



# Confessions of an Armchair Shopper

By Beth Foreman

Last week I was caught up in a typical Sunday morning whirlwind, rushing around the house, trying to get to church on time.

Okay, where's my Bible? I know it was here on the table or the kitchen counter yesterday. Under all these catalogs. Let's see...Lands' End. Current. L.L. Bean. Harry & David. Crate & Barrel. Where's Abraham and Isaac?

Yes, I confess. I'm an Armchair Shopper, a catalog junkie.

You see, I get a bunch of catalogs — everything from those small ones advertising ninety-nine cent necessities like cat scratchers and electric tweezers to the high-priced catalogs with pages of \$500 organdy toddler dresses and \$269

digital blood pressure monitors.

Catalog shopping is like window shopping — no commitment. I don't buy anything. If I see something I like, I fold the top corner of the page into a neat triangle, a reminder to look at it again. Someday. Maybe. Probably never.

Once I filled out an entire order form but never mailed it. Whew! I almost spent \$142.96 on squeegees, disinfectants, spray bottles, and doormats.

One catalog promised that if I'd order \$30 or more, I would receive a free gift, a mystery gift. A beautifully wrapped box filled with who-knows-what. Exactly what I need...

Armchair shopping requires almost no work. It's comfortable. I curl up on the couch in my sloppiest sweats — the gray

ones with a coffee stain — and my fuzzy red slippers. I sip hot tea and munch on homemade biscuits. Sure beats driving through traffic and standing in long lines with aching feet.

For a few years I lost interest in catalogs because I lived in a busy city with ten malls in a 20-mile radius. And before marriage and children, I had time to find parking spaces and empty dressing rooms.

But one day I found myself in southern New Mexico surrounded by sagebrush, dry mountains, no mall, and a new baby. A sympathetic friend let me borrow a few catalogs...I started small, receiving a few baby catalogs here and there. Then my catalog pile grew faster than my son.

Let's go back to that Sunday. Later that afternoon, I sorted through the catalog pile and found my Bible, buried beneath the catalogs. There's something symbolic here, I thought. Too often I glance at the Bible like a catalog. It's filled with some great stuff, but I'm only window shopping. No commitment. No discomfort. No purchases.

I sit in my comfortable chair and read about men and women in highly uncomfortable settings. Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son. The Israelites traveling in the desert for years. David facing a giant in battle and later hiding away in caves as Saul hunted him down to kill. Daniel coming face to face with hungry lions. Jesus hanging on the cross.

Armchair Christianity. Hey — it's easy. No commitment. No discomfort. No purchase. I can leave my Bible on the shelf (or buried beneath catalogs). I can offer one hour Sunday morning for worship. I can live a comfortable life doing what I want to do.

Do I really want to tell my non-Christian friends about Jesus and risk embarrassment? Do I really want to spend time at the homeless shelter and be with people who make me uncomfortable? Do I really want to serve on a church board?

Do I really want to have an office in the LWML?

Sure, it looks much easier to be an Armchair Christian. But is that what Christ has called me to be?

Consider Peter and John and the apostles who were imprisoned and flogged for preaching the Gospel. Yet they left rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:41–42 ESV).

Wow! That's faith in action! Such faith in action is not a requirement for salvation...God's gift of grace is free! Without spending a dime or even a minute of my precious time, I am already given Eternal Life!

God's gift encourages us to respond with all our heart and strength.

Let's get out of our chairs and hit the streets! Let's not cease sharing and giving thanks for the most Precious Gift, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord and Savior. His grace is free for an eternity!

And that's a gift we won't find in any catalog!

*Beth Foreman is Features Editor for the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly.*

Too often I glance at the Bible like a catalog. It's filled with some great stuff, but I'm only window shopping.