

A Biblical Reflection on False Teachings and Spiritual Discernment

1 Timothy 4:7 (ESV):

"Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness."

The Apostle Paul gave Timothy a clear and direct instruction: reject "old wives' tales" and instead, discipline yourself in godliness. These tales also called *myths* or *superstitions* may sound innocent or even wise, but they are dangerous distractions from the truth of the gospel.

What Are These "Old Wives' Tales"?

These are sayings, beliefs, or customs passed down through generations that seem to carry truth on the surface but are, in fact, baseless and unbiblical. Almost every culture has them. Examples include:

- "If you urinate without spitting on the ground, your mother's breasts will swell."
- "A baby who looks into a mirror won't grow teeth."
- "If someone jumps over you, you will stop growing."
- "If a girl sits in the doorway, she won't get married."

- “Pointing your finger at a grave will bring death to a parent unless you bite it.”

And the list goes on: albino superstitions, cooking while singing, crying into cooking pots, etc.

While some of these may seem humorous or harmless, others create deep fear and even cause people **including Christians** to act irrationally. Unfortunately, these beliefs have infiltrated the Church. Some pastors and so called “apostles” now promote similar ideas as spiritual truth.

A Real Example: The “Umbrella Tree” Myth

One popular example is a teaching that claims planting a certain tree called the *umbrella tree* in your yard invites curses, including the death of the father, poverty, sickness, and family division. A so called “apostle” widely circulated this teaching on social media.

Sadly, many believed it. A woman I knew listened to this message with great fear, and soon after, she cut down the tree from her home. Others did the same including my own family motivated by fear, not faith.

But what does the Bible say?

Biblical Discernment in the Last Days

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (ESV):

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.”

Paul called these superstitions *demonic teachings* not just harmless stories. When people begin to attribute spiritual power to trees, animals, or objects, they slowly drift away from the living God and toward **idolatry**. They no longer seek God’s power or wisdom; instead, they try to fix their problems through natural things plants, rituals, objects which eventually opens the door to false worship.

Are Trees Evil? What Does Scripture Say?

The Bible is clear:

"Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." 1 Timothy 4:4 (ESV)

No tree or plant is inherently cursed. To say that a particular tree causes death or poverty is **to ignore the root cause of human suffering SIN** and to assign spiritual power to something God created good.

If trees cause economic hardship, then why are families all over the world suffering without those trees present? Why do both rich and poor have them? The problem isn't the tree it's the heart.

The Real Enemy: Fear and False Teachings

Today, even Christians fear minor accidents, animals, or dreams saying they're "under witchcraft" every time something goes wrong.

- See a black cat? It's a witch.
- Step on a lizard? You've been cursed.
- Sneezing means someone is speaking evil about you.

This mindset keeps believers in bondage. And **fear** is not from God.

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV):

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control.”

Satan wants people consumed with fear so that their focus is no longer on Christ but on his lies. This results in spiritual weakness, bondage, and idol worship even unknowingly.

Paul's Warning to Timothy About These Times

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (ESV):

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching... they will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Timothy was told to *reject* such myths, and *rebuke* them in the Church. Today, we must do the same.

What Does the Bible Truly Emphasize?

Not stories of witchcraft. Not suspicious animals. Not cursed trees.

But rather:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." Colossians 3:16

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord..." 2 Peter 3:18

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." Matthew 6:33

Sadly, some preachers now spend more time teaching on demons, witchcraft, and fear than they do on Christ, grace, and love. This gives believers a *deep fear of Satan* but *shallow knowledge of God*. They avoid black cats but don't fear sin.

A Warning from Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 16:21 (ESV):

"You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord your God."

This speaks of **idolatry**, not landscaping. When people start treating certain trees or places as spiritually powerful (for good or evil), they begin slipping into pagan practices.

Even pagans didn't begin by worshiping trees. They *first* believed trees had some mysterious power. Then they began making *requests* to those trees. Eventually, they bowed to them in reverence.

That is how **idol worship begins** little by little.

False Prophets Targeting the Vulnerable

Paul also warned that false teachers would prey especially on **women** who are burdened and emotionally vulnerable:

2 Timothy 3:5-7 (ESV):

“... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”

True Spiritual Fruit vs. Demonic Fruit

False teachings bring:

- Fear
- Suspicion
- Worry

- Division
- Mental torment

But the Holy Spirit brings:

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV):

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control...”

When your heart is filled with **God’s Word**, you become peaceful, hopeful, and confident not fearful and superstitious.

Know God Deeply

Many are being led astray, not by Satan appearing in frightening forms, but by *false teachings that sound spiritual*. Even if you are born again, you will be vulnerable to deception if you are not grounded in **God’s Word**.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6

Jesus never taught us to fear plants, animals, or circumstances. He didn't call us to memorize superstitions. He called us to **walk with the Father**, to **abide in Him**, and to **seek first His Kingdom**.

Even now, the same demonic spirit that led ancient pagans into tree worship is trying to enter the Church through fear and myth. Be watchful.

Romans 8:38-39 (ESV):

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If you belong to Christ, no tree, no lizard, no flower, and no sneeze has power over your destiny.

"Know God deeply and you will have peace."

Not by knowing the devil, but by knowing Christ.

Be rooted in the Word. Be free from fear.

God bless you.

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