

Children of Light

By Jani Lynn Warner

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them;⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” - Eph. 5:6-11.

We live in dark times, surrounded by lies and deceptions. As children of light, how do we escape deception? God warns us in Ephesians that we are to “let no man deceive us with vain words.” When I read that verse I think, “What a responsibility God has given us!” I also remember that this is nothing new. After all, Eve let Satan deceive her.

At one time, I sympathized with those who have been deceived. I used to think, “Well, it’s not their fault, is it?” But I began to realize that when we are deceived, we may actually be more at fault than we think. The reason Eve believed Satan was because she really didn’t believe God. John states, “...he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36b)

As children of light, we must pray, watch and guard ourselves from being deceived. God has given us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to help us. I try to remember to ask God to show me truth and life when I read the Bible. But it shouldn’t end there. I need to pray for His discernment on every subject in whatever medium information is presented. We call this medium of information the media.

Since we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, God can show us if something is unfruitful and will hinder His light in us. We can ask Him to help us understand and evaluate what the presenter, author, or artist wants us to believe, to feel, or to do. Do they want to help us fix our eyes on Jesus or fix our eyes on the world and the god of this world who blinds “the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” – 2 Cor 4:4.

More forms of media surround us today than at any other time in the known history of the world. We have access to radio, TV, internet, CD’s, videos, videogames, advertisements, billboards, etc. Let’s guard ourselves from the wrong fellowship with media.

Many times in Scripture God warns us about idols made of wood which cannot speak or hear. In Romans 1:22-23, we are told that unthankful people who didn’t glorify God “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened.” They “changed the glory of an incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts and to creeping things.” Today we see images moving and speaking everywhere - on video, computer, and TV screens. Images are given words on billboards, packaging, and book jackets. From whose heart do these images arise—a heart filled with the light of God, or a foolish, darkened heart? What do the authors and artists want us to believe, to feel, and to do?

Finally, let’s pray for boldness to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. In our culture, we are encouraged to tolerate many things that are against God’s Law. When we tolerate something, we do not object to it. We need to remember to ask ourselves this question: What are we being asked to believe, feel, and do by tolerating ideas and behaviors that we know from Scripture are harmful?

Many times I have found myself sympathizing with an individual or movie character who is portrayed in a difficult situation. But feeling sympathetic, patient, or longsuffering in such situations may open the door to deception. We may think we are showing Christian virtues, but instead we may be tolerating sin. Asking God to help us guard our emotions at all times is essential.

Practical Exercise:

Use a notebook, 3x5cards, or computer to exercise discernment when you view or hear material.

Ask God for understanding. What does the author or artist want you to believe, feel, and do. In all media, there is a message for the viewer. In God's media, the Bible, that Message is His character and His Good News, the Gospel. Evaluate the messages, whether they are in words or pictures. Are you being asked to fellowship with light, darkness, or a mixture of light and darkness?

Decide whether to accept or reject the material. What is your "fellowship?"

This is also an instructive habit to begin with children, including very young children. But whatever our age, we are all children of God and need practice!