

Deception

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I. Watch Out that No One Deceives You

When the disciples asked Jesus what the sign of the end of the age was, he pointed to deception first. And Jesus answered and said to them: "**Take heed that no one deceives you.** For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Matthew 24:4-5)

You foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you?** Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (Galatians 3:1)

I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.** (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even **if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.** As we have said before, so now I say again, **if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.** (Galatians 1:6-9)

Jesus said, "**For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.** See, I have told you beforehand." (Matthew 24:24-25, NKJV)

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.** And for this reason, **God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,** that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

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2. Doctrinal Deception

A major problem in the church today is that we have substituted the leadership of the Holy Spirit with false human leaders. Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us the Bible and to guide us into all truth. A genuine leader will never bind the believers to himself or his ministry but lead them into maturity. The mature believer is led by the Holy Spirit. **For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:14-17)** It is the responsibility of the five-fold ministry to equip the church to become mature and walk in the fullness of Christ.

Jesus has given the responsibility of personally teaching, mentoring, guiding, and counseling us to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth who will never teach false doctrine. He also does not act or teach of his own volition but only as he himself is directed by Jesus Christ. **Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come." (John 16:13)**

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ... (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

And Jesus said to them, **"Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."** ... "How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you about bread? **But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" Then they understood that he did not say to **beware** of the leaven of bread, but **of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** (Matthew 16:6; 11-12)

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and take pride in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:2-3)

3. Personal Deception

Personal deception occurs when a person is convinced that something is right when it is false. It can concern our personal life, people we know, our relationships, teachings, or other matters. Doctrinal deception is always also personal deception, but personal deception does not necessarily refer to doctrine. It can concern purely personal decisions and matters such as who to marry, where to live, what job to take, how to handle relationships and situations, etc.

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Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. **But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!**" (Matthew 6:22-23)

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12); **The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.** (Proverbs 14:15)

Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "**