

FROM THE BEGINNING

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IMPORTANT: To keep our newsletter costs down we are asking that you send a postcard to let us know that you want to continue receiving these FREE of charge. Otherwise your name will be taken off of our list after this letter. We have received many replies already and thank you for your prompt reply. I apologize for this inconvenience but it is one way we can be good stewards of our finances. If you have signed up since May, you will be automatically put on the list and you need not reply.

One other important note: We are trying to raise some funds to give away free "Creation Packs" to those who need them. This will include a set of 9 DVD's. One of the most cost effective ways of doing so requires ordering a large number at one time but this means 1000's of dollars invested as well. This ministry does not have what is needed to do so, but we believe that if this is of the Lord He will provide. Therefore, I just wanted to let you know there is a great need and ask that you would pray about this. If you have questions or interest please contact us.

THE TREE OF LIFE

In Genesis 2:9 we read, "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The question I will pose to you is this: Are the churches still eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

I used to think that Satan had all out lied to Eve to deceive her into eating of the tree but nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is, Satan almost always mixes

truth with a little falsehood, making it all a lie. The story is told of a mother who made brownies once for her children after they had returned from a movie. The children told her that she needed to see the show because it had hardly anything bad in it, only a swear word or two and just one scene of bloodshed. Well, when the children were eating the brownies and commenting on how good they were the mother replied, "I'm glad you like them. I added something to the recipe. I put just a pinch of dog poop in there, but it's hardly any. You see, just a little yuk makes the whole thing bad."

Satan lies by adding a little lie into truth, making the entire thing one big lie. The truth is, when Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil her eyes were opened and she could see good and evil. What she didn't know is that she didn't want to know evil. She was told she would be given knowledge and be like God. She was given knowledge and was now like God, knowing good and evil.

Satan continues to use the same deception within our churches today as he does everything he can to keep us away from the tree of life. Today, churches look at the needs and try to fill them. For example, we see so many unchurched kids in our community so we say, "Hey, let's start a daycare to teach these kids about God." We see families aren't training their children so we say, "Let's start a Sunday School program." At first glance one

may think what is wrong with that? Well, where are Sunday school programs mentioned in Scripture? They aren't because the fathers of the homes were to be in charge of their childrens' spiritual training. The Bible says SEEK YE FIRST the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added. I believe if the church sought a relationship with Christ FIRST, we wouldn't have a need for Sunday school programs or a neighborhood day care. But instead, we add program upon program trying to fix all the problems that have come about because we sought first materialism, money, and worldly cares. Don't take me wrong, I'm not saying Sunday school or daycare is bad, I'm simply using these as examples to reveal an attitude within the churches today that is certainly not Scriptural. Sunday school was started for orphans who had no father to tell them about spiritual life, but today it has become an excuse for fathers to ignore their spiritual role. As a result, the churches have so many programs that are trying to fix the problem that everyone is getting burned out with good intentions while Satan sits back and smiles. Rather than chasing problems why don't we chase after Biblical repentance and seeking first His Word?

I believe this has come about because Satan deceived the church into feasting upon the tree of knowledge. We have so many denominations because each one has the truth in doctrine while none of them seem to be united in the Way, the TRUTH and the Life. Each church has been filling their head but ignoring their heart. Now I'm not suggesting doctrine isn't important and that we should compromise on the Scriptures, nor am I not recognizing a need for different denominations, but I am suggesting there is a wall that needs to come down.

Hebrews tells us, "Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of

repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so" (Heb 6:1-3). Here we are warned to LEAVE the ELEMENTARY teachings about Christ. Sounds like something that may come off of the tree of knowledge. What are these elementary teachings? It is right there: laying again the foundation of repentance, instructions on baptisms, laying on of hands etc. Doesn't this sound like denominational boundaries to you? We are fighting about elementary things when we should be moving on to MATURE teachings of RIGHTEOUSNESS. The verse directly above this one quoted states, "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Heb 5:13-14). The milk teachings are the head knowledge instructions but the meat comes from feasting on the tree of Life, which is none other than Jesus.

