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## Spiritual Sweeteners

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When I teach about physical health, I always try to convey to people the potential danger of artificial sweeteners in food, and indeed that is a very important part of a healthy physical lifestyle.

What most people don't realize though, are the dangers – or even the existence of—spiritual artificial sweeteners. So today I would like to share with you the concept of spiritual sweeteners and why they are just as hazardous to a healthy spirit as physical artificial sweeteners are to the physical body.

### **The anatomy of an artificial sweetener**

Basically an artificial sweetener is a non-natural substance designed to sweeten the taste of foods. It is generally much sweeter than natural sugar, but also can cause harmful and sometimes deadly side-effects.

Spiritually, an artificial sweetener is anything that deceives by giving a false sense of sweetness, making you or I believe that it is good and right but inwardly it is actually destructive and dangerous.

These can be big, such as the cults that ultimately lead to the death and/or suicides of its members, to the smaller deceptions such as twists in doctrine that may have a sweet taste to them, but they are in-fact killing the spirit from the inside-out.

### **Recognizing and avoiding artificial sweeteners**

Just as we must read and research the ingredients on our physical food we must read and research the Bible to see what lines-up with it, and what needs to be thrown away.

One of the most important scriptures to remember when we are judging if something is a spiritual artificial sweetener is this:

*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

*(1 Timothy 6:3-5)*

Now that scripture is fairly clear, if anyone tells us something that does not line-up with the teachings of Jesus, we are best to ignore it!

However, it is not always easy. There are many clever people who twist the meanings of their words and the Bible to make deception seem like Biblical truth.

I have heard such claims that we are all gods exactly like Christ; I have heard claims that we have personal “servant gods” which exist merely to please us; I have also heard claims that we have angels around us waiting to do our bidding and fulfill our every wish.

Each of these claims was seemingly confirmed with some scripture or another... and this is why research and study are required. If I had not done my homework on these scriptures and claims, I would've easily fallen victim to these deceptions; just as if I didn't research the scientific names of the ingredients in my physical food, I would've never known what I was really eating. The same principal applies to the spiritual.

### **Researching and studying the Bible**

At first thought, researching and studying the Bible seems like a monumental task, a daunting feat that will never be accomplished. And while it's true that the Bible can be quite intimidating, it is not something to be feared. Most people get stuck with one of three books of the Bible... Leviticus, Numbers, and Revelation... and many of the problems there stem from the misunderstanding that unlike most other books, the Bible is not meant to be read straight through, cover-to-cover.

You see, the Bible is divided into sections (books) with each book having a different theme and purpose, each unique and separate yet each connected in some way to form a cohesive master-work which we call the Bible.

Once we understand this distinction of the different books, we can start to look at each of them under a new light and we can start to read the Bible more productively instead of trying to read it from end-to-end as a giant novel.

### **Conclusion**

This may seem like a lot of extra work to some of you, and to be honest I would understand that feeling. Yet just like researching food ingredients and reading food labels, it will become like second nature to you over time, and being aware of and avoiding spiritual artificial sweeteners is necessary to attain the highest levels of spiritual health.

Stay strong and Rise to the Challenge!

