

Lots of books on your shelf?



Many people, as a hobby, have become collectors. Some collect stamps, some antiques, some valued pieces of art, coins, comic books, you name it. Generally speaking, the more you have, the better. My daughter, Tori, collects candles but only burns the ones she doesn't like. You'll have to ask her!

Just for fun, I did some quick research. A man in Michigan has 17,000 different Pez dispensers. Another man in the United Kingdom has 20,736 matchboxes. And finally, another man from Idaho has over 2.7 million baseball cards!

I can't come close to topping that, but I can relate to collecting things. One, silly example is from my first job out of college. I was working as a field service engineer, traveling all over the US and in 3 other countries. I was constantly in hotels. And you know, you don't always use all the little soaps they provide, right? Well, I figured I paid for the room, so I took many of them with me. (Looking back, I now feel if I wasn't going to use all of them, I should have just left them there.) I accumulated quite a few over a two-year period. I had a huge bag of them for quite a while. That is until I got married! Amy looked at the bag and asked, "What's in here?" When I told her, I think she had second thoughts about saying, "I do." 😊 Needless to say, they were gone in a heartbeat.

I can share another "collection" example that brings us to a more significant point.

If you know my personal story, you know that when I was in college, I was challenged by my physics professors regarding the Christian faith. Because I had very few answers at the time (never having been seriously confronted before), I needed to do research. Lots of research. It all started with two books: *What is Creation Science?* and *Scientific Creationism*. Someone from my church recommended those titles and loaned me both of them. That was 37 years ago! He and I regularly get together for breakfast... and he still has both of those books!

After devouring those books, I purchased other books myself. Then a few more. And then a few more. You get the picture. I also purchased audio lectures, videos, technical journals, everything and anything I could afford at the time. Over the years, my collection grew, as you can imagine. I would occasionally loan some resources out, but many times I never got them back, and I couldn't remember who I gave them to. I honestly believe I have lost more resources than most people own! I even developed my own resource database to track everything I had, including anything loaned out. I really enjoyed every single time I was able to enter a new resource into the database. The total kept growing. I was proud of my collection, but not in a bad way.

Eventually, I got up to about 1,500 resources. Yes, 1,500! I loved looking at the cabinets on the wall in my home office, filled with books, videos (VHS & DVDs), cassettes (antiques now), newsletters,

Question of the Month

technical journals, and the like. And then reality set in. Kind of like the bag of hotel soaps. Here's what happened.

Amy came into my office, which was always extremely well organized and clean (not). She asked me a question, "Do you really need all these resources?" I emphatically said, "Yes!" Then she walked over to the cabinets, pulled a random book off one of the shelves, and asked, "When was the last time you looked at this book?" I sheepishly said, "Um... maybe 5 years ago." She asked, "Do you really need this one?" I said, "Well, maybe not that one." Then she did the same with another random book. "And what about this one? How long has it been?" I said, "Probably about 8 years." "So do you really need it?" "That one? I guess not so much."

Here's the important point of this somewhat humorous story. I had a lot of great resources in my possession from which I honestly had gleaned a lot. My knowledge had grown tremendously, and I was much better positioned to defend the Christian faith. However, now those resources were not doing anyone any good other than making me feel good looking at them from a distance and being proud regarding the sheer volume. Why do I still have them? Yes, a few I should keep as a reference. Still for most of them, either there are more current resources, or I can easily find what is in them via articles from various apologetic ministries online.

Cutting to the chase, I ended up giving away over 1,000 resources. Later, looking at the approximately 500 remaining resources, I decided to have "round two." I think I whittled it down to about 200, and I am seriously thinking about "round three," which might bring me closer to 50. The majority of what I give away is still valuable, and others could benefit immensely from them. So, if you're interested...

And now, to make the most important point of all. Not all of you have tons of apologetic literature in your possession. However, you all have something even more significant. Your personal testimony! Think about it. (Speaking to those reading this who are born-again Christians.) At one point in your life, your eternal destiny was in separation from your Creator and everyone else, in a place called Hell. At another point, you heard the Gospel Message, which states that even though you are separated from God, headed to Hell, because of your own choices, and even though the standard for getting into Heaven is 100% perfection (which is impossible for you to achieve on your own), Jesus Christ died on a cross to pay the penalty for your sins, so you, by faith alone, could change your destiny and spend eternity with your Heavenly Father! What good news!!!

Now, imagine, knowing all that, it "sits on a shelf." In other words, even though the knowledge is there, it's not really being used. You may be growing in your faith, but the Gospel Message that changed your eternity is no longer really "being used." How sad when millions of those around you could put it to good use! They need to know it, just like at a point in your past, you did as well. Is it "sitting on a shelf," or are you actively looking for people to give it away to? The best part is, even though you can only give away a book once, you can give the Gospel away an infinite number of times!

Question of the Month

Let's be praying for opportunities to do just so. God will grant you those opportunities and is honored when you use them to share the Gospel. All you have to do is ask! "You have not because you ask not" (James 4:2-3).

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)