

# Blest Be the Ties that Bind?

by Penny Musco

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**D**id you know you can't look behind you in church? As an impressionable fourth-grader attending a house of worship different from my own, I believed my best friend's admonition that I wasn't allowed to turn around. *Did a quick peek count, I wondered. What happened if I got caught? And who was watching?*

Now I'm all grown up and, like the apostle Paul, have "put away childish things," right? Well . . .

When my Dad declared nothing must be placed over a Bible, his sensitive daughter took it to heart. I realize now that all he wanted was for me to revere God's Word, but do you suppose I can lay even one sheet of paper on my NIV today without suffering terrible guilt? "This book is *about* the Bible, so maybe that's okay," I find myself thinking, or "I can't put my purse on top! That's like saying money is more important!" My family finds my biblical juggling act hilarious.

But I'm not alone! My friend Diana divulged that she was *shocked* the first time she saw someone writing in a Bible! Outwardly she laughs about it, but I know deep down she still feels qualms when she jots in the margins.

Then there's my fellow congregant Jim. He doesn't have a specific problem with his Bible, but he got the idea growing up that Christian women shouldn't wear red coats. If his wife ever purchased a flame-colored piece of outerwear, he'd feel she was on her way down the slippery slope of moral laxity. Overhearing Jim's confession, our organist revealed that she could never buy red shoes because they were "racy."

Following those revelations, I felt much better about myself. During the service, I looked over my shoulder to see who was there and took sermon notes in my Bible. Then I climbed into my red car, plopped down all my things willy-nilly in the front seat, and drove home. ►