

JESUS IS OUR LIFE

A TESTIMONY & EXHORTATION

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As many of you know, the Lord has allowed me to experience significant health concerns in recent years. From 2012-2016, I had four surgeries in four years. In 2012, I was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and underwent surgery and treatment for this in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, my ulcerative colitis became unresponsive to medical management and so my entire colon was removed in a life-saving surgery, followed by reconstructive surgeries in 2015 and 2016. In 2015 metastatic cancer was found throughout my abdomen and I was given only a couple of months to live. The enemy was a roaring lion seeking to devour, but I thank God for His amazing design of the church and for His love and care for me. The body of Christ travailed in intercession on my behalf and the Lord was, and is, so faithful! As a result of these experiences, it has become so real in my spirit that Jesus is Our Life.

During my health struggles, I found the voices of the world trying to persuade me to seek knowledge, whereas the Word of God directed me to keep my eyes on Jesus. I am

an educated woman, trained to use my mind to research, evaluate, plan, and implement knowledge. I feel akin to Paul when he lists in Philippians 3:4-6 his reasons to have confidence in the flesh. Chapter 3 doesn't end with verse 6 however, rather, it continues, *"But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ...My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection..."* (Philippians. 3:7-10, CSB).

In summary, I feel that I can testify as John did in John 1:1-3, *"...what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the*

eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (CSB). May we encourage one another to keep our eyes on Jesus.

Jesus Is Our Life

“These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time that the LORD God made the earth and the heaven, no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die ...’” (Genesis 2:4-9, 16, 17, CSB).

“Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’ ‘No! You will not die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; ... Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.’ Then he asked, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man replied, ‘The woman you gave to be with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.’ So the LORD God asked the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said,

‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (Genesis 3:1-13, CSB).

As it was in the garden of Eden, so it is today – we are deceived into partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil when the Tree of Life is at hand. We live in a culture that is obsessed with knowledge as it was foretold in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 (KJV):

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Instead of seeking knowledge, I have learned I need to seek Jesus. Jesus teaches in Matthew chapter 6 that if we seek the kingdom of God first all of our natural needs will be provided for.

“No man can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other... Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? ... Can any of you add one moment to his life-span by worrying (thinking)?... For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you” (Matthew 6:24, 25, 27, 32, 33, CSB).

It is so easy to get caught up in today’s culture of knowledge that when we are presented with a situation in our lives, our first response is to look at the tree of knowledge instead of to the Tree of Life. As we have already read, “the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom.” It still has the same appeal today. It’s so natural that when we have a health concern, need to make an important decision, or even want to know more about God that we turn to knowledge instead of to Jesus. How many times have we read a book, surfed the net, or “Googled it” before waiting on the Lord, reading our Bible, or praying? I know that I am guilty of being deceived even as Eve was deceived.

We are reprimanded in Psalms 4:2-5 (CSB):

“How long sons of man will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie? Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful

for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him. Tremble and do not sin; on your bed reflect in your heart and be still. Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.”

Paul encourages us in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (KJV):

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

In the October 2018 Sharon Star, we are taught about our tri-fold being composed of body, soul, and spirit. Knowledge works at the level of the soul. It deals directly with our mind, our intellect. In our fallen state, our mind drives our lives – what we do, how we feel, the decisions we make, etc. In God’s plan for the complete redemption and transformation of his people, our mind needs to come under the direction and submission of the Holy Spirit.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:5, KJV).

