

Jonestown Bible Church

14 Silvertown Road, Jonestown, PA 17038
717-865-4732 www.jonestownbiblechurch.org

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. James 1:5-6

January 19, 2023

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You have heard the phrase, "don't judge a book by its cover." How true it is when it comes to things in this world that can be harmful to our Christian walk. On our way to the Celestial City as we travel through the garden of this world, there are dangers planted along the way by the enemy of our souls, Satan. He will always make what is most harmful to us look appealing and safe; *And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light*, 2 Corinthians 11:14.

We learn this truth from the life of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah. Jehoshaphat was a righteous king but on one occasion he was deceived by a poisonous relationship. He had nothing in common with wicked King Ahab who reigned over Israel in the North, but Jehoshaphat makes an unwise decision. Jehoshaphat begins a very dangerous friendship with wicked King Ahab by allowing his son, Jehoram, to marry Athaliah, Ahab's and Jezebel's daughter (2 Chronicles 18:1). Through this marriage Jehoshaphat had a relationship with a very wicked king. Ahab then asks Jehoshaphat to join him against his fight with Syria; *Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in war,"* 2 Chronicles 18:3). Jehoshaphat unwisely said yes, thinking he had a friend in Ahab. Was he really just like Ahab and were his people just like Ahab's people? Jehoshaphat made an unwise decision and was in a very dangerous situation. When he was about to be killed he cried out to the Lord and God rescued him and spared his life.

Sometimes we will make unwise decisions and get ourselves into dangerous situations. God sees everything we do. We can call upon Him even in times when we have not made wise choices. God confronts Jehoshaphat about this sin through the prophet; *And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord, and by doing so bring wrath on yourself from the Lord? But there is some good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God,* 2 Chronicles 19:2-3.

The Alnwick Garden in Northumberland England is a beautiful attraction which is the home to the world's largest Tai Haku Cherry Orchard. Visitors are encouraged to touch, smell and even nibble a berry or two as they stroll through Alnwick Castle's 26 acres of shrubs, trees and flowers-until they reach the Poison Garden. To enter the poison garden of Alnwick you must first fetch a guide to unlock the black iron gates, which are decorated with a white skull and crossbones and a worrying message: "these plants can kill" inspired by the poisonous gardens. The Duchess, Jane Percy, is an unlikely patron. In 1995, her husband unexpectedly became the 12th Duke of Northumberland following his brother's death and Alnwick castle fell into their families care.

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Roaming the elaborate gardens, the newly minted Duchess decided to transform an overgrown, neglected section into something that was at once both traditional and dangerous. The Duchess of Northumberland created this poisonous garden in 2005 dedicating it entirely to poisonous or narcotic flora.

The poison garden now sits nestled among acres of greenery dotted with water sculptures, a cherry orchard, a bamboo labyrinth, and an enormous treehouse. This carefully curated garden contains about 100 plants that have the power to stimulate, intoxicate, sicken, or kill. Guides detail their dangerous properties while enforcing the strict "no touching, no smelling" rules. Poppies cannabis, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and deadly strychnine are among the innocent looking greenery. Because of the danger poised by the floor, some can kill or cause sickness just through touch. Some plants are caged, and the garden is secured under a 24 hour security watch. Some people occasionally faint from inhaling toxic fumes while walking in the garden.

The Lord has promised the believer wisdom in discerning that which would be poison to our spiritual life; *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind,* James 1:-5-6.

Let us ask the Lord for wise discernment in our relationships, our activities and life decisions. He has promised to give us spiritual eyes to see with and ears to hear with.

In Our Savior's Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pastor Larry".

Pastor Larry