

Well Fed

In a world so full of distractions, it is so easy to lose the focus on the real mission at hand. Misinterpretation of scripture and the desire to “please the listeners” overrides what God’s Word actually says. The attitude is “if it makes them feel good, what harm is there?” This is the same attitude towards Christmas and Easter, slap a Jesus label on it and God will love us anyway, He won’t mind us negating His Word and the example Jesus Christ said for us to follow. Getting the “Word” out to all the world is another diversion keeping those with “good intentions” from making the spiritual connection. Then again, unless they’re being called (John 6:44, 65) it really doesn’t matter.

All too often, churches equate success with numbers and growth. The things that truly matter to God cannot be measured by man’s limited thinking. *More* is better, *bigger* is better, the focus is on physical or material things. When Andrea and I used to attend the local Pentecostal Church, the Pastor always wanted to take attendance and then keep a count of those who raised their hands at the end of the service and “said the sinners prayer.” It was always about the numbers. He was more focused on a body count than sharing God’s Word and truth. We have discussed this numerous times.

We in the church can be caught up in “things” even if they are not worldly. So many people fall victim to focus on Church work; they forget The Lord of the work. Reaching out to “serve” others is one way to become *absorbed* in the work of the church. While there is nothing sinful about reaching out to those in need, taking the “Great Commission” as a charge to knock on doors and hand out tracts is not where the marching orders were directed. Christ sent His disciples to the established churches, charging them to make disciples, *you need believers before you can get to that level*. This is why most pamphlets and tracts handed out end up blowing across parking lots. God does not want us to waste His Word. He does want us to know His Word and have a ready answer for those He sends our way.

Matthew 7:6- “Do not give that which *is* holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces.”

People want to be entertained in church and have their ears scratched for an hour so they can get to the buffet before it gets crowded. Sharing the real truth causes them to unlearn what they (like us) had learned their whole lives. It also paints an entirely different plan of salvation that negates the saying a simple prayer to one of

actually committing and doing what God said to obey, keep, and do My Commandments (including His Sabbaths and Holy Days.)

2 Timothy 4:3-4- “For there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their own lusts they shall accumulate to themselves a *great number of* teachers, having ears itching *to hear what satisfies their cravings*; And they shall turn away their own ears from the truth; and they shall be turned aside unto myths.”

Most churches focus on **pleasing people and showmanship** rather than sharing God’s truth.

Acts 5:29- “But Peter and the apostles answered and said, “We are obligated to obey God rather than men.”

1 Thessalonians 2:4- “But even as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, we speak in this manner: as those who please not men, but God, Who proves our hearts.”

"We have become so engrossed in the work of the Lord that we have forgotten the Lord of the work."

—A.W. Tozer

Tozer was an American “Christian” pastor, author, and spiritual mentor who served in the Christian Missionary Alliance for forty-four years. He had a major influence on evangelicals. Tozer kept Sunday and preached going to heaven. Does that make him a “Christian?” Sadly, the majority of anyone believing in God and Jesus Christ would agree. God has the last word on that.

I put Christian in quotations as anyone who professes to be a “Christian” and does not follow God’s Commandments and keep His Holy Days as Jesus Christ did. they are not what they profess to be. This is not my opinion, but simply what God’s Word says.

1 John 2:4-6- “The one who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked.”

Colossians 3:2-4- “Set your affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life has been hid together with Christ in God. When Christ, *Who is* our life, is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory.”

Straight forward and to the point. Either **you are obeying God or you are not.** No matter how holy one professes to be, if **they are not keeping God’s Commandments as per His instructions**, they are missing the mark. There is nothing man can do to make anything more holy than what has already been established. Remember God is **no respecter of persons**. Would you let your son be crucified and then allow the “pardoned” to re-write the terms of the covenant? God is specific.

James 2:8-10- “If you are truly keeping *the* Royal Law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you have respect for persons, you are practicing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors; For if anyone keeps the whole law, but sins in one aspect, he becomes guilty of all.” (**No respect of persons-Acts 10:34, James 2:1, Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, 1 Peter 1:17**)

By all means we are to serve those in need and those among our own flock, but ***not*** if it takes our focus away from our relationship with God, His truth, and growing in the image of Christ. We are to feed the flock among us His truth and not Fairy Tales.

1 Peter 5:2-3- “Feed the flock of God *that is* among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an* eager *attitude*; Not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock *of God*.”

Being an example to the flock is knowing Him and His Word.

Colossians 3:23- “And whatever you do, do heartily, as to the Lord and not to men;”

If we are throwing our arm out of socket to get a pat on the back, God will notice, but not in the manner in which would be pleasant. Jesus never desired recognition.

Matthew 8:4- “And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a witness to them.” (also Mark 1:44)

Our service to God is not for recognition or notoriety.

Deuteronomy 28:47-49- “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all *things*, Therefore you shall serve your enemies which the LORD shall send against you in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all *things*. And he shall put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. The LORD shall bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you shall not understand,”

Filling pews *is never* greater than *filling hearts*. For those teaching and leading others away from God’s truth, judgment will be greater on them.

