

The problem that Jesus came to solve

Father, help us to open the eyes of our heart so that we can see and know the goodness, beauty and majesty of You and the hope we have for today and for all of our tomorrows. Let us not be satisfied with just knowledge of You. Give us revelation of You and for how You see from eternity's point of view. Amen.

What if as we read the Bible we look at God's wisdom for us not as a formula for what to do, but as a process for how we are to do life? Instead of exercising the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for what and what not to do we receive direction on how to do life in a relationship with God, the Source of all life.

The how question instead of what to do is about learning to think differently about reality, Christianity and even ourselves. How instead of what is related to how we know the truth not what the truth is we know. By what process are we engaging our filter for understanding life around us? Are we interpreting from our knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong or are we receiving from God's perspective?

The concern of Jesus when starting His ministry was not about programs, structure or organizations, but about people. Relationship with the Author of Life is God's answer to a life lived abundantly not a formula for success. The way the world has taught us to perceive reality is not the reality God wants to show us.

The Pharisees knew the Bible, their Tanakh, better than anyone else in their day. However, through their perception of reality of God's truth they only brought death to themselves and the people around them. The trap was they thought they had the right way to bring life through their knowledge of God's truth and acting on it. In thinking this way they were their being own source using their knowledge of good from God.

When God is our Source we start to perceive reality from an eternal perspective over a finite one. We automatically search for answers based on how we define the problem. If we will begin to think biblically; believing the Bible is God's autobiography written through men, but authored by God. We will become amazed at how much of our perception of being a Christian is not biblical at all. We will find that many of our beliefs are actually based on false doctrine, traditions within our communities of believers and perceptions the world has put on us.

I.e. God cannot be in the presence of sin. God only does what we cannot do for ourself. God only helps those who help themselves. Christians are supposed to be perfect. Sin is bad behavior.

There are 9 Hebrew words for sin and none of them are in Genesis, chapter 3 where we learn of the problem that Jesus came to solve. In Genesis 2:9 we learn there are two trees in the center of the Garden; a tree of Life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We all know what a tree looks like, yes? This seems like a silly question when reading of the trees in the Garden.

What does life look like as a tree?

What does knowledge look like as fruit on a tree?

In the Garden seeing both the spiritual and the physical were natural and normal. This is a way of knowing and seeing we do not have today. The same word for seeing the trees in the Garden is used in Exodus with Moses seeing a bush on fire that somehow did not burn. This is seeing differently than we can see naturally today. To see something like this today we call it supernatural because this way of seeing is not natural for us. Adam and Eve had a way of knowing reality that ended in Genesis, chapter 3.

Cherubim, a form of angel, guarding the entrance to the Garden with a flaming sword can be different than we understand. Today, we tend to think guarding is to keep something out. The wording used more accurately describes guarding as a way of seeing. When Jesus was on the road to Emmaus talking with some followers describes a way of seeing; that they did not recognize Jesus until the breaking of the bread and their eyes were opened.

These same followers describe how their hearts burned as Jesus opened the Scriptures up to them on their walk telling about who He, the Messiah is. Even with new knowledge through the revealing of Scripture they never recognized Him until later. This suggests that seeing is what we are looking for instead of what to do. The Pharisees saw Scripture very clearly from mankind's point of view. The problem they did not understand was they did not see from God's point of view. *Letting go of what we think we know is simple to say yet hard to do without hearing God.*

In the Garden this suggests eating the forbidden fruit changed two things. Their source for life changed from God to knowledge, becoming their own source. Their foundation for reality changed from the normal being both spirit and physical to only the physical as natural. Since we only know life from this side of the change everything runs the risk of going through our filter of understanding from our knowledge of good and evil.

When our source for life is the knowing of good and evil then even good can come into our lives and bring death. God has never called us to do something for Him. He has always called us to do it from Him and with Him. This is not what we should do, but how we should do.

In the Garden everything Adam did came from the Source called Life. As long as Adam stayed connected to Life he did not need to concern Himself with the rules and regulating his performance by them. Life kept him within the boundaries not his knowledge of good. When we are doing Life with God our life and lifestyle are in alignment with the rules. In this way we are filled with power not the structure to keep us in line with the rules trying to stay on a dot or on the line.

We take dominion not by reading the rulebook and enforcing it on other people. Jesus took dominion, affecting the environment around Him such as walking through hostile crowds unharmed. He was connected to God letting God guide His steps and filling Him with power. We want the nature of who we are through the nature of God inhabiting us to be the influence that exercises dominion over what is around us.

