

# Missing Persons

## *Lusting for What We're Lacking*

August 25, 2024

Today we're learning to **look past the things we don't have to appreciate the things we don't see!** Cuz the truth is, *we're all wealthy* but there's nothing more *distracting* than what we're *lacking!* And because what we *want* blinds us to what we *have*, our vision test comes down to one question: **do you suffer from FOMO?** AKA the **Fear Of Missing Out**; does *that* fear distract you?



*Sure it does!* Whether you realize it or *not*, it's just part of our human nature because we are *not* self-sustaining; we're *dependant* creatures! We *require* air, water, food, shelter, other people, and purpose to *live*; so our flesh is wired to *worry* cuz **missing out can mean passing away!**



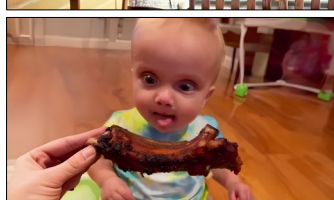
But as we saw a few weeks ago, **all these natural needs are part of our created purpose** cuz they keep us hungry and *human* hunger is a *spiritual test* to teach us to *trust God alone* gives everything we *need*.



So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. – Matthew 6:31-33 NIV



But as great as that *is*, it comes with an *unwelcome* implication: **if God doesn't offer it, we don't need it.** *Uh-oh... sometimes missing out means saving lives!* Or at *least* saving *eyes!* Which is what we learn from the parable of *Ralphie* in the holiday classic, *A Christmas Story*. Cuz in it, we witness *Ralphie's obsessive hunger* for a Red Ryder BB gun *distract* him from the *entire* Christmas season even though everyone around him *repeatedly warns*, **"You'll shoot your eye out!"** But still, the *whole* movie centers around his blind *determination* to get what he wants in *spite* of the *warning*, even if it takes constant *justification* and *manipulation* in *all* of his interactions. And when he *finally* gets his way on Christmas day, what *happens?* He nearly shoots his eye out! Cuz we all know, **what's best for kids is rarely what kids want.**



And because *only our* Heavenly Father knows what *is* best for *His* kids, we're repeatedly reminded that **He should call the shots so we don't lose an eye!** And we *need* those Scriptural reminders cuz when hunger *hits*, we quickly *forget* and go "full Ralphie" as we *justify*, *manipulate*, and *twist* the truth to get what we want. And *that's* deadly *dangerous* when dealing with *God's input* – which is why we're warned about keeping *God's Word* real. In fact, the Bible *opens* and *closes* with the *same* warning; cuz back in Deuteronomy, right *before* Moses laid down the *law* he said:

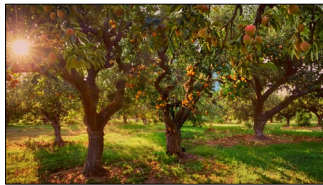
Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. **[as spoken!]** – Deuteronomy 4:2 NIV

[And just *two* verses before the *end of Revelation*, we're told:] I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone *adds* anything to them, God will *add* to *that* person the *plagues* described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words *away* from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the *tree of life* and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. – Revelation 22:18-19 NIV

You got it?! **Any twisting of truth is a straight-up lie.** Cuz *truth* is only *truth* when it's the *whole* truth and nothing *but* the truth; and *anything* short of *that* increases the probability of *perversion*. So, the *rule* is, **No twisting His truth or no tree for you!** Cuz *your* whole life is *still* just a *part* of the *same* story that got going in the Garden and we're *all* still a *part* of learning the *same* lesson.



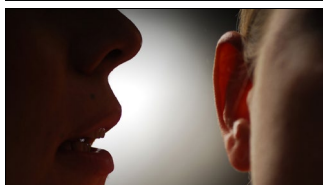
[So let's recap *our* backstory:] The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye *and* good for *food*. In the *middle* of the garden were the tree of life *and* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [And then] – Genesis 2:9 NIV



The LORD God took the man [*humanity*] and put him in the Garden of Eden to *work* it *and* take care of *it*. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are *free* to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must *not* eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly *die*." – Genesis 2:15-17 NIV



**Absolute abundance!** Sure, we still had a *hunger* for something to eat but we *also* had *all* the *trees* to satisfy *those* needs! Including the tree of *life*! In *other* words, *life* was *good* and the good lasted *forever* just cuz we had *confidence* in our *King*. Which is the *same* picture of *paradise* that *Jesus* promised by saying, "**seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**" Cuz *that's* still the deal: **Give God control and He'll give everything you need!**



But, we only get our *best* Christmas *ever* after we *accept* that the BB gun might *not* be a good idea and *trust* God when He says "**Let it go.**"

**So why is it so hard?!** Well, a big reason is Psychological Reactance. Cuz that's what we call **our emotional response when we sense a threat to our freedom.** It's the idea that we *defy* rules, restrictions, and prohibitions just to *prove* we're *in control*; regardless of what we *believe*. "I have to wear a seatbelt? No one tells me what to do! I'll show them even if it kills me!" So it takes *deliberate discipline* to *unlearn* the idea that *letting go* means *losing out*. And until then, even the slightest *nudge* can convince us to see *reasonable rules* as *fightin' words*! And our *enemy* knows it:

[Cuz] The serpent was more *crafty* than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, [*to encourage twisting*] "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "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.'" "You will *not* certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." – Genesis 3:1-5 NIV

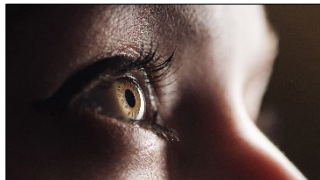
And in an instant, our *flesh's* FOMO was weaponized for *spiritual* warfare; by turning *hunger* to *lust*.

