

# Cybercolumn by Berry D. Simpson: Predictable

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## CYBER COLUMN: Predictable

**By Berry D. Simpson**

I walked up to the counter at the fast-food restaurant at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning, and the woman with the bright smile and twinkling eyes and pulled-back hair said in her deep voice, "Here you are."

She was pushing a tray with a large drink cup and a serving of hotcakes (no sausage), along with all the accessories. She was clearly proud of herself for having my order ready before I actually ordered it—in fact, before I said even one word.

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"Well, you certainly have me figured out," I told her.

"Is this what you want this morning?" she asked.

"Yes, it sure is," I replied, paying her \$3.55 for my high-class power breakfast and sat in a booth with my friend, Keith. We've met for hotcakes-and-large-Diet-Coke every Tuesday morning for seven or eight years, and I guess the professional wait staff picked up on our predictable behavior.

Keith was smiling when I sat down, having overheard the entire exchange at the counter and knowing they had my order ready even as I was walking in the front door. “There’s nothing wrong with knowing what you like,” he said.

“That’s right!” I said.

Keith is an attorney, I am an engineer, and being predictable is one of our best assets. We don’t need a lot of change in our lives. We find what we like and stick to it. While others may be tossed to and fro every time they stand in front of a menu, trying to decide what they feel like eating that morning, we already know. On the table in front of Keith was a tray containing hotcakes (no sausage) and a large Diet Coke—just like mine.

I wouldn’t have thought someone in a fast-food restaurant that serves hundreds of people every day would remember one customer’s order, even an order repeated weekly for 300 times. I’m always surprised when I discover someone else has been noticing the details of my life. Who knew they were paying such close attention all this time? It makes me wonder how many other people are keeping track of me, and I haven’t yet noticed. It makes me wonder if I pay enough attention to people around me to notice the small details of their lives. I’m afraid I’m usually too absorbed in my books and journals to notice much.

Maybe it isn’t that they pay so much attention to me, but because I do the same things over and over week after week it’s impossible not to notice. Maybe my predictable life draws attention through its very repetition.

Sometimes, I wonder if living a predictable life is not such a good idea. It’s no good trying to be unpredictable on purpose. In fact, people who make it a point to be unpredictable, who brag, “You never know what I’ll do,” are a lot of trouble. They feel compelled to do the unexpected simply trying to live up to their reputation. That isn’t what I mean about being less

predictable. What I mean is this: Should I loosen my grip a bit? Does it get in the way of the Holy Spirit's influence? Am I so locked into my habit patterns I can't be directed by the Spirit?

John 3:8 says: "You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God."

Well, I've been born again, into the Spirit of God. Am I standing still like a tree when I should be blowing on the wind?

There is a Greek word, *pneuma*, which in the Bible is commonly translated as "spirit" or "breath." "Pneumatology" refers to the study of spiritual beings, particularly the interactions between humans and God. Leonard Sweet writes that we Christians should be wind riders, traveling by faith in God, sharing Jesus and led by the Holy Pneuma-Wind, the Spirit. We're Pneumanauts for God

Well, when I walked back through the dining area to visit the men's room, I passed a man and woman from my church, only they were sitting at a table on the left instead of the corner booth on the right, where they sat week after week. It was a significant move, I thought. I said, "You two moved across the room? Just like that?"

"Yes, it was time for something different."

"Wow, so unpredictable. You're very brave."

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