

# The Importance of Learning the Truth

## ***Ignorance is of different types.***

I remember a boy (whose name shall remain unpublished) who lived in the same town where I grew up. I was about 12 years old when I saw him do something I have never forgotten. I saw him climb out on the limb of a tree about fifteen or twenty feet off the ground. He then placed a saw on the limb between himself and the trunk of the tree. Then he began to saw. I could not believe he would continue, so I was speechless. But I watched him finish cutting the limb off. Then as if in slow motion the freshly cut limb—with him aboard—fell, turning as it plummeted to the ground. I remember that as he fell he turned completely over in the air, and then he landed on his head. (That’s probably what saved him.)

He was unhurt.

From this I learned that some people will endanger themselves, possibly not even knowing the risk they are taking. Also I learned that some people are naturally dense. Others are merely foolhardy, reckless, or imprudent.

The truth is: as human beings we know very little although we like to think that we have great knowledge and broad understanding. Even as little as I knew then I’m sure I could have guessed what would happen if he sawed that limb off. I’m not sure he knew.

Bildad the Shuhite said to Job,

Job 8:8 “Please inquire of past generations, And  
consider the things searched out by their fathers. 9  
“For we are only of yesterday and know nothing,  
Because our days on earth are as a shadow.

We have short lives, and in the greater scheme of things we have been on the earth only a short time. Even with a lot of study we remain largely ignorant of what is and what has happened in the world.

There is the story of the man who wrote a letter to Cambridge University. He had a question. We could also add that of the many questions that are asked of the faculty of Cambridge University, there are some that naively ask about scientific matters. His was one of those questions. He asked, "If the Moon takes a month to revolve around the Earth, then why is it that it is over Detroit every night?"

Was this question from a slowness of perception, or a lack of education, or was it self-imposed ignorance? Surely, this writer was ignorant of the Earth's rotation on its axis, and the revolution of the moon about the earth. Perhaps, we could say, charitably, that he was merely pulling the legs of the Cambridge professors. Whatever the cause might have been, it betrayed a kind of ignorance.

Then there are the people who are deceived, as was Abimelech,

Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken for she is married." 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless? 5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister?' And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." 6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now therefore restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and

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you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

Abimelech was in deadly peril because he took a woman to be his wife who was already married to another man. He was deceived to be sure. But ignorance was no excuse.

If you sin you die. And death it will be even though you might think it is not sin. It is imperative to know the truth concerning matters of the type that Abimelech entered. Paul warned the Thessalonians about the coming of the Lawless one in,

2 Thessalonians 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

So, love the truth—and be saved.

There is a seduction in wrong doing that becomes more attractive as the person engages in the behavior. It is like a narcotic that attracts with the promise of pleasure, and afterward supplies the justification to continue through acceptance of the lie. In a former generation there was a popular expression that said, "Can it be wrong if it feels so right?" Yes, it can. But in this way the adulterer assuages his own conscience and embraces the momentary pleasure of his sin.

For this and other deceptions there is only one antidote. One must believe the truth and take no pleasure in wickedness. And how can one know the truth? Thankfully, for the benefit of ignorant humanity Jesus left His home in glory and brought the

light of truth down to Earth. One must accept the truth to avoid calamity.

Moreover, it is important to realize that what we believe to be true in a fundamental sense can lead to great deception. I am speaking here of worldview. This is a sort of lens through which we view and interpret the world.

Peter wrote in his second letter,

2 Peter 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

Peter points out that the beliefs of the mockers will cause the truth to escape their notice. The belief is characteristic of people who have received public education; i.e., materialist philosophy. Today, many maintain a belief in Uniformitarian philosophy which is the basis of modern geology. This leads to a denial of the Flood of Genesis which destroyed the world. In this case they think they know the truth, but they are in fact deceived, and are ignorant.

The Bible presents a worldview that explains creation, the moral condition of mankind, and the way to salvation. Secular education presents another, often contradictory explanation of origins and the moral condition of mankind. Because these worldviews are so different they come into conflict in almost every phase of life. There is conflict in science, in politics, economics and in the structure of society. Only one of these worldviews can reveal the truth, the other leads to false

conclusions. Jesus endorsed the biblical worldview, and He embodies the truth.

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Jesus told about a man who live in luxury and a beggar at his gate lived in poverty. They both died and the beggar went to a place of comfort, but the rich man went to a place of torment. The rich man entreated Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers about the place of torment after death,

Luke 16:29 “But Abraham \*said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 “But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ 31 “But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

So it is with people today. If they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, or Jesus and the Apostles, they will not be persuaded even though someone rises from the dead. And there are numerous reasons for this unbelief, but among them must be the notion that resurrection is not an experience their worldview permits.

