

## 4. Multiple Choice

### Bloodlines – Series

Ps. Wareru – 1 october 2017

### Sermon Notes

Gen.3:1-7



This last week, our groups discussed chapter 3 of Simama, and we should have begun reading chapter 4. But it's not too late to start if you haven't!

Pastor's prayer at the prayer tent/front after the service...

We're going through a series called **Bloodline: Winning Freedom For My Family**. Most of us are also going through this experience together in our small groups. The apostle Paul warned us in **Ephesians 4:27** that we should not give the enemy a **foothold**. Through this experience, we are identifying the major doors where the enemy has gained a foothold in our families, and then through prayer, we are kicking him out and we're closing those doors. The two doors we have learnt to close so far are the doors of pride and the door of lies about ourselves and God. Today, we want to look at doorway number 3. Are you ready? I love it!

We live in a cosmopolitan world. You see, many of our parents grew up in a village, and they only encountered people of other ethnic groups when they became a lot older. But we –

- We grew up and went to school with friends from different ethnic groups.
- We work with people not just from different parts of the country, but from all over the world.
- We experience technology that would seem like magic to our grandparents.
- And – this part I really like - we have a much more exciting diet than our ancestors ever did.

Imagine growing up in those days! Depending on what part of the country you were from, you would have been restricted to

- Beans & cassava OR
- Posho & fish OR
- Matooke & beans, OR
- Beef + Kalo OR

But today, we are not limited in our choices, we can have it all! Plus other exciting foods from other parts of the world like fries & pizza, lasagna & black forest cake, spaghetti & meatballs... you get the picture! We really have it good, don't we? It's so nice to have choices! I mean, why would you want to be limited to one kind of food when you can have it all? Why would you want to eat ala carte when you can afford the buffet! Life is so much better when you can eat what you like, when you like! And all the people who like good food said... AMEN!

Apart from different foods and cultures and technologies, we are also exposed to different philosophies, and faiths and ways of thinking. Nowadays, it's common to find someone going to bible study one evening and then chanting a mantra in yoga class the next morning. At work, we go on a New Age team building session where we walk on hot coals chanting 'ice cold' to build confidence and focus. Over the weekend, we attend the Landmark forum to help us become better people. We read self-help books to help us achieve our full human potential; books like the 'The Secret', where we are taught to practice the laws of attraction. I mean, what's wrong with a Christian adding on all these value-adding practices, so long as they help you to become a better person?

You see, just like with cultures or foods, it's easy to ask ourselves when it comes to spiritual things, why settle for ala carte when I can have the buffet? Who says one way is better than the other? Isn't that just a function of where you were born? What if you'd been born in a different culture? Isn't it intolerant to say that your way is better than someone else's way? These are common questions today. And so we have become a generation that believes in and practices buffet Christianity.

And you know, this whole idea of a buffet spirituality is not a new one. Amazingly, the bible talks about it right from the beginning. Turn with me to Gen 3:1-7 and let's see where it all begun from.

#### READ GEN.3:1-7 NIV

Picture this. Adam and Eve live in a perfect paradise that was custom built for them. They have a perfect relationship with each other, with nature and with God. This is not even about religion - it's about all of life! They are completely living out their purpose and all their work is meaningful and satisfying. They have full access to everything God ever made, except one tree. God has warned them that they must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did this, then they would die.

And that's where the enemy sees his opportunity. Taking the form of a serpent, he approaches Eve with a threefold strategy. His plan is to make her question God, reject God and ultimately replace God (repeat). Here's how he plays it...

1. **Question God** – v.1 'Did God really say 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden?' The enemy approached Eve with what sounded like an innocent question from a concerned observer, concerned about her wellbeing. But if you look at the question carefully, you'll notice something small but very important. The enemy is exaggerating what God said. God had never said they must not eat from any tree in the garden! But the enemy is very clever. He's trying to focus her attention on the prohibition so that she forgets everything else that God has given them. The garden was full of trees! Gen.2:9 tells us that there were all kinds of trees in Eden,

some that were pretty to look at and others that were good for food. But the devil wanted Eve to forget that and to focus on the one God had said they shouldn't eat. 'Why would God want to deny you of something so unilaterally? Why didn't he consult you? Isn't that a bit unfair? Don't you find that a bit strange? Maybe even a bit intolerant?'

Eve's reaction in v.2 tells us that she fell for the trick. 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die".' Wait a minute! Did you notice that Eve also exaggerated? God nowhere said anything about not touching the tree! What she is saying here is 'God is not as mean as you're saying, but come to think of it, by the way, killing someone for eating a fruit – that sounds harsh – in fact, it's definitely intolerant!'

