

Bee a Sweet Christian

By Pastor Doug Batchelor

The Bible says that when we study God's creation, we can see His truths. And the more I learn about bees, the more amazed I am about the lessons of creation. Not only are bees astounding creatures that play an important role in our world, we can learn a lot from them about being better members in our families and churches.

Of course, there are many kinds of bees — about 20,000 different species! But for now, I want to especially focus on the common honeybee.

I think the Lord made the honeybee for a very special purpose, more than just pollinating flowers, which helps us grow crops so we can have something to eat. He created them to give us special insight into His nature and what He wants from us.

So let's buzz in for a closer look to see what we can discover from these fascinating flying insects!

Bee a Hard Worker

Have you ever heard the expression "busy as a bee"? There is a very good reason for that, as bees are some of nature's hardest workers.

Here's an Amazing Fact: To make just one tablespoon of honey for your toast in the morning, a bee has to visit 4,200 flowers! A worker bee will make up to 10 trips a day, visiting 400 flowers. And to make just one pound of honey, worker bees need to visit more than 3 million flowers and travel the equivalent of three times around the world!

Of course, they don't mind doing it, because they care about their hive. And the harder they work, the happier and more productive their colony can be.

The Bible also calls Christians "workers" (3 John 1:8). And the body of Christ, God's church, is a lot like a beehive. The Lord wants us to be workers in our homes and churches, being "busy bees" who do our part to make life sweeter for those around us. The Bible also says that Jesus will recognize us by our love for one another. Part of showing that love is doing our part to build up the body of Christ.

In a bee colony, every bee has a job. There are worker bees, queen bees, and drones. The queen lays the eggs, and the workers find nectar and make honey. (Nectar is what helps them make the honey.) What would you think if I told you that a bee drone doesn't have a stinger? That means they can't defend the hive, and not only that, they don't gather nectar, make honey, or lay eggs either.

At first, drones might appear to be a little worthless! But in a hive, no one is worthless. The drones help feed the larvae, the babies, among other responsibilities. So they might not collect pollen or have the highest position in a beehive, but they do have a very vital part to play. And they give their all to do it.

And the same goes for you. The Lord has placed every bee in the hive for a reason: to fulfill its purpose. He has placed you in your family and church for the same special reason (1 Corinthians 12:7). And no matter what your job is, don't let anyone tell you it's not important.

Bee Respectful

Here's an Amazing Fact: Honeybees are very loyal to their queen. They will go wherever the queen goes and do whatever is needed to make sure their leader is healthy and happy, and they'll work hard to help the queen do her part for the hive. Her main job is to lay eggs so the colony will grow; everyone else really works to feed the larvae and protect the queen. It wouldn't work very well at all if the other bees ignored or even hurt the queen, would it? In fact, it would lead to an unhealthy queen and could even destroy the entire colony!

In the same way, it's not very good for God's workers to be disrespectful or critical of their leaders — which can mean your parents, pastor, *and* teachers (Exodus 20:12). If you are making their life difficult, it's harder for them to do their jobs, which includes protecting, sheltering, and feeding you!

So I'd like to make a suggestion: Try to be sweet like a bee. In fact, if you're ever unhappy with someone who has authority over you, instead of saying mean things about them, do like the bees and serve that person even better. If you feel they are treating you unfairly, pray for them instead of rebelling against them. God has placed leaders where they are for a reason — to serve Him and to help you. Remember that when Moses' friends helped him hold up his arms during a battle, the whole nation gained a victory (Exodus 17:10—13). We would do well to do the same for those who lead us.

Bee Optimistic

It's sad, but true, that many people focus on negative things, even gossiping so that others get an unfair, bad impression of a person. They do it for different reasons: Sometimes they want to be mean to somebody that hurt them or even just to feel better about themselves. For some reason, people, even Christians, often gravitate toward the negative.

Here's an Amazing Fact: On the other hand, bees are very optimistic. You'll never find a bee saying, "Oh, I'd like to get some nectar, but that flower has too many thorns!" Forget it — the bees look right past the thorns and go straight to the flower. Instead of focusing on the negative, they're always looking for that which is sweet.

Being positive also helps bees stay persistent when looking for nectar. Sometimes they have to travel for miles to find a flower full of nectar. They also have to deal with people shooing them away from their gardens. But have you noticed that they always come right back? They're focused on their mission of gathering sweet nectar, not the obstacles that stand in their way.