Not wrong, just not enough...

We tend to think our problem is that Adam broke the rules and was punished with this being carried over to each of us.

Instead of being punished, Jesus came and took our punishment so that we don't have to be punished anymore.

More to the story...

We are not supposed to be just citizens in a kingdom. We are supposed to inhabit the kingdom and be rulers in this invisible kingdom today. Jesus has removed the obstacle for us by redeeming us and enabling us to change sources. This is not the same thing as living in our purpose on the earth today. The obstacle being removed is our beginning. Living in pursuit of Life is our adventure. We are learning how to live not just manage our knowledge of good.

No amount of knowledge, having the right information, can bring life to us. For Adam and Eve they switched the one thing that brought them life for what never would or could. Knowledge as our foundation and our source is the world's position and view for understanding life. Knowledge is not bad or wrong. However, knowledge can never be our source for life.

Jesus says I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life. This says so much more than we think it does when we do not understand what life really is. We can never know enough to bring aliveness. Accurate information about Jesus won't bring us life either. The person of Jesus brings life to us.

Revelations 2:1 (NLT)

Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

"I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

"But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!^b Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

Looking at reality from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil we can misunderstand the instruction given to the church at Ephesus. Jesus, our first love, is our Source for Life not our knowledge or our actions. Judgment, criticism and self-perception are the fruit of being rooted in knowledge. Jesus says, Follow me and I will give you life and life abundantly not do more and be better.

May we all let go of what we think we know and grab a hold of the prize we have in Christ Jesus.

The problem Jesus came to solve (continued)

Each generation from Adam and Eve have sought to improve their knowledge of good over the last generation. Each generation tweaks what was good from the previous generation to make this one better. How we do family, operate in the work force, live as a nation and interact with the world are supposedly improved with each generation through our current knowledge of good. The fact that these changes have not produced their desired outcome demonstrates that our knowledge of good does not overcome evil.

Our knowledge of good becomes the lens that taints everything. Such as the Pharisees in Jesus day whose desire to please God made them overlook that a miracle of healing took place and blessed a person because it was done on the Sabbath. Today, we do the same thing when faced with the brokenness of people we encounter or know. An affair that happens because of the need to be needed and loved; an addiction to drugs or alcohol that happens from trying to escape the challenges life is bringing; becoming an overachiever in order to establish and prove that a person has value and worth. All of us have the need to be recognized and accepted no matter how wrongly we try to achieve this..

All of these examples and more reflect people who are lost, held captive by something that is killing them. These are people who are hurting; confused about what they are missing and their behavior is trying to fill the void they feel. When all we can see is the wrongness of a person's behavior we are overlooking the value and the need these people have, even if they are us. This is why the sinners wanted to hang out with Jesus and the Pharisees thought they were better than Jesus.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

All of mankind is rooted in knowledge as their source. The two basic strategies that Satan has is using our knowledge of good and our knowledge of evil against us in order to steal, kill and destroy our life. He gets us to work our knowledge of good so that we believe we are doing okay. Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs because they looked good on the outside and yet they were dead on the inside. They were trying and wanted to do good, but from a dead source.

The rejects of society and the sinners knew they were dead and were receptive to receiving the life Jesus offered. The Pharisees believed they were alive and were not aware of something they needed that only Jesus could offer. Their trap was not in their root system of knowledge, but the lack of awareness of where the source for life comes from.

Today the world seems confused about what good is and yet when we recognize evil or wrongness in ourself and others our solution is to stop that and start doing good. In this mindset all we have done is change branches, but we are still in the same tree. Our knowledge of evil produces shame and guilt causing us to want to hide. When we are overcoming the knowledge of our wrongs with good we want to shout out to God, "Look how high I have climbed in the tree."

We all develop a strategy for living in the good we know and avoiding or ignoring what we know is wrong. In our experiences we know better and more than we did before. After cleaning

our side of the street we can then compare ourselves to others and how well or poorly they are managing their side of the street with their knowledge of good. Our knowledge of good along with our behavior becomes the measure we use for determining our quality of life. The fruit of being rooted in knowledge is that judgment, criticism and self-perception become how we evaluate our own and others' goodness.

