

Ant Poison

I know, I know... *everything has its purpose* (loosely based on [Eccl.3:1,17](#); [8:6](#) I suppose, but it really seems like a stretch in this case), and I realize that ants are the inspired and inspirational example of initiative, industry and teamwork in [Proverbs 6](#), and I'll even admit that they're great disposers of all things dead and decaying, but since I'm already up before dawn working (today anyway) and don't have any rotting corpses lying around, I really don't want them making their "hills" or colonies in my lawn and attacking me every time I unsuspectingly step or stand in one of them! So yesterday I mounted a counter-attack offensive...

I went to the local hardware store and bought two cans of ant poison and started my "seek and destroy" mission. I was glad I bought two cans since by the time the second container was empty: 1) I was surprised at the number of colonies I found; and 2) I was fairly certain I overlooked some of the litter buggers. Then, as I mentally reviewed my campaign that would surely produce victory and confidently strode over to dispose of dispensed ammunition shells (the empty cans) I noticed something on them. Although the label boldly proclaimed the product's powers and guarantees, it also provided the chemical agents contained in its arsenal. This particular brand listed its "Active Ingredient" as "0.1%" while its "Inert Ingredient" was "99.9%" of the total content. In case you don't know, "inert" means "**deficient in active properties.**" In other words, **99.9%** of the product doesn't really do anything but serve as a "carrier" for the **0.1%** that does the actual killing (or in the case of most ant treatments, "irritates sufficiently for them to move to new location"!). All of which got me to thinking...

Of course, many of us have heard the sermon illustration that compares the relatively small amount "active ingredient" in rat or other poisons to seemingly unimportant or trivial amounts of false doctrine combined with truth that still have the power to produce deadly effects on Christians or would-be disciples of Christ. But my mind went in other directions also.

More literally, "inert" means "lacking the power to move" according to Merriam-Webster. This definition conjured two additional applications for me. Firstly, that many congregations of the Lord's people seem to have a lot of "inert" members and a relatively small amount of "active" ones. The oft-touted "80/20 Rule," where 80% of the people in an organization typically do 20% of the work while 20% of the people do 80% of the work may actually need to be amended to more closely reflect the ratio of "inert" vs. "active" ingredients in ant poisons to be accurate. (Think about how difficult is it to get bible class teachers to fill in the schedule each quarter, or to have enough {or any} Elders and Deacons?). The Lord's assessment that "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*" from [Matt.9:37](#) seems to fit.

Secondly, these things reminded me of Jesus' encouragement to His disciples in the latter part of [Matt.17:20](#), "*...for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible for you.*" Think about that. The disciples' "active" ingredient, though small, appropriately applied and utilized could remove tremendous obstacles! We, like them, may indeed be comprised of mostly "inert" (lacking the power to move)

ingredients, but the “active” ingredient of faith, even in a relatively small amount, is a tremendously powerful *mover!* Indeed, “*Lord increase our faith!*” Luke 17:5!

So, are YOU an “inert” or “active” ingredient in your congregation? And, be aware that faith, though small and surrounded by “inert” ingredients, contains great power to be effectively “active” in and for the Lord’s kingdom! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)