People who follow Christ should also be optimistic. Your attitude around others is like a witness. When we speak negatively about someone or something, it can make people feel sour about Jesus. Like the bees, I hope you will always go after that which is positive and be a sweet example to everyone around you (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Bee Humble

Here's an Amazing Fact: A cousin of the honey bee is the bumblebee. But that was not their original name. Instead, they used to be called "humble bees"! Evidently, way back in history, some English children couldn't say "humblebee" very well, and instead they would say "bumblebee." This cute nickname stuck, and even adults started calling them "bumblebees." (They do "bumble" around, don't they?)

Well, they were called "humble bees" because they're rather large for bees and yet they are also very gentle and patient for their size. In fact, you can "shoo" them away and even flick them, and they'll leave you alone. (If you do persist, however, they can sting!) They are big and imposing, but they are very gentle. That's a good lesson for Christians. Even if we are

bigger or stronger than someone, we should be humble like Jesus and turn the other cheek if they are mean to us (1 Peter 5:6).

Bee Holy

Here's an Amazing Fact! A long time ago, a scientist claimed bumblebees shouldn't be able to fly based on aerodynamics, which is the study of flight. Well, today they know how such a large insect with such small wings can fly, but at one point, some people thought it should have been impossible. Of course, it isn't impossible at all because the bumblebee keeps flying.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of pessimistic people who also say that it is impossible for a follower of Christ to live a holy life. And sometimes we're told that so much we actually believe we can't. But we should take a lesson from the humble bumblebee, which still flew when scientists said it should be impossible.

Just as bumblebees were created with wings so they can fly, God created you in His image so you can live a holy life. The Bible says, "He declares, I am holy, be ye holy" (1 Peter 1:16). And whenever God says to be anything, you can know that it's possible to be. (After all, when He said, "Let there be light," there was light! And the disciple Peter actually walked on water when Jesus invited him to get out of the boat.)

God is calling you and me to live holy lives. Don't listen to all the people say, "Don't take yourself too seriously. Don't worry about being pure and godly, because it's spiritually impossible." Instead, keep trusting in Jesus and know that all things are possible to those who "bee"-lieve in Him.

Bee Sure to Share and Serve

Here's an Amazing Fact: Did you know that honeybees will fly as far as eight miles in search of nectar? It's true — and whenever they find what they are looking for, no matter where they find it, they will turn right around and make a "beeline" back to their hive so that all the bees can join in the good news and go get some nectar.

You see, honeybees like to share good news with each other. And they don't like to waste time doing it. When they get back to the hive, they start doing an amazing little dance that tells all the other bees where they found the nectar.

You'll never find a honeybee saying, "I'm not telling anyone else where this is! I'm just going to enjoy it for myself." And you know what? Christians shouldn't say that about the good news either! The gospel of Jesus is something very sweet. And the natural, loving response to Jesus' offer of grace isn't to keep it all to ourselves.

When we taste the goodness of the Lord, we should want to share it with the rest of our hive. Bees love to share the good news, and so should we! (Read Isaiah 61:1.)

Here's a bonus Amazing Fact! Did you know that most honeybees spend almost all of their time feeding other bees, rather than themselves? And not only will you find a bee always ready to feed another bee, they'll even feed bees from another colony!

This is why scientists call bees a social insect. They like to interact and "bee" with one another; mutual feeding seems to be a part of that special relationship.

This is a great example for us in our church and families. Not only do we need to help other people in our "hive" hear and understand the good news, we need to serve them. Of course,

worker bees first have to feed themselves before they have the energy to feed others. Likewise, we need to read our Bibles and pray before we serve others.

The Bible also says that the disciples gave five loaves and two fish to Jesus, who blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it back to His men. Then they took this blessing and fed thousands of people! They even had 12 baskets of food leftover! What can we learn from this miracle? Well, we first have to receive something from Jesus before we can give it to others. But when we do share it and serve others, we also begin to create an abundance of service and sharing.

Did you know that bees produce a lot more honey than they need to feed themselves? They always have an overflow that others — like you, me, and bears with a sweet tooth — can share in! Jesus and His Word are just like that: When we share the Bible in service to others, they'll take what we give them and serve others with the abundance, and the message of peace from Jesus will overflow to even more souls.

