

All through school they told me the day would come when I would throw away my notes. I sat in classrooms for years--at least it seemed like years. Some days seemed like years. And I took notes on everything my teachers said. I did that not so much because I would learn from them, but because I'd be tested on them. My notes filled piles of notebooks. They told me one day I'd throw them away. Then in my adult life I heard people my age tell me they had actually done it. They'd thrown their notes away, and it felt wonderful.

I don't know why I kept my notes so long. God knows I did not refer to them very often. It shouldn't have been such a hard thing to throw them out. My education taught me how to learn. If I were to keep learning new things, I shouldn't need to refer to old notes. My notes had changed. They were no longer helps; they were clutter. It took me ten years after I left the seminary, but I finally did it. I threw them out. It was a Tuesday; the day they collect trash on our block.

There's a lot of stuff we cling to. Some of the stuff we cling to are things. The danger of living in a spacious house with closets and garages is that we fill those spaces with stuff: broken toys, old clothes, abandoned projects, and notes from school.

But we also cling to other stuff. We cling to habits. We buy the same products; we eat the same food; we go to the same places. Even when we don't enjoy them any more.

We also cling to relationships--many we could have unclung years ago. We have friends who are not friends. We know people whose values differ so from ours. Some people even remain in abusive relationships.

We're afraid to let go. Afraid we might hurt someone's feelings. Afraid we might need something again. Afraid of living life differently. We all cling to some stuff we'd be better off without.

When Jesus told his disciples, "You must be like salt," he knew something ugly about salt. Seasonings lose their flavor, and they're good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Jesus wanted followers who kept the tang. If they didn't, he let them go. Jesus did not cling to stuff.

Sound too harsh? It may not be. This saying about salt has a humorous twist. When Jesus says salt is good for nothing but to be trampled underfoot, I wonder if he ever walked on sidewalks in a Kansas City winter. Salt that's thrown out to be trampled underfoot is not useless--It can keep you from breaking your neck on the ice!

We all cling to stuff--we cling to things, to habits, and to relationships. We cling to salt even when it's lost its flavor. But to throw it out and to trample it underfoot may very well save us from breaking our necks.