

increase of around 270 to 300 denominations. Are too many parents not sure themselves exactly what the difference is between a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Baptist, a Methodist — and — a New Testament Christian that Christ *bought with His own blood* on the cross of Calvary? That's the only reason we can think of that would cause parents to say to their son or daughter, "I know what I believe but you'll have to make up *your* mind for yourself." *This is eternal salvation for your child that we're talking about here* — it's not apples and bananas! How much more important — yet — apples and bananas?? — parents diligently teach a child to discern the difference! But religion?? — "make up *your own* mind???"

God's design for the family gives parents to children — parents to *teach* them to discern apples from bananas and parents to *teach* them to discern religious truth from religious error. God only gives parents a few short years of opportunity to teach their children about things that might determine their *eternal* destination. Why are so many parents afraid to take full advantage of those years? Why do so many parents seem to consider apples and bananas more important than God's Word? Maybe they *don't!* Maybe they just aren't sure themselves!

How can parents fix that? Study! Study! Study! Learn the Word of God *yourselves*. Learn the *difference* between the New Testament Church and the thousands of denominations in the world today. Then teach your children to discern the difference between them. You're right, as parents, we don't have all the answers — we never will. Maybe we *are* wrong about something we believe. But teach your children to *discern*! Teach them "*to recognize or to comprehend mentally*" that there *are* differences. Teach them "*to perceive with the eyes or the intellect*" that there are thousands of beliefs all *claiming* to come from the same Word — so they can't *all* be right! Teach them "*to perceive or recognize as being different*" all of the denominations that exist in the world. And *then* — when your children have learned to *discern*, they will continue to fine tune that ability so that even when they see yellow apples, they'll *know* they aren't bananas — even though they resemble them in *some* way. Your children will learn to recognize that in the midst of thousands of denominations, *many* will *resemble* the church that Christ died for — but finely tuned discernment will show that they *aren't* the same thing. Yes, our children *should* make up their own mind — but they need to be *taught to discern* and they can't learn that skill without the guidance of parents. They don't learn to discern apples from bananas without someone's help and guidance — and they don't learn to discern Christ's Church from the 30,000+ *other* churches without help and guidance. Study! Discern! Believe! Be certain! Teach your *children* to study, discern, believe and be certain! We're talking about *eternity* here! Start today!

"Diligence" is a privately funded publication of:
Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://www.gorfsystems.com/diligence/>



DILIGENCE

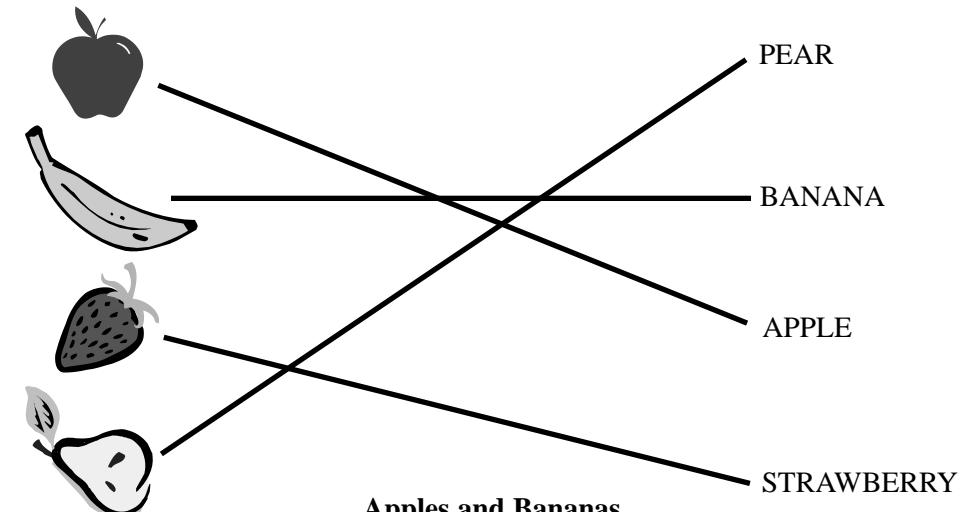
"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 5

April 1, 2006

Issue 4



Apples and Bananas

Have you ever helped a child do an assignment like the one above — or maybe even remember doing one like it yourself when you were younger? Very early in children's lives, we begin teaching them to recognize the difference between "mama" and "dada." Then they begin to discern the difference between items such as an apple, a banana, a pear, etc. — perhaps calling them by name and pointing to each one while shopping at the grocery store. As reading skills begin to develop, we teach them to match pictures with words, patiently giving instructions to help them complete exercises like the one above. Sooner or later the child becomes proficient at matching the correct word with the correct picture.

Now here's the question we want to consider. How does a child *learn* which word is apple and which word is banana? Even earlier than that, how does a child learn in the grocery store that the long yellow things are called "bananas" and the round red things are called "apples"? That's *not* as silly a question as it may appear to be. Think about it! The child *relies on* the information that the *parent gives* to him or her.

