked, “How do you do such a great job carving decoys?” Having been asked that question before, he readily answered, “It’s very simple. Just cut away anything that doesn’t look like a duck.” This self-deprecating answer downplays the thousands of hours of tedious work honing his craft over many years.



One of Ned’s Carvings – A Flicker

While this answer may make it sound easy, the artistic skill required to produce exact replicas of bluebirds, mallards, or flickers is enormously complicated. In addition to woodworking skills, he must also study each species to know what doesn’t belong, and then add what Ned’s answer could be applied to our spiritual experience.

How do you live a faithful Christian life? Simply get rid of anything that doesn’t look like Jesus. Just like carving, it’s never that simple. By the time we are convicted of various sins, they become deeply ingrained habits that are not only difficult to break, but we often do not want to. They’ve become more a part of us than a knot in tight-grained maple.

The task of producing a life that mimics Jesus requires walking with Him. The only way to know what doesn't look like Jesus is to know Jesus well. We do that by reading His Word, spending time in prayer, and listening to His Holy Spirit.

Even then, it's still not easy to repent or cut away our cherished sins. We sometimes need the Holy Spirit to chisel these away despite the pain it causes. At times, He may need to use His band saw or Dremel tool to make drastic changes, while other situations may only require a bit of sanding.

Chip by chip, a life resembling the Savior's begins to emerge from the rough block He started with. Unlike the lifeless wood, however, we have to cooperate with the Carver and yield to His skill. How much easier it goes when we submit and allow Him to make the necessary alterations.

Also, unlike duck carving, much must be added. Although a bird carver might add glass eyes or attach feet fashioned from another board, most of the finished specimen comes from the same chunk of wood. In our Christian lives, however, in addition to removing that which doesn't belong, the Spirit also has to add much that we lack. We naturally have little love for our fellow man, grace for others, or internal peace. Thankfully, He has a rich supply and knows how to integrate them into our natural tendencies to develop something resembling the Model.

As we consider Ned's gift of carving birds, may it remind us of God's work in shaping and forming us into Christ's likeness, and may we yield to His hand.

George Bowers – CBC Ex. Board

Weekly Prayer Points

Pray for all CBCs international congregations and that God would bless, protect, and provide for each of them. Pray for their pastors and pray that the CBC Sister-to-Sister prayer partnership would be a blessing to congregations on both ends of this ministry.

Please pray for these congregations and pastors:

- Bonde le Baraka congregation in Tanzania, Africa and pastor Haruni Malogo
- Boones Creek congregation in Johnson City, TN and pastor Scott Kinnick

CBC Prayer Committee