I am learning to stop following the pattern of the world, to stop looking at knowledge as the solution to my problems, as something to attain to, or even as a prerequisite to believing God’s Word. I can’t use my mind to understand or attain the promises of God. I have learned that the problem with seeking knowledge is that it diverts my attention away from God and it has no power to change me. It is working at the body or soul level. It has a form of godliness but has no power. We can seek knowledge for different reasons – perhaps due to lack of faith in God’s ability to heal or take care of us, or maybe to impress others with our breadth and/or depth of knowledge. We can also justify the quest for knowledge as “wanting to be informed” or “using wisdom.” I have learned that if I listen to the voices in the world there is confusion and conflicting advice. Just think about how the wisdom of man changes as fads come and go. What the healthiest diet is today was the opposite of what was recommended a few years ago. The same goes for how to parent, teach children in schools, etc., etc. We become as *“children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive...This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not*

as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...” (Ephesians 4:14, 17, 18). The lesson for me is to listen to and follow the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus Christ in all matters; *“...the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:3-5, NKJV).*

Jesus was very hard on the religious leaders of his day who followed the traditions of men rather than the ordinances of God. I think sometimes we don’t see the relevance to us today as we tend to think, “That was the Pharisees, I don’t do that.” Paul, however, was prompted by the Spirit to admonish us in Colossians chapter 2 to not be influenced by the reasonings and philosophies of the world.

“I am saying this so that no one will deceive you with arguments that sound reasonable...So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him: being rooted and built up in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude. Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ. For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority... if you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations: Don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch? All these regulations refer to what is destined to perish by being used up; they are human commands and doctrines. Although these have a reputation for wisdom by promoting self-made religion, false humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence” (Colossians 2:4, 6-10, 20-23, CSB).

I have learned that I need to walk in submission to all of the teachings of the Bible whether they make sense to me or not. The world teaches us to trust in our minds *“They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us” (1 John 4:5-6, KJV).* God, however, is asking us to *“... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2, KJV).*

The world seeks afterlife and health through the pursuit of

knowledge, but as we read in Genesis, the end result of partaking of the tree of knowledge is death. Even as the serpent deceived Eve, he is trying to deceive, if possible, God's elect. *"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them"* (Deuteronomy 11:16, KJV). *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Galatians 6:7-9, KJV).

We all have sickness in our bodies. I am very appreciative of all the wisdom and help that I have received from the medical community over the years. However, I can attest that doctors and medicine have limitations. Medical treatments often have side effects and/or trade-offs. For example, my son has Type I Diabetes. He is alive today because of amazing medical advances. However, as an active young man, he always has to think about his activity level, sugar intake, and blood sugars. He has a tube attached from his belly to a device that clips onto his waistband that delivers insulin to his body. He also has another sensor on the other side of his belly that monitors his blood sugars. He has to wear both sensors all the time which can be uncomfortable, especially at night. These sensors need to be changed every few days involving needles. He has to do finger pricks every day. He always has to carry around an emergency pack with sugar tablets and extra diabetic supplies. I ask the question, is this really healing? I don't feel that it is. It's treatment or management of a disease, but not healing. Only Jesus can bring true healing and life. I am not suggesting that we shouldn't get medical attention, but I am suggesting that we earnestly need to seek JESUS as He is our Life. The scriptures give many examples of Jesus healing the sick, *"Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them"* (Matthew 15:30, NKJV). We don't want to give up our inheritance of eternal life for the perishable as Esau did when he sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage (Genesis 25:29-34).

Many times throughout history, God's people are offered a choice: to choose whom they will serve as in Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (CSB), *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the Lord your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the Lord swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."* Joshua also said, *"But if it doesn't please you to worship the Lord, choose for yourselves today: Which will you worship – the gods your fathers worshipped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15, CSB).

In this hour, we also have a choice as we read in Romans chapter 6, *"Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to who ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?... But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:16, 22-23, KJV). God offers eternal life through Jesus. We choose whether we will believe God's Word or not. I am fixing my eyes on Jesus, the Author, and Finisher of my faith, and say as Peter said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:68-69, KJV).†

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SHARON STAR

The Sharon Star is a monthly publication and mailed as a free-will offering plan. The articles within are intended for inspiration and information to those who are interested in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God.

Published by:
Global Missions Inc. in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada.

The Sharon Star is found online at:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/sharon-star

Publications Mail Agreement 40012206

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