*Craftiest of the creatures, indeed! Our healthy hunger becomes life-threatening lust when the feelings of our flesh encourage us to twist the Word of God.* And all it takes is a tiny reminder of what God *holds back* to distract us from what God *gives freely*.

*For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. – 1 John 2:16 NIV*

So *here's* the bottom line: **We can measure our lives by what we're denied or supplied; but a life measured by what it's missing is hollow while a life measured by what it's filled with is rich.** And our *perspective* is determined by our *focus*; if *we're* at the center, our *pride* points to what we're *denied*. If *God's* at the center, our *gratitude* points us to everything *He supplies*. And *whoever* we make our main *focus* also determines whether we *hunger* or *lust*; cuz **hunger comes from God and leads us to trust God** while **lust comes from pride and leads us to challenge God**. Which is exactly what happened when we first let the serpent shift our focus.

Now, *remember* we're sternly warned *not* to *add* to God's Word so follow along to keep it clear where *my* words begin and end; and remember *they're food for thought – not food from God*:



When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for *food* and pleasing to the *eye*, and also desirable for gaining *wisdom*, she [started *fixating* on it, as the serpent's words began to *sink in*. "Maybe he had a point; maybe God didn't mean we'd "*die*" die – maybe He meant our *innocence* and *ignorance* would die; cuz we *would gain wisdom*..." And she took her first step *toward* the tree. "Maybe He doesn't think we're *ready*, but *wouldn't I* know that *better*?" she *pondered* as she continued *walking*, slowly pushing *past* branches full of perfect *peaches* and whole trees of ripe *avocados*. "I mean, He made us hungry, and gave us our taste..." she thought as she bobbed her head to see *through* the thick clusters of cherries and walnuts. "Maybe He's threatened by the idea...?" she said as she approached the middle of the grove and stood in front of the breathtaking tree of life. "Well, there's only one way to find out if we *are* missing out." She said as she walked all the way around it to come face to face with the forbidden fruit. And in her last moment of innocence, she thought, "I wonder what knowing evil will taste like?" So she reached out,] took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and *he* ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. – Genesis 3:6-7 NIV

Now *I don't know* exactly *how* things went down, but I *do* know being *human*; and when *we're* told we *can't have* that BB gun *we want*, **it's all too easy to let lust rob us of our riches by stealing our attention.** Because we **can't see what God gives when focused on what we lack.** Every other tree God offers just becomes a barrier when we let lust lead us with an ungodly appetite.

And, as George Macdonald reminds us, **"There is no heaven with a little hell in it - no plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and feather!"** So we're all left with the same decision, **either we let go of lust or God lets go of us!**



Like C.S. Lewis says in *The Great Divorce* "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done'" Because *that's* our free will; **we choose who to follow for our best**; *ourselves* or our *Creator*. And back in the Garden, we went with *our own eyes* – even though it risked shooting one out.



And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of Us, knowing good and *evil*. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After He drove the man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. – Genesis 3:22-24 NIV

Cuz believe it or not, **that was God's only option for an act of love.** If we *stayed* and were *allowed* to live *forever*, our perfect paradise would be eternally *contaminated* with *our imperfection*, so He had to kick us out until we learned to let go of our self-serving lust and give *Him* our life-saving trust. And that means pounding one point into our hard heads: **Missing out does not mean having less.** So, no wonder this lesson is all over life when you start looking! You ever had a *desire* that you're *glad* went *unfulfilled*? *Sure you have!* We just try to *forget* them cuz they remind us how dumb we can *be*. Maybe you wanted to invest in Enron, or get a Def Leppard tattoo, or buy a Blockbuster franchise – it's all like losing your ticket to the Titanic – **missing can be a blessing!**

Personally, just a few years back, my wife and I worked feverishly to try and sell our house cuz we saw a cheap fixer-upper with *possible* potential to be our dream house. And we thought if we *stretched* finances to the *limit*, committed to *years* of *elbow grease*, and made the *kids wear potato sacks* through high school, we *might* just be able to make it happen. So, it started eating up all our time as we worked to *justify* and *manipulate* the situation, until we finally *admitted* it was *too much*. And we were pretty *deflated*. *Until it sold*. Cuz we heard there ended up being *arsenic* in the *well*, *structural problems*, and *tens* of thousands *more* in *repairs* that were needed just to get it *to code!* So you better *believe* we high-fived and *thanked God* for keeping what we wanted away from us! Cuz we got to experience the antidote to FOMO – **GOMO**; the **Gratitude Of Missing Out!**

And GOMO makes life so much more *satisfying* cuz it makes FOMO so much less *threatening!* All it takes is asking in all things: **Whose will am I truly pursuing, God's or mine?**

[Cuz when it's *God's*, like Paul, we can say:] I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being *content* in any and every situation, whether *well fed* or *hungry*, whether *living in plenty* or *in want*. [And it all boils down to this:] I can do all *this* through *Him* who gives *me* strength. – Philippians 4:12-13 NIV

Cuz when we have *total confidence* in *our King*, we can trust what *we're missing* is still *His blessing*. And **when our appetite centers on what He offers, our trust overpowers our lust** and we're able to see *all* the fruit *in front of our eyes*; trees full of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. And of course, the *one tree* that offers the sweet taste of *LIFE!*