Jesus always makes our cups overflow so that others also might be nourished. Let's do our part and live to serve other people and share the good news (Psalm 23:5).

Don't Bee a Counterfeit!

Now there are some bees out there that look a lot like honeybees, but really aren't.

Here's an Amazing Fact: A honeybee stings only once, and then it dies. But another kind of bee called the yellow jacket can sting more than one time. They also make honey like honeybees, but instead of nectar from pretty flowers, yellow jackets get nectar from dead animals! And while honey bees live high up in the trees, yellow jackets live in the lowly ground.

Sometimes, people in our churches and families say they believe in Jesus, but they really don't follow Him. And instead of wanting to share the good news through good behavior and showing love, they feed on sinful things and are mean to just about everyone around them. They aren't a good witness, and people who are just meeting Jesus get scared off by these kinds of counterfeit Christians.

The Bible says not to take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7). That means we shouldn't use His name inappropriately, such as a cuss word. But it also means that when we become Christians, we can't act like we aren't. It is so important to remember this, because when we say we're a Christian but don't act like it, it hurts people in ways we just can't imagine.

Bee Sacrificial

Here's an Amazing Fact: Some people are afraid of bees because they can plant a painful stinger in your skin. But most forget that bees don't want to sting anyone! It is their very last resort, because when a honeybee stings someone, the bee will die soon after. But bees are always thinking of the colony. If they believe their hive is threatened, they will throw themselves at the enemy and lay down their lives to protect the others.

When Jesus came to this world, He took on the devil's lies to protect His people. With the sword of His Word, Jesus delivered a paralyzing sting to the enemy. Jesus did this knowing that He would have to lay down His life to save His people, including you! And He must really love you, because He said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Bee Born Again

Here's an incredible Amazing Fact! Did you know that in order for a bee to fly, it must be born twice? It's true! After a queen lays an egg in a chamber, the drones get busy feeding the larva after it hatches. When a larva gets big enough, the worker bees seal it in a tomb-like chamber where it begins to change, a process called metamorphosis. When it is done with this transformation, it is "born again" as a new creature. But it isn't always easy. When it's finally done changing, it has to break out of the chamber, struggling and wiggling. In the process, the bee actually breaks a membrane on its back that holds its wings down!

Eventually, their wings dry out and the new bees are able to fly. Isn't that incredible? In other words, they are born twice and they're able to fly only because they are re-born through a struggle. Well, that's exactly what it is like for you and me.

When Jesus comes, we'll fly with Him to heaven. But we won't be able to do that unless we are born again of the Holy Spirit through the grace of Jesus. No one will get to heaven because their parents or brothers or sisters are Christians. We have to make that decision ourselves, by being born again and struggling against the power of sin in our lives.

Of course, you don't have to do it alone. God will give you the strength, as long as you pray, read the Bible, and commit your life to Him every single day. Jesus told Nicodemus that he could not enter the kingdom of heaven "unless you are born again" (John 3:3). Sometimes it's a struggle, but if we don't lose heart, eventually Jesus will liberate us from this world.

Bees Are Amazing, and So Are You!

Here's one last Amazing Fact: The brain of a bee is no bigger than the size of small pinhead. Yet despite their small-sized brains, bees have a very complex society, they communicate with one another, and they design and build one of the strongest homes on the planet — the honeycomb. Not only that, they work hard and serve each other diligently.

God made you a part of His special creation too. Your brain is hundreds of times bigger than a bee's noggin, and that means you can have an even greater impact on your world — whether that's at school, at church, or at home. Imagine, if like the honeybee, you were also a diligent worker, respectful of authority, worked hard to serve others, were always humble, holy, sacrificial, and optimistic? Imagine the wonderful things God could accomplish through you!

I want to ask you: Has the Holy Spirit spoken to your heart while you have been reading? Do you want to be more like the honeybee and be a sweeter person — a sweet Christian? By doing so, you will make the lives of those around you as pleasant as honey.

If that is your wish, I hope you'll pray to let God know. You can pray, "Dear Lord, help me to be a hard worker and to serve others just as Jesus did and just as the bees do. In Jesus' name, amen." If you pray this, God will help you!