

Licking the Fruit

Most Wednesdays, our church hosts many elementary and middle schoolers for the BLAST program. This Believing, Loving, And Serving Together ministry includes snack, recreation, dinner, and class learning time. My main responsibility is to teach Bible lessons. Since the themes last fall were in Genesis, the first evening it was a joy to share God's amazing act of creation!

The second Wednesday, I shared the tragic story of the Fall. When our greatest grandparents yielded to temptation, they plunged God's perfect creation into sin's consequences including hard work, painful childbirth, and death for all. But I also got to share the first prophecy about Jesus regarding Eve's Seed that would crush the serpent's head.

When I asked for questions, one young man had his hand in the air. I had highlighted the fact that Eve had amended God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil by adding the prohibition of even touching it. This youngster wanted to know if she could lick the fruit. When I replied, he followed up by asking if she could bite it, chew it, and spit it out. Whenever you ask children for questions, you'd better be ready for anything.

Isn't this just like human nature? How close can we get to disobeying God without actually sinning? Our tendency is to always test the limits. We can stop anytime we want. We can eat it, smoke it, drink it, watch it, etc. without ever getting addicted. We're not as weak as other unfortunate souls. And before we know it, we're not just touching, licking, and chewing, we're swallowing to our appetite's desire.

We are prone to add to or take away from God's Word, both of which are sinful. Like Eve, some have added many additional laws. To the 613 commands of the Old Testament, the Pharisees had added over 1500 to keep Jews from getting anywhere close to disobedience. And while their intention to keep the law was good, Jesus pointed out that even they could not obey all their own regulations.

Most of us, however, usually take the opposite approach. We push the limits ignorantly believing the devil's lie that we can stop anytime we choose only to realize too late that we are powerless to do so. Like Eve, when we see the forbidden fruit pleases our eye, is good for food, and can make us smarter, we can no longer resist. Sadly, we drag others into our sin, as did Eve, bringing guilt on all.

Paul's advice in I Thessalonians 5:22 is to, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." This helps us to avoid seeing how close we can get to the edge of sin's canyon without falling in. But he balances that with the freedom not to be bound by law, but to do what

is right by the Spirit. There is a balance, and we pray for God's wisdom not to add to or to take away from His Holy Word.

George Bowers – CBC Executive Board

Weekly Prayer Points

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” — Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

As we step into the summer months, many of our congregations are preparing for Vacation Bible Schools, youth camps, and outreach events. These activities are vital opportunities to sow seeds of faith in the hearts of children and families. Let us pray for the volunteers, leaders, and participants—that God would grant strength, creativity, and open hearts. May these efforts bear lasting fruit for His Kingdom.

Please pray for these congregations and pastors:

- Zion Hill Congregation in Columbiana, OH seeking pastoral leadership
- Amazing Grace Worship Center in Uganda, Africa and Pastor Isaac Mutesasira

CBC Prayer Committee