Now **tolerance** is a big word today. One of the worst things you can be labeled is intolerant. In the past, tolerance meant I accept my neighbor, despite the fact that they believe something that I know is wrong. Today however, tolerance means that you can't label what someone else thinks as right or wrong. I mean, how dare you think that your way is right and someone else's is wrong?

But there's something we need to be aware of, when it comes to this concept of tolerance. NOT ALL ISSUES ARE THE SAME! For example, imagine you like bright colors like me. And so one day you're dressed in your favorite brightly colored shirt and you're out flossing your swag when your friend comes up and says 'I've never liked how you dress'. Your eyes narrow and you ask 'why?' The person says, 'bright colors are a sign that you're crying out for attention. You are clearly a very selfish and needy person! I suggest that you start wearing pale colors that blend in more. That's a sign of maturity'. What would you say to them? **DISCUSS** 'How dare you force your preferences on me! How intolerant of you! How can you not see that these are just different choices!'

But let me give you a different example. Supposing you're about to buy a house at the bottom of a hill; and you love this house. Then your friend comes up to you as you're admiring it and says 'even though it's dry right now, this is actually a riverbed. You'd be foolish to buy this house, because when the river floods, you will have put your whole family in jeopardy. You'd better buy a house up the hill; that's what I've done'. Would you call them intolerant? Probably not. You'd research to find out if their words were true and if they were, you'd change your buying decision! In fact in this case, you wouldn't call them intolerant, you'd call them caring.

What the enemy does is that he takes a house in a flood valley decision and makes it a shirt color decision, so that God is no longer caring but intolerant! And why would you want to follow a God like that?

The enemy is still doing the same today. For example, he is asking many of us, 'Did God really say that sex was bad?' And being good Christians we reply, 'no He didn't. But... BY THE WAY, creating sex and then making me stay single so I may never enjoy it! That's harsh! Did God really say that Christians must stay stuck in a loveless marriage? Not really; but *yenye*, forcing me to stay married to that woman when she's not meeting my needs... That sounds very unfair!' As you begin to focus on the prohibition, you begin to question God and to look for a second opinion, and that's exactly what Eve did. The second thing the enemy did is he caused Eve to...

2. **Reject God** – v. 4 'You will not surely die' – Now that Eve is entertaining doubts, the enemy moves in with alternative facts. Not only is your God narrow and intolerant, but he is also forcing his choices down your throat!

Why would you allow someone else to limit your choices? You must reject any voice that tells you that you can't get what you want when you want it!

The enemy continues to say those same words to us... *'You will not surely die'*... Today, it's fashionable to reject any absolutes. You can believe whatever you believe so long as you don't try to restrict my choices. After all, who are you to judge me? The cardinal sin of our age is judging. Who are you to tell me that my choices are not right? That I shouldn't watch the programs I want to watch or hang out with the friends I want to hang out with? That's why we want to be with friends who only tell us positive things about ourselves. We want to worship in a church that makes us feel good about ourselves. We don't want a God who puts any limits on our choices. That's why we mix and match: Jesus and Oprah, and witchcraft and New Age. We want a positive, feel-good spirituality that doesn't demand much from us. And that's what you find on TV today, sadly even on Christian channels.

One of my pastor friends shared how someone asked him, 'why should I bother coming to your church? I can stream any preacher in the world on my HD TV on Sunday morning with surround sound!' We've created our own faith that about inspiring me and making me happy. We reject anything that makes any demands on us, and we only follow what works for us.

And so the enemy causes Eve to question God and then to reject God. The third thing the he does is he causes Eve to...

3. **Replace God** – v.5 *'For God knows when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'*. In other words, why not become your own God and determine your own destiny?! Why not do what feels good for you? *'Take control!'* Once we reject God, the next step is to replace God. Now the enemy is the master of half-truths. It's true that we are created in God's image. And in that way, we are already like God. But he takes this truth and distorts it. Having helped us reject the God who created us in His image, the enemy now tempts us to create God in our own image. Instead of us looking like God, now our god looks like us!