Jewish traditional law with its beliefs and practices led to ignorance.

Paul said concerning the Jews,

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation, 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

A person can be zealous for God, but ignorant. And not just ignorant, but possess an ignorance that motivates them to crucify the Lord, the very One who represents the truth.

Paul described another type of ignorance in his Ephesians letter,

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Ephesians 4:17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

These are people who refuse instruction (they are willfully ignorant). These are justly ignorant because of the hardness of their hearts. A calloused heart is one that the truth just bounces off. It can't penetrate.

There is the story of the bishop in the 1870's who had charge of a denominational college. It was his practice to make an annual visit to the college, so he made his visit and stayed with the president of the college. The bishop boasted his confidence that everything that could be invented had been invented. The college president thought otherwise. "In 50 years," he said, "men will learn to fly like the birds."

The bishop, shocked, replied, "Flight is reserved for angels, and you have been guilty of blasphemy."

The name of the bishop was Milton Wright, and back home he had two small sons Orville and Wilbur.

Prejudice is a difficult thing to overcome.

Still, merely because something comes to us from a recognized authority does not mean that it should be accepted without question.

There is the story of a doctor who had ten patients in the hospital. A day came when he prescribed medicine for all ten and left. The next day he returned and asked the orderly, "How did the patients do last night?"

"Nine died," said the orderly.

"Nine died? But didn't I prescribe for ten?"

"Yes. But one refused the medicine."

Sometimes a person has to refuse the prescription the authorities offer. Even the authorities can be wrong; human authorities, that is.

God isn't. Paul wrote,

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

***Overcome your ignorance. Hold your own faith before God.***

We must humbly receive instruction from God, allow the truth to penetrate our hearts and enter into our innermost being so that it can have its good and beneficial effect.

We must not allow someone else to hold our faith for us.

Don't let a preacher, a priest, a writer or any other public figure decide what you are to believe. Insist on Scriptural proof. Jesus Himself provided the example in his contest with the Devil. Jesus answered three times, "It is written..."<sup>1</sup>

Paul said, (concerning matters of faith),

Romans 14:22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

If you approve something based on what the minister says—and he is wrong—you will be condemned with him.<sup>2</sup>

There is the story of a clergyman who was called by a church to become its minister. He was one of those who had been strongly influenced by critical scholars who downgrade portions

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 4:4, 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 15:14.

of the Scripture as myths. He doubted the authenticity of the whole Bible.

About two years after his coming, the minister visited one of his members who was sick to the point of death. When he learned that the man had a terminal illness, he suggested, "Perhaps you would like me to read the Bible and pray for you?"

"Yes," replied the man as he took his Bible and handed it to the minister. When the minister opened it, he was shocked at what he saw. Many of the pages were torn away, some of the chapters were missing, and a number of verses were actually cut out! It was a badly mangled volume.

So the minister asked, "Haven't you got a better Bible than this?" The dying man replied, "When you came to our church, I believed the entire Bible. But as soon as you told us that certain sections were not true, I removed them. When you said that some stories were probably fiction and referred to them as fables, I tore them out. I think if I had another year under your teaching, I would have nothing but the two covers left."

Such can be the influence of a preacher.

Read the Bible for yourself and become convinced of its truth. Don't depend on the preacher or the teacher for your faith. Have your own conviction before God. Trust God because you know what the Scripture says. God stands behind what He has inspired.

Paul said,

Ephesians 3:3 "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;"



You can understand it. Put the Bible to the proper use. That means: read it.

Paul also said,

Ephesians 5:15 "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Don't rest on somebody else's understanding. Beware of people who say, "I just felt like God spoke to me..." If what follows is in any way a departure from the orthodox Biblical doctrine—don't believe it.

To Timothy Paul said,

1 Timothy 3:14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

Paul wrote so people would know. And acquisition of that knowledge affects one's personal conduct. We should both understand what the will of the Lord is and we ought to know how to conduct ourselves in the household of God.

God does not want a single one of us to be ignorant.

In the Palestinian village of Jish, located in the Galilean hills where Jesus lived and preached, elementary school children are now being instructed in Aramaic. [Aramaic is the language that Jesus spoke.] The children belong mostly to the Maronite Christian community. Maronites still chant their liturgy [their public worship] in Aramaic but only a few understand the prayers they are offering.

So before the instruction in Aramaic the Maronites were conducting a worship service they didn't understand. This should not happen. People ought to understand what they say.

Some people worship in Latin. I wonder if they understand what they are saying. If someone tells you a dark and mysterious religious doctrine ask them to explain it and to offer references as to the source of their insight.

Paul wrote to Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Scriptures are adequate. With them we are equipped for every good work. We have the instructions written down for us in the Bible. There is no need to be ignorant.

### ***Ignore what the crowd says.***

Today the majority of people are mistaken in their understanding of spiritual matters. They are ignorant of God's word.

Many years ago the publishers of Redbook magazine hired one of the top pollsters in the nation to survey a full representation of our seminaries which are supposedly preparing men for Christian service in the Protestant churches. Here are some of the results:

Of the ministers in training, 56 percent rejected the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. 71 percent rejected that there was life after death. 54 percent rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus

Christ. And 98 percent rejected that there would be a personal return of Jesus Christ to this earth.<sup>3</sup>

In all these cases there was a majority that rejected the biblical doctrine. This survey was conducted many years ago, and I dare say that the conditions have not improved since then. Ask yourself, How many people today believe that same sex “marriage” is OK? And believe it in clear contradiction of what the Scriptures say.

Don’t think that merely because a majority of people hold a certain opinion that the opinion is correct. Large numbers of people are ignorant of God’s will. Remember, morality is not determined by referendum or by a poll taken among a society existing at one time. Neither are the fundamental doctrines of the faith subject to revision by humanistic seminaries.

Roy Riegels was the Center who played for California in the Rose Bowl of 1929. It happened for him as it may only happen once in the career of a football player—in this case a lineman. The opposing team fumbled the football at his feet. As the crowd roared he picked up the ball and started to lumber toward the goal line. The more he ran, the louder the crowd roared. The louder they cheered the harder he ran. So loud was the noise that he could not hear the anguished cries of his team mates. Why? Because Riegels ran the wrong way.

His own teammate, a California half-back, whose name was Bennie Lom, caught him and tackled him on about the one yard line, thus preventing a safety against his own team. The California team tried to punt from their one-yard line. But Tech blocked the kick and recovered the ball behind the goal. That recovery scored a two-point safety for Georgia. This proved to be Georgia Tech’s margin of victory.

California lost to Georgia Tech by a score of 8 to 7.

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<sup>3</sup> Survey conducted in 1961.

The moral of the story is: don't be confused by the noise of the crowd. In matters of religion there is a lot of "crowd noise." Ignore it. Read the Scriptures.

After Jesus had risen from the dead, and the good news of the resurrection began to spread, the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent delegations to many lands to preach that the disciples had stolen the body while the guards were asleep.

It was total falsehood.

But many people believed it then, and people still believe it today.

Think. Could the guards have seen anything while they were asleep?

In Luke we read that Jesus said,

Luke 11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

The lawyers were the scribes, the ones who copied the manuscripts. They were supposed know what the Scriptures taught. But they had taken away the key of knowledge. They were preventing people from learning the truth.

Weigh carefully what the "authorities" shout at you. Be like the Bereans,

Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

The Bereans were hearing the preaching of Paul and Silas—and still they verified the message by consulting the Scriptures.

### ***Be wary. Learn for yourself.***

There is the story of the man who took a room at a boarding house. He was happy with the room. And he took his meals there. But he still had a problem. The owner of the boarding

house was a woman who was a really good cook and she could make excellent pies. The problem was that she cut the pie into eight pieces and the boarder wanted more. He tried several subtle maneuvers to get more pie, but none of them worked—the cost of the meals was of course figured into the board money he paid.

He knew that she was a religious woman, and that she was devoted to the Bible. The trouble was she couldn't read and so she had other people read passages from the Bible to her.

So, he devised a plan. He would read the Bible to her. One evening, during one of his Bible readings, he slipped in this verse, "Whoso cutteth the pie in more than four pieces is in danger of the hell of fire."

Now any serious reader of the Bible knows that there is no such verse. And what he did was one of the worst of deceptions. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of the following evening's supper, he enjoyed a larger piece of pie.

The morals in this story are several. What the man did was an abuse of his privileges and much worse. He corrupted the Word of God for his own advantage. In this he made himself a liar, and endangered his soul.<sup>4</sup> The woman would have been better served if she could have read the Scriptures for herself. Regrettably, she could not read and that is a condition of risk—given the presence of religious opportunist in the world.

Do you know what is worse than being in a position where someone else has to read the scriptures to you? The answer is: knowing how to read, but refusing to do it for yourself. Or knowing how, but depending on a preacher to read and interpret for you. It is much better that one develop the skills for reading the Scriptures for himself. If that is not possible then beware of the risk.

Paul said,

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<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18, 19.

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2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

- Do this because some men are unscrupulous.
- Some are just plain ignorant.

The disciples once spoke to Jesus about His rebuke of the Pharisees teaching on hand washing,

Matthew 15:12 Then the disciples \*came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

- “Both” fall.
- It is no excuse for someone to say, “But my pastor told me...”

Paul also said,

1 Cor. 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God.

There is the story of the woman from Denver, Colorado who went into a jewelry store looking for a necklace. “I’d like to have a gold cross,” she told the man behind the counter. The man bent and looked over the stock he had in the display case and then said, “Do you want a plain one, or do you want one with the little man on it?”

Are you kidding me? “...the little man”?

A lot of times we assume people know about God and spiritual things. That is not always true. Nowadays, “...some have no knowledge of God.” We do not live in a Christian,

Bible reading society. We live in a heathen society. Act accordingly.

Proverbs tells us that we should choose carefully the ones with whom we associate. Our companions wield a tremendous influence over what we know.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Therefore, exert the effort required to overcome your ignorance. We all have to do this. It pays dividends toward your spiritual life.

Overcoming ignorance might require humility.

There is the story of the young Filipino who traveled to Chicago. Having arrived in the city he registered at the Hotel Sherman. Later he took a walk to see the city. He became lost. Unfortunately he failed to inform himself about the hotel and its location. He was ignorant of the name, location, and appearance of the hotel, and so was unable to find it again. Consequently, he selected another room in the Hotel Astor. Unwilling to acknowledge to the authorities that he was lost, he tried for five days to find the place where he had left his baggage.

Unsuccessful, he finally appealed to the authorities. The police soon found his original registration place, and informed him that for five days he had been living next door to the place where he had left his baggage. Although so near, he lost five days' peace of mind, five days' time, and five days' use of his baggage all because he would not tell an officer that he was LOST.

Sometimes the thing that the lost are looking for is right next to them.

The priests and Sadducees placed Peter under arrest, and brought him to trial in Jerusalem, asking him "By what power,

and in what name have you done this?" (for he had been preaching Jesus).<sup>5</sup>

Jesus and the apostles had been in Jerusalem and in the Temple itself teaching, and these Sadducees did not know whom they represented.

Acts 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Jesus has an effect on people that is noticeable.

Jesus said,

John 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Being a disciple of Jesus is not a one-time reading of His word. It requires continuing in His word.

Peter said that keeping the words of Jesus provides everything that pertains to life.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these he has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

In recent years the people of the western nations have abandoned Christianity, along with the wisdom and instruction

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<sup>5</sup> Acts 4:7.



that comes from diligent scriptural study. Beginning with movement toward rationalism in Germany and with Deism in England, Modernism now permeates every major denomination of what is called Christianity. The control of many major denominations is in the hands of willfully ignorant and ungodly men and women. So-called Christian leaders boldly and blatantly deny the Virgin Birth of Christ, the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and Atoning (Work) of Christ, the Literal Resurrection of Christ, and of course they ridicule the Second Coming of Christ.

Among the modernistic preachers is an Arlington, Virginia, minister who said, “We have closed our minds to such trivial considerations as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe that nonsense, we have no objections, but we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb 20 centuries old.”

This minister does not know it but spiritually he is like the boy who crawled out on the limb and then sawed himself off. He has cut himself off from the tree.

### ***The consequences of rejecting the truth***

1 Timothy 1:19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

C.E. Macartney told a story about a shipwreck off the coast of England many years ago. He said, on the stormy southwest coast of England there is a church whose towers are silent. No bells ring for the living or toll for the dead. There is a legend that a ship was once beating its way along that shore, having on board bells that were designed for this church building of Bottreaux, England. A sailor lad, heard the neighboring bells of

Tintagel sounding over the sea, and he thanked God for the favor that would soon bring them safe to port.

But the Skipper was a godless man, and he told the young sailor to thank the steersman, the good ship, and the ready sail. As if in answer to his blasphemy, the sea rose and the waves dashed the ship and its godless master on the rocks. Now they say that the bells which went down with that ship may be heard above the surge of the ocean as it breaks on the iron cliffs, pealing out the invitation of the Church, the invitation of God, the coming of death, and after death the judgment.

As it happened to that captain and his ship there are many in this life who suffer shipwreck because they willfully forget that the course of their life is in the hands of God, and that only by consulting the chart that He supplies may they reach the safety of a sheltering harbor.

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation principle on which Christianity stands. Many of the larger denominations have abandoned the foundations of Christianity for a social gospel, which they consider more important.

It is a return to ignorance.

Paul's Sermon on Mars Hill promotes the knowledge of God,

Acts 17:22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

Many of today's ministers and preachers are doing the opposite of what Paul was doing. They are promoting ignorance.

Paul went on to say,

Acts 17:30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Salvation, forgiveness of sins, and future judgment all depend on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In the light of what Paul preached could the resurrection be considered a “trivial consideration”? Hardly.

Willful ignorance of the work of Christ will lead to ruin.

Jesus said,

Revelation 22:12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 13 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Don't join those outside.

Come to Christ and learn.