

## Are you an Ostrich or an Eagle?

by **Tom Massey, Ph.D.**

Ostriches are peculiar animals. They walk a bit goofy, kind of like they just stepped into a pile of something that they are trying to shake off their feet. What little hair they have on their head sticks out in all directions similar to someone who just stuck his finger in a light socket. They always have a bewildered look in their eyes as if they just woke up to a new world this morning, and when faced with a challenge they stick their head in the sand trying to ignore it until it goes away. To top it off, ostriches are birds that can't fly. What's up with that?

Eagles, on the other hand, are majestic. Their eyes are steely and their vision is precise. They can see the speck on a rabbit's tail from a mile away. They are among nature's greatest hunters. Their feathers are pristine and magical, certain Native American tribes use them for healing ceremonies. When faced with challenges, such as being chased by other birds, they fly directly toward the sun. Their pursuers fall away because they can't tolerate the light, but eagles thrive on it as they soar higher and higher.

Which does your life resemble? Are you an ostrich or an eagle? Do you wake up to a new world each morning or do you have your eyes focused firmly on the future? When the going gets tough do you stick your head in the sand or do you fly toward the light?

### **To Conform or Not to Conform is the Question**

Are you a conformist? Do you go along with the crowd or choose your own path? Eagles usually fly solo. One young man refused to conform to the opinions of others when he decided to embark upon a great adventure. His family and friends were fearful because popular wisdom (popular wisdom...Is that an oxymoron?) held that the world was flat, and he would surely fall off if he ventured too far. But that didn't stop Christopher Columbus from sailing to America to explore a new world.

Imagine the life of a baby girl who was born to a poverty-stricken thirteen year-old mother. As a child she was a victim of both physical and sexual abuse. When she was thirteen, she became pregnant and gave birth to a stillborn baby. She could have chosen to stick her head in the sand and conform to her environment, but Oprah Winfrey chose to fly instead, growing up to become one of the most well-known, powerful women in America.

Being an eagle has its risks. You must be willing to rise above the opinions of others and stand above the crowd, which is not often a popular stance. Which would you choose - being popular or doing the right thing? It's not about being perfect. Soaring eagles make mistakes and fall down like everyone else, but they get back up without blaming others for their predicament. They choose to accept personal responsibility for their own actions and take control of their future. When confronted with challenges, they face them head on - no excuses.

## **Good News, Bad News**

First the bad news: Most people choose to live like ostriches – dazed and confused, with their heads in the sand, giving little thought to the future. Dude, that's no way to live. Here's the goods news: You can be an eagle. You can soar!

Why do what most people can or will do, when you can do what others can't or won't do? Be an eagle. Stay focused. Set your goals and standards high. Choose what's right over what's popular and be personally accountable for your actions. The world will benefit from your contribution.