And that's the role of religion. Religion is any system that helps humans connect with the divine. At the heart, it's true that all religions are the same. Have you heard the story from India about the blind men who were each trying to describe an elephant? The one who touched the leg thought an elephant was like a column. The one who touched the tail thought an elephant was like a rope. The one who touched the trunk thought it was like a tree branch. The one who touched the ear thought it was like a hard fan. The one who felt the belly felt the elephant is like a wall. And the one who touched the tusks said the elephant is like a solid pipe. The usual meaning of the story is that all of them were in some way correct from their limited perspective, and in the same way, all religions are in some way are correct from their limited perspective!

It's a clever story. My only problem with it is that all of the blind men were wrong! The elephant is not anything like a branch, or a wall, or a pipe. That's why the bible tells us that religion doesn't work, because none of us has the capacity to discover God on our own terms. And so, if I was to use the language of the story, what if the elephant knew that none of the blind men would ever be able to accurately describe him? What if he turned himself into an Indian man? And what if, speaking to them in language they understood, he showed them that they were actually all wrong by describing what an elephant truly looks like? That's the bible story! You see, none of us has the capacity to discover God on his/her own terms. Not even Christians! And that's why God

comes to us and reveals Himself in a form we can understand, as Jesus, to show us who God truly is. I'm not just a relative concept that you decide on, depending on where you come from - this is who I truly am!

The third doorway that the enemy uses to gain legal access to our lives is actually the oldest one, and it's the doorway of alternative spirituality. When we insist on following our own spiritual path, it may feel good at first. It gives us control; it works for us. The bible says when Eve looked at the fruit, it was *'good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom'*. In other words, regardless of what God had said, it worked for her because it was tasty, beautiful and added value to her life! And so she and her husband ate it together. And instantly their eyes were opened. But what happened wasn't what they were expecting. Instead of seeing themselves as gods, fully in control of their lives, they saw themselves as they really were – naked and exposed – and cut off from their real Source who was their Creator. That's what happens when we give the enemy a foothold in this door of alternative spirituality.

Perhaps you've been a Christian for a while and you think this doesn't apply to you. But even Christians practice alternative spirituality. I was reminded of this not long ago. Carol and I are going through a study together and in one of our assignments, we had to do a self assessment . ILLUS: my inputs/outputs assessment. Christian religion also gives the enemy a foothold!

Buffet spirituality would be great if it was a shirt color decision; but not if it's a house in the flood decision. The bible tells us that it is the latter. Jesus said in John 14:6 *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*. Choosing our own spiritual path sounds advanced and adventurous, but ultimately, it exposes us. Instead of bringing freedom, it enslaves us. It removes our spiritual cover. It gives the enemy the right to meddle in our lives. I believe that many of us have exposed ourselves, often innocently, to alternative spirituality. And it's because you were searching for the Truth. But it's possible that in your search, you opened spiritual doors that are leading you to death and not to life.

I recognize it takes the Spirit of God to reveal this to you and that for some of you this is so new that you need to process it. That's why when you meet your prayer partner this week, you'll be praying "Lord open my eyes, and show me how I've opened the door of alternative spirituality". I also realize that we can't tackle this subject in one sermon and I hope we can do a series about alternative spirituality later on. But I suspect there are many of you here to whom God is revealing ways you have exposed yourself to teachings that have opened the doors in your life and family to the enemy. And that you would like to pray to close those doors.

## **PRAYER**

- I or my family has been involved in witchcraft (e.g. weddings/funerals) + other religions/cults or watching stuff on media/reading that is opposed to God

This week, we'll be asking God to show us any ways that we or members of our families have participated in any activity or group which denied Jesus Christ or which offered guidance through any source other than the authority of the bible. We'll also be renouncing any group that required secret initiations, ceremonies, or oaths. But we want to end with a freedom prayer to close this door of alternative spirituality.

**FREEDOM PRAYER** (*stand together – invite those who are ready to say this prayer*)

Dear heavenly Father, I confess that I have not loved You with all my heart and soul and mind. I have sinned against You, by violating the command not to have any other gods before me. I ask You to bring to my mind anything that I have done knowingly or unknowingly that involves occult, cult or non-Christian teachings or practices. I renounce all worship of false gods and chose to worship and serve only you. I cancel any ground Satan may have gained in my life through my idolatry and renounce all satanic assignments for my life.

I recognize that there is only one true and living God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is worthy of all honor, praise and glory as the One who made all things and holds all things together. I recognize that in Jesus Christ, God came in human form to save us from the power of sin. I believe that He demonstrated His love for me, by dying for me while I was still a sinner. I declare that I am complete in Christ and that Satan and his demons are subject to me in Him. Therefore I obey God's command to submit to God and resist the devil, and I command Satan in the name of Jesus to leave my presence. AMEN