Jeremiah 23:1-2- “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture,” says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, “You have scattered My flock, and have driven

them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings,” says the LORD.”

In the Book of Amos, he speaks of a famine of God’s Word.

Amos 8:11-12- “Behold, the days come,” says the Lord GOD, “that I will send *a famine* in the land; not a *famine* of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the LORD and shall not find *it*.”

When we were growing up, God was part of our lives, our culture, and our nation. He was in our schools, our homes, and our families. Most of the kids I grew up with had some denomination or other and there was always an acknowledgment of God. Assemblies in schools, homeroom and sporting events had moments of prayer right after the Pledge of Allegiance. These were public schools! I’m sure some of the older members here can relate to some of these things I’m mentioning. God is all but gone from our society these days, in our homes, in our schools and sadly in our churches.

We live in a time of *spiritual starvation*. And is it any wonder? Are there any truths being taught in churches these days? Negating the Sabbath and Holy Days pollutes any messages being given. Celebration of man-made holidays as opposed to God's Holy Days eliminates any hope for "churchgoers" to learn God's Plan of Salvation for mankind. Again, man cannot make holy what God has already set aside as such. It is sad times indeed when you can count the lies being taught in churches compared to how many truths are actually shared. The Fourth Commandment is the most common to be broken as it has been written off as "Jewish" or "done away with." We have covered numerous scriptures where we know these thoughts to be outright lies.

Many pastors and members of the clergy believe they are doing the "work" of the church by warning the world and gathering as many as they can to "say the sinners' prayer" and "saving" as many as they can.

Matthew 23:15- "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves."

Sharing the Word of God is critical indeed but we'd better make sure we are sharing exactly what He said and not some edited version for denominational support.

Galatians 1:6-11- “I am astonished that you are so quickly being turned away from Him Who called you into *the* grace of Christ, to a different gospel, Which *in reality* is not another *gospel*; but there are some who are troubling you and are desiring to pervert the gospel of Christ. But if we, or even an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel to you *that* is contrary to what we have preached, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! As we have said before, I also now say again. If anyone is preaching a gospel contrary to what you have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! Now then, am I striving to please men, or God? Or am I motivated to please men? For if I am yet pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Ezekiel 34:2- “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, “**Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?**”’

God makes it perfectly clear there are and will be consequences for the “shepherds” of His flock, *if* we fail to feed His sheep as He intends.

What then, is “a necessary work of the church?” What happens when a famine occurs? What is critical during the time of a famine? The most important task is to feed those who are starving!

Free dictionary defines famine as: A drastic, wide-reaching *food shortage*.

A drastic shortage; a dearth (scarce supply). Severe hunger; starvation, a severe shortage of food, as through crop failure or overpopulation, acute shortage of anything, violent hunger. Fairly straight forward.

We’ve all seen images of the poor and needy throughout the world who are starving to death from hunger. Their emaciated frames resemble a skeleton with skin stretched over it. It’s difficult for us to imagine the possibility of such things here in the U.S. God has certainly blessed our nation and we have definitely forgotten Him. The possibility definitely exists as we’ve seen empty shelves in supermarkets and supply “famines” of various sorts. Some suspiciously “man-made.”

It is no different for a spiritual famine. People are starving for the true Word of God. We are to feed the flock with truth, God’s unedited truth. Not “our way,” or

warm and fuzzy sermons. Not false promises of floating off to Heaven to walk the streets of gold with Grandma. Nowhere in God's Word does He say this. It is an easier "sell" than God's truth of turning back to dust awaiting one of two resurrections. The phrase "Shall be saved" has been taken out of context all too often. God has "conditions" for us to follow in His plan of salvation; work is involved so it's no wonder saying a simple prayer is the one most chosen. But in the end, God is the One Who does the choosing.

1 Peter 5:1-3- "*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: Feed the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an eager attitude*; Not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock of God.*"

The Free Dictionary defines feed as, "To give food to; **supply with nourishment**." I know there have been numerous sermons and articles written on this topic, but something has become clear. It is our responsibility to nourish those among us with the Word of God. A healthy spiritual diet is as if not more important than a well-balanced food diet. Proper nutrition is critical for good health and growth in

both areas. It is vital for us to try to have the finest diet imaginable, prayer, fasting, and daily Bible study. Unless we **obey and do** what God's Word says, we will spiritually starve to death. For only by consuming sound spiritual food will we be able to endure and please God in this end time. Have you ever gotten so hungry you become dizzy? If we fail to maintain a proper spiritual diet we will faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31- "Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not grow weak nor weary? And His understanding no one can fathom. *He* gives power to the weary; and to him with no might, He increases strength. Even the young shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; But those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up *with* wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

If we consider the now 45,000 denominations of "Christianity" the famine may well be upon us as God's truth has been edited and watered down to fit a softer doctrine that keeps the pews full. The spiritual meals being served are of the fast food variety. Perhaps like Chinese food, they'll be hungry an hour later...or at least forget what they were fed.

