

Cross Current



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THE WEB MASTER



Hate spiders? Just be glad they don't hate you. Several studies say we're seldom more than three feet away from a spider, which isn't surprising when you know there are 2,500 species in North America. In a typical grassy field, there are more than a million of the creatures.

Mostly we know them by their webs, which are made of silk produced within their bodies and pulled with their hind legs out of abdominal openings, called spinnerets. There are three kinds of

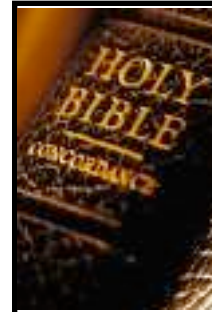
thread. Some are safety lines, some are sticky silk for trapping food, and others are fine silk for wrapping whatever's captured.

Interestingly, spiders must rebuild their webs constantly to keep them effective and in good repair. They do so by eating the protein-rich skeins and recycling the silk to make brand new threads, all of which takes a lot out of the spider. It's worth it though. Among other things, the webs are used to travel from one place to another, protect the entrance of the spider's dwelling, encase egg sacs, and trap insects that keep the spider nourished.

Though the webs look flimsy, they can stop a bee flying at full speed. Spider silk is not only strong but extremely elastic, able to stretch almost 40 per cent before it breaks. In fact, scientists calculate a spider web could stop a full-size jet flying at landing speed — if the thread was as thick as a pencil and 30 kilometres long!

No wonder industry is exploring uses for spider silk, such as bullet-proof vests and artificial tendons. Even now, traditional European medicine uses webs on cuts and wounds to reduce bleeding and speed healing because they're rich in vitamin K, which helps clotting.

As for the spiders, they have to be careful to climb only on the



Face Book

"Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says [or] it's like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like."

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non-sticky strands of their webs or they become entangled in their own work. A second problem is that a spider in the middle of its web is highly visible to birds and other predators, so they hide at the edge of the web or appear to be inedible or unappetizing.

The web does offer protection though. Many webs span gaps between objects the spider couldn't reach by crawling, and some spiders use their webs as a lifeline. While moving, they attach a thread to a secure spot so that, if they accidentally fall, the strand lets them return to their original position.

In so many ways, the strength and intricacies of the spider web are like the love that must permeate our lives. After all, love gives us safety and security, nourishes us, and helps us get to where we need to be in our relationships. Love protects our homes and our young, and acts as a lifeline so when we fall — as each of us will — we have something to hold onto as we struggle back to where we were.

In one of the Bible's best known passages, the strength and supremacy of love is described in powerful detail. *"If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would've gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It doesn't demand its own way. It isn't irritable, and it keeps no record of wrongs. It doesn't rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures every circumstance."* (1 Cor. 13:3-7) For a truly humbling exercise, start with that second sentence and replace the word love with your name.

When it's genuine, love is incomparably strong and elastic. It's well able to hold us up, speed the healing of our hearts when they're cut and wounded, and it keeps us connected to God and our loves ones, even when we fall. But like a spider web, love must be renewed every day, to keep our relationships effective and in good condition.

That takes effort, energy and commitment. It also leaves us vulnerable, which is why some people stay on the edges of love and avoid hurt and disappointment by appearing so unappealing. Yes, love can entangle and entrap us in negative ways if we're not careful, but it's still the most beautiful and precious of all God's gifts embodied in Jesus. Learn from the web Master.