

Leaven

Ponder: Influencing and being influenced.

Scripture: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9, NKJV).

Question: Is leaven good or bad?

Answer: Yes!

A leavening agent may be helpful or harmful, depending on what you're doing. You need leavening to make a loaf of bread, but if you're keeping fruit juice fresh, yeast particles will hinder your success.

Under the Mosaic Law, grain offerings were always unleavened. Anything offered to God was to be pure, whereas leaven, by its very nature, infiltrates and changes a substance.

The New Testament uses leaven as a metaphor to illustrate several evil things. Jesus warned His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6). They thought He was speaking literally about bread which they had forgotten to take. When the Lord corrected them, they realized "He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (16:12). Like leaven, false doctrine spreads and changes those affected by it. Paul recognized this and used the same illustration to warn brethren about the erroneous teaching of the Judaizers. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9).

Paul used identical words to rebuke the church at Corinth for tolerating open and notorious sexual immorality. Left unchecked, such wickedness would undoubtedly spread. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

On a happier note, the spreading and influencing properties of leaven apply to the gospel too. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Matt. 16:33).

Rather than letting ourselves be influenced by false teaching or immoral behavior, let us strive to spread the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! God's word has the power to change people from the inside out, just like leaven. What a glorious thought!

Hymn: "We Have Heard The Joyful Sound"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the power of the gospel. May we busy ourselves proclaiming it as You open doors of opportunity. In Jesus' name, Amen.