

## Spiders

Have you ever watched a spider spinning its web?

It really is an incredible feat of engineering.

Did you know that spiders use four very different types of silk in every web?

Firstly, they use a bridge and frame thread, which is the strongest and thickest thread, whose purpose is to support the whole structure.

Then comes the radius silk, which is so thin as to be almost invisible.

It has no sticky coating, but serves as a framework for the spiral spinning.

The auxiliary spiral thread comes next, which is also free from stickiness and which is the guideline that helps to keep the spiral pattern even.

Finally the spider spins the capture spiral, which is the stickiest of all and which is amazingly flexible, with the ability to stretch to three times its original length before it will break.

Only when this work is complete does the spider produce the anchor threads which, as their name suggests, are used to attach the web to nearby structures, such as grass or bushes.

If the spider omitted, or even changed the sequence of any of these stages, then the web would not be properly constructed and would fail in its purpose.

So much effort, patience and planning, and yet the end result seems so fragile and so transient.

The weight of heavy raindrops, the force of a stiff breeze, or a careless passerby, can all destroy the hours of careful work.

What does the spider do then?

It doesn't moan or complain, but neither does it review its plans to see if the design can be improved upon.

It simply and patiently, begins the whole spinning process all over again.

What is all this effort in aid of?

Is it so that people can be delighted by the sight of rainbows trapped within the dewdrops its silk supports?

Or perhaps the spider gets a kick out of watching hapless individuals stumble through the web and then struggle to free themselves from the entangling threads?

Do Mr and Mrs Arachnid run snickering back to their lair when this happens saying, "Just wait till we tell the kids!"

No. The true purpose of the web is both more simple and more sinister than that.

The bottom line is that webs exist to bring about death, in order that another might have life.

The invisibility of the threads is so insects will be entangled before they even realise that it is too late.

The stickiness ensures that, the more they try to free themselves, the more firmly they will be held.

The flexibility of the silk ensures that even if the victim thinks they are pulling away, the threads can still reach out over considerable distance to wind them in again.

And once caught and held, death is inevitable.

It may take a considerable time, but eventually death will triumph!

The spider can then take its time to devour its prey, knowing that it is now beyond rescuing.

The victim is reduced to being a source of life for the next generation of spiders, who in turn will spin webs to trap the next generation of unsuspecting victims.

We can shake our heads in dismay at the ignorance of insects who allow themselves to be so easily trapped and who consequently forfeit their lives prematurely.

But are we really so different?

There is a web of a different sort which is spun especially to ensnare people.

It is often almost invisible, until we find ourselves in the middle of it and once caught it is impossible to escape.

The inevitable end result is our death.

I'm talking about the web of sin.

At this point some of you may say, "Oh, not that old wives' tale!"

As if anybody actually believes in sin any more."

And even by thinking that thought, you have positioned yourself for the first silky, sticky tendril to be wrapped around you.

So is there any hope for escape?

Certainly not through our own efforts.

That's what got us into this mess in the first place.

What we really need is someone who would be willing to come and take our place, knowing that they would have to die instead of us.

That's the only way we could be free.

Where on earth could we find someone like that?

Fortunately for us, there is someone exactly like that.

His name is Jesus, and He was so moved by our helplessness in the grip of sin, that He stepped up and volunteered to make the trade – His death for our life; His captivity for our release; His suffering for our freedom.

The spider who sits in wait in the web of sin – Satan – was willing to accept the offer, thinking that he would now have a bigger, juicier prey to feed on.

He didn't realise that there was no web that could ever be strong enough to hold the Son of God, who is life itself!

So Jesus firstly set us free and then obliterated the web of sin and its ability to rob us of life, permanently!

Communion gives us the opportunity to take a moment to pause and reflect on where we would be right now if it weren't for Jesus and His selfless sacrifice.

The bread reminds us that He paid a price for us by allowing His body to be broken instead of ours.

The cup helps us to remember that it took nothing less than His own blood to dissolve the threads of sin that were so mercilessly wrapped around us.

So let's eat and drink together and remember everything that Jesus has done for us.