Today we have more books on Christianity and the Bible than ever before, yet we continue to slide down the slope towards hell. I realize there are a number of reasons for this: not preaching repentance, addressing sins, the family is falling apart, television, pornography, busyness, etc. But I suggest that all of these have come from feasting on knowledge, not life. I have experienced this in my own life. During college I fell in love with the tree of knowledge as I read book upon book on church doctrine. I became well acquainted with it and began evaluating each person and church accordingly. When anyone would speak about Godly things, I would correct them because a word was used that didn't portray the doctrine correctly. Meanwhile, my life didn't portray the love of Jesus in obedience to Him or to loving others because that could only come from the tree of Life. I had elevated knowledge of the Scriptures above knowing Jesus and had become just like those hypocritical Pharisees who had all the answers but didn't know what to do with them. Jesus even said to the Pharisees, and I believe to us

today, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life” (John 5:39-40). I believe Satan knows the Scriptures way better than I do, but where does that get him? Hell! Just because you feed off the tree of knowledge and may be going to church, praying and talking of God here and there doesn’t mean you are a saved man. The real question is, have you taken from the tree of Life? In 2 Timothy 3:5 we see people who are said to “have a form of godliness, but denying its power.” Why do they deny its power? Verse six tells us, “They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.” Are the churches today always learning but really never able to acknowledge the truth of God’s Word? “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19). Even demons know what I know; but they have not experienced what I have experienced; the love of Jesus.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Fear of the Lord comes first, then true knowledge will come about, but we think that by knowledge fear of the Lord will come. No wonder we are in such a mess.

Paul tells us how he gained knowledge “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was” (Gal 1:15-17). Paul didn’t go to any man to read their doctrinal stands or see what other programs churches were doing that worked, he went straight to the tree of Life and look what God did in his life.

The more churches continue to listen to the deception of Satan the more problems we are going to have to chase down and fix.

Today we judge a church by the sermon that is given. Why? We are looking for knowledge.

We have a love from God but not a love for God. In Bible times a church didn’t have a Pastor who was paid to do all the work. The body of Christ was expected to work together and have the Spirit manifested through that entire body. Instead, today we expect the Spirit to be manifested all through ONE pastor. The qualifications of this man seem to be a seminary degree and a willingness to come to our church. In other words, they have been eating from the tree of knowledge, but this doesn’t necessarily mean they have a relationship with Jesus. However, Timothy gives us the qualifications of a Pastor and very few lean towards knowledge, rather a relationship with Christ that changes a person: “Now the overseer must be **above reproach**, the **husband of but one wife**, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He **must manage his own family well** and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a **good reputation with outsiders**, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (1 Tim 3:2-7). Why do so many pastors not meet these qualifications today? Are we seeking first the kingdom of heaven or are we feeding on knowledge? This relationship centered body must get back to a Biblical world view not a man-centered one. There are many pastors who love the Lord, have knowledge of His Word, but don’t fit the “able to teach” or “manage their family” qualities. Biblically this means they shouldn’t be pastors. It doesn’t mean they can’t serve the Lord and minister in other ways, just not in the role of a pastor. Many may disagree with this statement, but what do they base this opinion on? It certainly isn’t the Biblical, Tree of Life, world view.

In Revelation we see that the tree of Life is there, but the tree of knowledge is not. Why? Adam and Eve could have lived forever without

knowledge of good and evil. In fact, you want your children to be as close as they can to the paradise of Eden but in a fallen world, keep them away from knowledge of evil. So often parents tell me they sent their kids to the public school early because they wanted them to adjust. Heaven forbid that sin should shock our children. I don’t want my children to ever adjust to that way of life. The main reason the tree of Life is in heaven is because that tree is literally Jesus Himself. Again, I am not saying knowledge is bad, but it is how we apply that knowledge that counts and who we apply it for.

My prayer is that this letter will cause you to take a step back and examine your church, family and personal life according to the Bible. Not as many view it by taking bits and pieces of knowledge that they like while they ignore the rest, but by a relationship and love for Jesus, the Christ.

This past month we had our evangelism camp where we took a number of high school students from North Dakota, California and Nebraska, and trained them in various styles of evangelism. We had a tremendous experience as we shared God’s Word to well over 300 people (*individually*) in a variety of ways both day and night. But one thing that stuck out in my mind was the number of people we met who claimed to know

(have knowledge of) Christ, but had no idea of what a relationship with Him was. They were living disobedient and depressing lives. They worshipped God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. They felt they could earn their way into heaven by being good. They felt that they really weren’t that bad to begin with so they really didn’t need Jesus. They felt they knew Jesus so they could get drunk and be forgiven. They spent time at the tree of knowledge but never at the feet of Jesus. Remember Mary and Martha? Sometimes God’s wants us to be sitting at His feet visiting with Him more than He wants us out running our programs and going through the motions. If you are one of those who have been feeding only on knowledge pray that the God who created you will begin to put a love for Him in your heart, read your Bible and do what it says. God will not turn you down. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37-38). “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matt 7:7-8).