For sake of this article, let's suppose that in little Johnny's very early days, his parents cruise down the produce aisle of the grocery store and consistently identify the long yellow things as apples and the round red things as bananas. Johnny would learn incorrect information because that's what he was being *taught*. He wouldn't *continued on page 2*

really know the difference because he's starting with absolutely no idea what a banana looks like. Johnny simply takes his parents word for it. He gradually begins to discern the difference between the appearance of the items and identifies each of them by the name he was taught, even though it was wrong. Unless another individual corrects the erroneous information, Johnny would believe something that was completely wrong. Why? Because he relied and depended on *someone* to teach him certain basic truths. If his parents taught the opposite of what was true, Johnny would believe it — at least until he was old enough to realize (or discern) on his own that he had been given incorrect information.

Now, it's pretty obvious that no parent would intentionally teach a child such incorrect things and allow the child to grow up thinking that a banana was an apple and that an apple was a banana. Why not? Because there is a basic truth involved that *can not* be changed. *Calling* a banana an apple, doesn't *make* it an apple. It's *still a banana!* Putting the name Jaguar on the front of an old Chevy won't *make* it a Jaguar — it's still an old Chevy. Its owner can *call* it a Jaguar if he or she wants to do so — but it won't *make* it a Jaguar. It has to be the real thing or the truth is corrupted when it's called something it's not. No one would argue that! *Basic truth is truth! Corrupting basic truth doesn't change it.*

Back to our parent/child discussion — parents teach children to discern a variety of things during the early years of their lives. For example, parents want their children to discern that a stove is sometimes hot *without* having to get burned in order to learn that truth. They *teach* children those kinds of truths because they love them and want to protect their children from having to learn it 'the hard way.' So children *can* learn to discern *without* having to experience certain things — but someone *teaches* them. Without a teacher, children might quite possibly get burned before recognizing that a stove is sometimes hot.

To discern means "*to recognize or to comprehend mentally: to perceive with the eyes or the intellect: to perceive or recognize as being different.*" A child comprehends with his eyes and intellect that a banana is long and yellow and that an apple is round and red. His ability to discern one from the other becomes *more finely tuned* when he begins to notice that *some* apples are green or even yellow but that *still* doesn't make them bananas. The child has learned (or comprehended mentally) to perceive and recognize that they are *different*. He has developed the ability to *discern* the difference, even though there may be *some* similarities. How did the child learn that? *Someone taught him.*

Let's suppose a highly improbable scenario — what if parents weren't entirely certain themselves which was an apple and which was a banana? What if they taught the child the wrong things? What if that child went to school and had even the most basic truths wrong? At this point you're probably thinking, "how ridiculous! *Everyone* knows the difference between apples and bananas! No parents would fail to understand such a *basic* truth and teach their children that truth correctly." page 2

continued on page 3

Really????? What about basic truths found in the Scriptures? Oh! Now we're starting to see *why* it's *so very important* that parents know and understand the Word of God. How can they teach a truth of which they themselves are not certain? They can't!

Let's take this idea of a parent *knowing* the truth so that they can teach it to their children just a step further now. Have you ever known a parent that strived to let their children "make up their own mind" as to the difference between an apple and a banana? Of course not! They *teach* them from almost day one. Parents *tell* them; "this is a banana" and "this is an apple." Why do they do that? Can you imagine how embarrassing it would be if a child was to start school and had made up his or her own mind that the long yellow things were apples and the small round things were bananas? *That's not going to happen, is it?*

Parents *teach* basic truths to children. There's no way they would allow them to stand embarrassed before teachers and classmates and argue that a banana was an apple because *that's* what they decided when they "made up their own mind" about it. Yet — why do so many parents say they want their children to "make up their *own* mind" about religious truths and risk standing embarrassed before *God* because they were never taught basic truth? Why shouldn't parents *make every effort* to teach their children (from day one) the *truth* about differences in religious beliefs just like they teach them the truth about the differences between apples and bananas?

How is it that some parents are so *dedicated* to teaching their children such insignificant things like the difference between an apple and a banana yet feel that they must stand by and "let them make up their *own* mind" about something as important as their *eternal* well being? Why do we hear over and over phrases like "I don't want to push *my* religious beliefs off on my child. I want him to make up *his own* mind about what he believes" or "I want her to decide on *her own* to follow the teaching of the Word." Parents — did you let them decide on "their *own*" the difference between a banana and an apple? Why then would you do it with something that has such *eternal* consequence?

Let's go back again to the parents who weren't real sure of the difference between an apple and a banana. We don't know about the rest of you but if we didn't know the difference between bananas and apples, we'd find *out* so that we *could* teach our child the difference. Could it be that the reason so many parents subscribe to the theory that they should let their child "make up their own mind about religion" is because the parents *themselves* aren't *really* certain about their own belief? Perhaps they think, "what if I'm wrong about this? I don't want to steer my child down the wrong road if I'm not right myself." Could it be that many parents are confused themselves because of the thousands of denominations in existence today? According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, there are over 33,000 denominations in 238 countries. Every year there is a net page 3

continued on page 4