

# **DOWN HOME: Complex cars; simple faith\_101804**

October 15, 2004

Posted: 10/15/04

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A radio reporter recently confirmed something I've known for years: Fewer people work on their own cars than they did decades ago.

Most guys don't need a Time/CNN poll to tell us the obvious.

When I was a teenager, I always changed the oil in our cars. Daddy probably figured the experience would "build character" (or maybe provide me with a useful skill if the college thing didn't work out). I just thought it was fun to crawl around underneath our cars, handle tools and keep the engines running smoothly.

As a young adult, I kept this chore, mainly because I was cheap and money was tight. But I had to give it up when Joanna and I bought our first new car—an ultra-compact import. (We justified that buy because, in 1980, we thought gas might hit \$2 a gallon. Little did we know ...)

MARV KNOX <i>Editor</i>
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The first time I looked under the hood and then crawled under the chassis of that midget car, I knew my oil-changing days were over. Without a lift to

hoist the vehicle over my head, I would've needed an extra elbow midway down my right forearm just to get a good grip on the oil filter. So, I scratched that chore off my list and started paying someone to do a task I was embarrassed I no longer could do myself.

The guy on the radio didn't blame ill-placed parts and squeeze-fitted engine compartments on the decline of shadetree mechanics. The real culprits are (a) computers and (b) new-fangled electronic, hydraulic and mechanical components that hadn't even been invented when guys like me thought they knew their way around under the hood of a car.

Now, you just about need a computer science degree from Stanford or a master's in engineering from MIT to fix the complicated machine parked in your garage.

I know what he means. Joanna and I now drive mid-priced sedans, both with more amenities than we really need but not with onboard satellite receivers, global positioning transponders or other high-end gadgets.

But I've got to confess that when I look under the hood of either car, I might as well be staring at the engine compartment of the Space Shuttle. If my life depended on it, I probably could add a quart of oil and fill the windshield washer reservoir. Maybe.

Sometimes, I think we Christians make the life of faith and the community of the church as complicated as today's high-tech cars. We seem to assume worship and ministry are so complex we have to hire professionals to do it. And so we miss out on the wonderful joy of "getting our hands dirty" in praise of our Lord and service to others.

The prophet Micah tells us our lives of faith are really pretty simple: "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

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