Sin translated from the nine Hebrew words translated as sin describes missing the mark on the target or missing the designed outcome in a way that we didn't attain the prize. Another way we could say this is that we didn't hit it or we don't have what we aimed for. We haven't attained the treasure we were designed to have; something is not in me that is supposed to be a part of me. Sin is the condition from which our wrong thinking and wrong behavior grows.

In our comparing with others we are cheating ourselves. Everyone is rooted in the same root system with the tree of knowledge. We should be comparing trees not each other. Are we looking through the lens from the tree of knowledge or from the lens of the tree of Life? Are we seeing from God's perspective of reality or are we relying on our knowledge and the history of our experiences to define our reality?

Our knowledge cannot bring us to life. Life has to come to us. The world asks why Jesus is the only way. Human knowledge can never reach the Source of Life. If we could get to the tree of life on our own, past the Cherubim through our knowledge then we wouldn't need God.

Romans 11:6 (NIV)

And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

If we could attain life through works then grace is no longer needed. We cannot get to Life on our own. This is why we can't do anything for God we must do it from God. We can only love God because He first loved us. He is our beginning and our end. If we are able to hit the mark on our own we are not hitting the right mark.

In the Old Testament God gave Israel instructions for holiness. He would be their God and they would be His people. In the very next book God is telling Israel that their sacrifices and rituals disgust Him. The people took God's guidance as a formula for what to do instead of direction for how to express what is in their heart for God. This is about the Source coming to you and through you; eating wheat or not eating wheat on the Sabbath; eating meat sacrificed to idols or not.

God is not telling us what to do. He is telling us how to connect with Him and His heart for us. We do things with God like pray, read the Bible and share with others, giving with a generous heart not because we have to. We do this because we want to as an outward expression of our inward relationship with God. We can do what we know is good or we can do what we do with Life flowing to us, inhabiting us and flowing from us.

Sometimes our knowledge of what God is doing is our biggest obstacle to receiving what God is doing today. Sometimes we take our knowledge of yesterday's life with power and turn it into today's religion, our best knowledge of good that you can have. As God chasers we all seem to

be on a quest for the best religion and instead of finding the right one or the best one we find the one most comfortable for us. Seeking God is not seeking religion. When we are seeking God we are growing in our relationship with God, seeking His presence, maturing as sons and daughters of the Living God, our Perfect Father and the Creator of all life.

Our soul; our mind, our will and emotions, plugged into the tree of knowledge gets us to focus on doctrine, our studies, the do's and don'ts of our beliefs and our community. When we plug into the tree of Life we live differently, making our choices from different motives. This does not mean we don't study to show ourself approved, growing in our knowledge of Jesus. We are doing these things living in honor and respect for God, others and ourself. Our life becomes an expression of being plugged into life rather than our life is expressed through studying and following the rules.

When Jesus came He bypassed the Cherubim and brought life to us. When we are plugged into life we are not concerned with avoiding evil. We are not in denial over its existence we just don't make our plans around it. We are not spending effort on trying to avoid the things in our past that were hurting us or trying to kill us; not because they don't matter. They just don't have the power to control us and have the influence over us that they used to. This means our focus is not on doing good and avoiding evil. We are focused on Life and doing everything with God.

Let us have no illusions. No one does this perfectly. We are all growing in oneness with God. The more time we spend with God doing life with Him the more we want to do things with Him. Our hard part seems not to compartmentalize what we do and don't do with God. Our knowledge of what we think is good is exercising our will instead of plugging into God as our Source when we do this.

Even if all we have in us is to spend 5 minutes with God a day it is a place to start. As we do our 5 minutes with God each day this will grow and become 10 minutes, 15 minutes to an hour and so on. God is not upset we don't do longer because we are learning how to let go of being our own source and trusting God to be our all in all. This takes time and God is not in a hurry or running out of time.

We keep drawing closer to God and we become better at including Him in all that we do. We are learning how to think differently and live differently as we close the eyes of our head and open the eyes of our heart. God becomes the Source for our beginning, our middle and the end of our day. Yes, we still have issues and struggles. We are all learning how to bring God into them standing on God's faithfulness to complete the good work He has begun in each of us.

Father God, You know us better than we know ourselves. Help us to let go of the thinking the enemy is trying so hard to get us to hold on to. Open our eyes to recognize the lies we have accepted as true for us. Replace those lies with Your truth, giving us a higher, wider, longer and deeper revelation of who You are and who we are in You. You are our beginning and our end. Help us to receive Your goodness for us throughout each day as we grow in our oneness with YOU. Amen.