

# TWIGGY DOCTRINES

By Marie Casale  
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In the Churches of God, I have heard ministers say many times that we should stick to the ‘trunk of the tree’ and not get caught up in ‘twiggy doctrines’. This means that some doctrines are thought to be not worth paying attention to because they are too small to be bothered with. The result of this teaching is that the members are trained to ignore anything the church considers ‘twiggy’ and those who do have small issues that gnaw at their consciences like a pesky fly will be afraid to mention them.

Since the doctrines of the faith are said to be like a tree in analogy, let’s first look at how a tree grows.

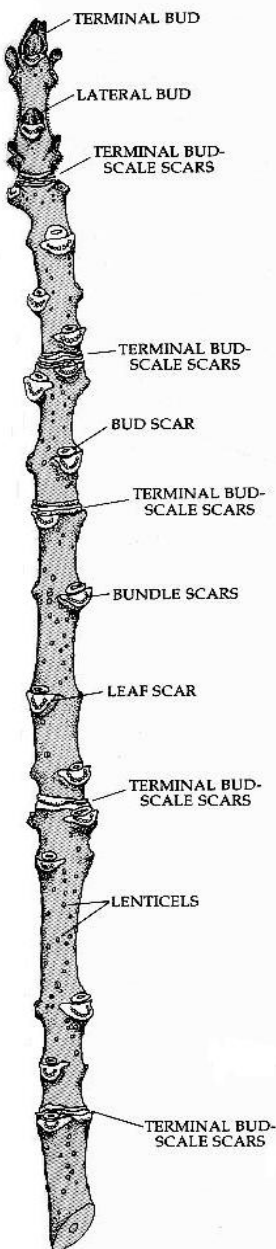
In humans and animals growth occurs in most parts of the body. As we mature, our bones, skin, organs, muscle all increase in size. But trees grow by producing new cells in three places of cell division. The buds in the twigs, root tips in the roots, and cambium layer in the trunk are the three growing parts of the tree. The cambium layer adds diameter (not height) to the tree trunk. The root tips grow in length to support the growth of the tree. Buds elongate the twigs and small branches and widen the crown (branches and leaves) on the tree so that the tree increases in height and fullness.

Let’s examine twigs further. There are buds at two positions on a twig. The Terminal Bud is at the tip of the twig. There is only one of these on a twig. The Lateral Bud is at the side of the twig. There can be several of these on a twig. Buds on the side of a twig can cause side branches to form. Both kinds of buds will make leaves and some new stem tissue. Flowers are not made in all buds. When a bud opens up, if it is one that will produce leaves, flowers and a new stem, all three of these already exist in miniature in that bud.

So what would happen to the tree if it ignores its twigs?

- \* The tree will be wide around, but it will not grow in height or fullness.
- \* The tree will not produce flowers or leaves from the terminal and lateral buds on the twigs. Without flowers it cannot be pollinated. Without leaves there will be no food for the tree manufactured in the leaves from the sunlight and there would be no oxygen as a byproduct for humans.
- \* The tree will have no fruit, since the fruit grows out from the twigs and small branches, not from the trunk.

So as you see here, the twigs of the tree are indeed very important. Trees would not exist without them.



I once read a very good and inspiring article about contending for the faith. But in the article was the statement, “We should be cautious and recognize that some teach twiggy, heretical and non-critical doctrines presented as contending for the faith. We should be able to prove that the faith consists of those doctrinal truths vital to salvation and which teach us how to live, how to know and love God, and how to love our neighbor.”

This statement leads to some interesting questions. Does “the faith” include the whole Bible or is it limited to “only those doctrines essential for salvation”? And which doctrines should be included and excluded as essential?

Mat 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

One minister said that the usage of the term ‘twiggy doctrines’ comes from Herbert Armstrong who years ago sometimes came to impasses with individuals who became so consumed by a minor topic, they had become oblivious to the important issues. It is true that there are people who go to this extreme. The other extreme is to ignore the small issues. We need to see that at either extreme the tree will not grow properly. I’m sure Mr. Armstrong didn’t intend for the concept of ‘twiggy doctrines’ to get out of hand in deliberately rejecting smaller issues as not being part of the faith.

Jesus taught the example that tithing compared to judgment, mercy and faith is a twiggy doctrine like a gnat compared with a camel, but still ought not be left undone.

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Mat 23:24 [Ye] blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The problem with the twiggy or non-critical doctrine is not that it is necessarily a false doctrine, but that it is often magnified out of proportion as if it is the trunk of the tree, not the twig that it is. It should not be magnified as such like the Pharisees magnified tithing, but it should not be discarded as totally unworthy of attention either.

Notice the difference between the words “twiggy”, “heretical” and “non-critical” in the above quote. The word “heretical” is the definition of a false doctrine. The words “twiggy” and “non-critical” do not necessarily describe false doctrines. Yet they are lumped together with the word “heretical” as if any “twiggy” or “non-critical” doctrine should be automatically discarded as a false doctrine. This is a deceitful statement isn’t it?

Another point is that some doctrines that might be considered “twiggy and non-critical” to some may actually be critical to others. For example, some may consider the doctrine of whether or not to vote as unimportant. But consider that to the babies who are being aborted in this country, our votes will determine who makes the laws of life or death for them. Another example is the doctrine of third tithe. If tithing is considered a “gnat” among weightier matters (camels) of the law, then third tithe must be the microbe on the gnat’s back. But to the fatherless and widows whom God gave third tithe to support, it is a vital issue isn’t it?

Consider the great understanding hidden in this twig of a law:

Deu 25:4 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out [the corn].

Who would even notice it way back there in the Old Testament? The Apostle Paul did not ignore it as a twig, but magnified the spirit of this law in applying it to support of the ministry.

1Cor 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

1Cor 9:10 Or saith he [it] altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, [this] is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

This is how God wants us to treat even his least and twiggy commandments.

Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach [them], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Moses taught the judges of Israel to judge all causes righteously:

Deu 1:16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear [the causes] between your brethren, and judge righteously between [every] man and his brother, and the stranger [that is] with him.

Deu 1:17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; [but] ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment [is] God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring [it] unto me, and I will hear it.

We as Christians are in training to become judges of the world.

1Cor 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

1Cor 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

This means that we must be diligent to exercise righteous and impartial judgment in all matters of doctrine and controversy, great and small. This teaching against twiggy doctrines trains us to ignore small matters. We think this is righteous, but in fact it is a deceit because ignoring causes that are brought to our attention to judge righteously is not the mark of true Christianity. It is a mark of wickedness.

Pro 29:7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: [but] the wicked regardeth not to know [it].

When Solomon asked God for wisdom to judge his people righteously, God gave him such great wisdom that the Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem from her country of Ethiopia to hear it.

But the only actual example of his great wisdom that is recorded for us is not some important state matter, but the judgment he gave concerning two harlots who were fighting over who was the mother of a baby. (1Ki 3:16-28) This example shows the righteousness of God in regarding the small causes of the poor as well as the wisdom of God in how it was resolved.

God is judging by how we treat small matters. Thus he knows how we will handle great matters.

Luk 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

So let us be faithful and just in the least matters as well as in the great matters of the faith so that like a tree we shall grow in the roots, the trunk and the twigs, full, high, fruitful and healthy:

Psa 1:1 Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psa 1:2 But his delight [is] in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psa 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: