

119

MINISTRIES

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Theological Junk Food

Everybody loves junk food. It’s tasty, addictive, and you can’t seem to get enough of it. Just imagine relaxing on the sofa while eating an entire bag of your favorite salty, fattening potato chips. Sadly, many of us would have to admit that we’ve done exactly that.

We don’t have to be reminded of how junk food is bad for us. Not only have we heard it from doctors and we’ve seen the documentaries, but also we’ve experienced it. We’ve all had times in our lives when we’ve eaten too much junk food and we were left feeling bloated, tired, and sick. That’s because we all know, despite how good it tastes and how addictive it is, that there’s ultimately no substance to junk food. It offers no real nutritional value. And we know that if we eat only junk food, we’re going to lead very unhealthy lives.

Well, did you know that there’s also such a thing as theological junk food? Theological junk food would fit all the characteristics of actual junk food, but instead of affecting your physical life, it affects your spiritual life.

Theological junk food might seem harmless. For many, it even appears to be much more exciting and addictive than solid biblical teaching. But like regular junk food, the problem is that it has no real value in our lives. And even worse, it causes the body of Messiah to be unhealthy and sick.

So what is theological junk food? Scripture actually speaks of it in a number of places:

1 Timothy 1:3-7

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, **nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations** rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, **have wandered away into vain discussion**, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Unfortunately there are many believers today to whom this passage could apply. Rather than devoting themselves to the doctrine of the apostles, which is grounded in love and a sincere faith, they have wandered away and devoted themselves to different doctrines. Notice how Paul characterizes these “different doctrines.”

- 1) They are called “myths,” which comes from the Greek word *mythos*. In this context, the word is used to refer to gnostic errors. Gnosticism puts a heavy emphasis on “secret knowledge” and mysteries, hence that Paul says these myths “promote speculations.” In other words, these different doctrines are not grounded in anything solid that can be proven biblically. They are speculative, empty, having no substance.
- 2) These different doctrines serve to distract believers from learning and applying true, biblical doctrine.
- 3) Those who promote these different doctrines desire to be teachers of the Torah, but they don’t understand what they’re talking about. Therefore, they promote speculative “secret knowledge” and drag other believers into “vain discussion.”

We are also told that these different doctrines do “no good,” they cause quarrels within the community, they ruin those who listen, they lead to ungodliness, and they are unprofitable and worthless:

2 Timothy 2:14

Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

2 Timothy 2:16

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness

2 Timothy 2:23

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels

It’s pretty clear that these “different doctrines,” which lead to pointless and vain speculations, are not good for the body of Messiah—hence the multiple warnings from Scripture!

This is not just a problem that existed only in the first century. While Gnosticism-proper disappeared centuries ago, you can still see the spirit that was behind Gnosticism in operation today. Too many believers are obsessed with “secret knowledge” and empty teachings that only promote wild speculations. Too many believers still have a craving for theological junk food—brain candy—something sensational, exciting, but ultimately lacking in real substance.

Another problem that we face is that many questionable teachers are all too willing and eager to feed this craving:

2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears **they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions**, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

You could argue that this problem is even worse today than it was in the first century. Why? Because now you have the Internet. Information spreads far and wide at a more rapid pace than ever before. The

doctrinal supermarket is stocked full of things to stuff our faces with, giving us all of the theological junk food we want!

Not only that, but Social Media creates an incentive for content creators to appeal to our appetite for theological junk food. How is that? Because the more clicks and views someone receives and the more successful the content is, it results in more followers, or perhaps even more ad-revenue. So rather than content creators focusing on providing quality content, many of them are focused on making something that sells. You see this with everything, including Bible-based teaching, sadly enough.

Those are a couple of the top reasons for everything being hyped up and sensationalized. Everything is branded as “shocking!” or an “amazing new discovery!” “You will NOT believe what the Catholic Church has been hiding from all of us!”

It appeals to our emotions. It makes us excited.

However, much of the time, content that is branded in this way is nothing more than theological junk food. We eat it up, and keep craving more and more, because it never satisfies...and because people crave it, it is everywhere.

Another dangerous aspect of theological junk food is this: Since it never satisfies, people get bored and quickly move on to the next new and exciting, but ultimately worthless, doctrine. Thus, false teachers who sell theological junk food are always pressured to deliver, leading to even crazier and crazier teachings.

Some people even end up abandoning the Messiah or becoming atheists because they never had a solid foundation on biblical truth. They’ve been fed on theological junk food their entire spiritual lives, and after realizing what they’ve been taught is worthless, they throw out the baby with the bathwater. They reject biblical faith all together because false teachers have exploited it and associated Biblical doctrine with so much junk.

Theological junk food fails to deliver us what we really need—that is, solid biblical food on the foundation of the Messiah and His Torah. To use Paul’s analogy, we need meat. Even milk is better than spiritual junk food.

So what can we do to avoid getting sucked in to the vortex of this garbage theology?

The first step is to be aware of the problem. The apostle Paul felt like this was a big enough problem that he brought it up and warned us multiple times throughout his letters. Therefore, like Paul’s first century warnings, hopefully this teaching highlights this issue so that you are aware of the dangers. We’re seeing some of the same issues today, so like Paul, we’re sending out a warning.

What are we to look out for? What are the symptoms of following theological junk food?

As we mentioned earlier, Scripture describes several of the damaging spiritual effects of having an obsession with theological junk food. Therefore, if you notice any of the following bad fruit constantly emerging from a particular source, you might need to consider the possibility that they are feeding you junk food.

1) Quarreling within the community.

Theological junk food often incites intense, unnecessary arguments and discord. Scripture says that God “hates” those who sow discord among brothers. In fact, it’s called an abomination to him:

Proverbs 6:16-19

There are six things **that the Lord (YHWH) hates, seven that are an abomination to him:** haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and **one who sows discord among brothers.**

In Romans, Paul warns us to avoid those who have an unhealthy obsession with controversy and who are constantly causing division. He even goes so far as to say they do not serve the Messiah, but only themselves:

Romans 16:17

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

Theological junk food salesmen thrive on controversy and division. They appeal to your emotions and cause you to be overly excited or outraged. It’s good for business. It’s good for attention and ego. It’s good for clicks and views. But it is not good for those in the faith. Our collective spiritual health suffers.

You’ll notice that this division serves as a distraction from the doctrine of the apostles, and that’s why Paul felt the need to continually address this problem in the Scriptures. That leads to the next point to look out for.

2) Neglecting for the Gospel and the weightier matters of the Torah due to distraction.

Just like we often prefer junk food to health food in the physical realm, the same is true in the spiritual realm. Controversial pet doctrines often become an idol and an unhealthy obsession. It becomes a passion that eclipses their love and passion for the Father and brothers and sisters in the faith, and they are not satisfied until everyone they know adopts the same passion.

Judging by how some people completely gush over their favorite pet doctrines, you’d think that those doctrines had taken on flesh and died for their sins. They’re obsessed. They wake up in the morning and it’s all they think about.

Perhaps you are someone who has allowed a particular speculative doctrine to become your idol. The first step to correcting the problem is to admit that you have one. That’s the goal of this teaching—to help believers realize if they’ve filled up on theological junk food so they can get their priorities straight. It’s only out of love and concern for the body of Messiah that we’re sharing any of this.

Regarding getting distracted, as we mentioned before, the reason a lot of us get sucked into theological junk food is that false teachers are constantly trying to stuff it down our throats. This is something to watch out for. If a ministry effort consists of every other communication being about the shape of the Earth, the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, nuances of the biblical calendar, the Illuminati, aliens, etc...then that is a ministry focused on theological junk food.

If you notice certain teachers or ministries that primarily focus on promoting one particular controversial

doctrine at every opportunity, it's perhaps time to consider learning from someone else. Seek out edifying sources that focus on having a well-rounded ministry defending and promoting Yeshua and the Torah.

This is not to say that we cannot entertain healthy discussions about such controversial topics—we have, and we do—but we need to have our priorities straight. We need to keep the main thing, the main thing. Yeshua and the apostles spoke of and emphasized the weightier matters, and we would do well to follow their example.

Some might ask about a few of the teachings that 119 Ministries has produced over the years. Haven't we, ourselves, released teachings on speculative topics that aren't hugely relevant to how we live as believers? Therefore, aren't we being hypocritical here?

You'll have to judge for yourselves whether or not the resources we put out are of value to you and the body of Messiah. And just as we encourage you to test other ministries according to the standards we've outlined here, we invite you to test us out as well.

Our primary focus at 119 Ministries is to exalt Yeshua and teach the Torah. We may not be perfect, but that is why we exist.

And while it's true that we've done a few teachings on speculative topics over the years, one distinction we hope you'll notice is that we're clear about the fact that they are speculative. We don't try to sell you anything. We don't try to sensationalize our teachings in order to emotionally manipulate you out of thinking critically. Our intention is that you don't simply believe us, but you think critically and test what we say, especially when it comes to controversial topics.

Moreover, our heart is not to be controversial merely for the sake of controversy. Our goal is not to get clicks and view and be popular. We don't want outrage and drama, we're tired of it. We are sure that a lot of people are tired of it. We address controversial topics in order to offer a balanced perspective and therefore, hopefully *resolve* controversy, not add to it.

So what can we all be doing to bring glory to the Father instead of investing so much energy in seeking out and promoting theological junk food?

Paul contrasts these “different doctrines” with the doctrine that we've received from Yeshua and the apostles. So the answer is to look to the example of Yeshua and the apostles? What did they focus on? What did they teach?

It's interesting to note that you never see Yeshua or the apostles even mention the shape of the earth. In the New Testament account they never engage in a debate over the calendar or when to keep the feast days. Not once. And we know that there were calendric differences and contrary beliefs in the first century.

Yeshua and the apostles were focused on the Gospel. They were focused on walking out the Torah from the foundation of love for God and love for their neighbor. Those are the things that truly matter. Those are the things that truly make a difference in this world for God's Kingdom.

We just want to be clear that we only bring all of this up out of love and concern for the body of the Messiah. We truly want to see God's Kingdom made manifest on earth through His people. We see an

obsession with theological junk food as a hindrance to the work of God.

We are also saddened to see gifted teachers waste so much time promoting theological junk food. Not only do we believe that they are ultimately hurting the body of Messiah, but also missing out on their calling as teachers. The body of Messiah does not need junk food salesmen. It does not need showmanship. It needs more good, faithful, humble teachers of the Word to equip believers with the means to glorify the Lord and walk out the Torah.

Let's get back to the work of the Kingdom. Let's bring people into the faith, not drive them away. Let's encourage others in the walk, not discourage and frustrate. Let's connect and grow with others, not divide and cause discord. Let's prepare the way for the coming of our Messiah.

We hope that you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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