Sharing God's truth regardless of the numbers present *is* what God sees. Is the truth being shared coming from the heart? We often chat about *how anyone can* read what is written in scripture and not understand what it says. The answer is simple, they do not know God, nor have they developed a personal relationship with Him.

Not knowing God will limit our knowledge and understanding of His Word.

Knowing Him begins with loving Him first (the Greatest Commandment) and being obedient to His Word. Having a strong connection with God keeps His Word readily available in our hearts and minds. *If God's Word is in you, it will come out of you when needed*. Being overly focused on doing "church work" without a solid foundation of God's Word can do more harm than good. We may interfere with God's efforts for someone else and hinder His work for us.

Isaiah 55:8- "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD."

The cares of this world and the desire to be helping in themselves can alter our insights and weaken our progress in spiritual growth. We fail to see the forest for the trees. Church "work" and salvation are intertwined but can be miles apart.

Proverbs 14:12- “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death.”

Serving one another and the brethren is part of our regular duties. We cannot allow ourselves to become overly focused and neglect our own spiritual growth. We are of no service to anyone if we need to repair ourselves, however, we all need regular maintenance.

Luke 21:34-36- “Watch yourselves, lest your hearts be preoccupied with high living and drinking and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare it shall come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth. Watch therefore and pray at all times that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

Pride will always blind us to our spiritual condition. Mega-churches and even the Catholic Church seem to be the “go to” sources when religious advice is needed. The “bigger the better” apparently means they have God’s favor. Nothing could be further from the truth. In knowing God personally, we can send those who seek Him directly to His Word.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9- “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart. And you shall diligently teach them to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates.”

We all need the occasional warning God has for us in His word. Much like a detour sign on the highway, they are given for our own course corrections.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12- “Now all these things happened to them *as* examples, and were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages are coming. Therefore, let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”

Having these things in mind, we will avoid paying God mere lip service.

Scratching those itchy ears on the wrong day of the week is doing exactly that.

They would rather please people than obey God and His Word. This is not being “legalistic” or any such nonsense, it is purely reading and ***doing*** what God’s word says.

Isaiah 29:13- “And the LORD said, “Because this people draws near *Me* with their mouth, and with their lips honor Me, but their worship of Me is made up of the traditions of men learned by rote, and their fear toward Me is *taught* by the commandments of men;”

Matthew 15:7-9- “Hypocrites! Isaiah has prophesied well concerning you, saying, ‘These people have drawn near to Me with their mouths, and with their lips they honor Me; but their hearts are far away from Me. For they worship Me in vain, teaching *for* doctrine *the* commandments of men.’ ”

Mark 7:6-9- “And He answered *and* said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men.’” For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast to the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this*.” Then He said to them, “Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your *own* tradition.”

The scary part of failing to heed warnings lies at the end of our journey. When we pass through the fire, what will be left? God knows His own and whose hearts truly belong to Him. We will be spared hearing “I never knew you, depart from Me.”

Matthew 7:22-23- “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?’ And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’”

Luke 13:25-27- “Once the Master of the house has risen up and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside the door and knock, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us’; then shall He answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you or where you are from.’ And you shall begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You have taught in our streets.’ And He shall say, ‘I tell you; I do not know you or where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’”

Now is the time for all of God’s calls and soon to be chosen to wake up and be ever more alert to our spiritual condition. Still doing the same things? Regular reflections are essential.

Romans 13:11- “Now *consider* this, knowing the time, that *it is* already *the* hour *that* we should be roused out of sleep; because our salvation *is* nearer now than when we first believed.”

It is easy to succumb to the distractions and temptations of this world. We can find ourselves drifting from God, from regular prayer and Bible study. This will lead us into a condition of spiritual malnourishment. Once we recognize this is occurring, we can remedy the situation immediately. God will do His part to perfect and complete His work within us (**Philippians 1:6**).

Remaining in an environment of compromise can and will take its toll on our spiritual health *if* we do not remain steadfast in our faith.

2 Corinthians 6:14- “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness?”

Being aware and cautious of what we are feeding and what we take in will keep us moving in the right direction. Don’t think for a minute that God isn’t aware of what’s going on regarding the absence of His Word. He will use this lack of His truth to test and perfect us.

1 Thessalonians 2:4- “But even as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, we speak in this manner: as *those* who please not men, but God, Who proves our hearts.”

With the world spiraling out of control we can bet on tough times ahead. The moral decay is so rampant, the enemy no longer needs to move in the shadows, he can run freely in the open and the lost cheer him along the way. Maintaining a good spiritual diet by keeping and storing His Word in our hearts, we will have the nourishment needed to keep us from the famine that *is upon us*. No matter what may come, famine, war, pestilence, captivity or death, God’s promises are sure and He will deliver and reward His chosen. We will be well fed. Amen.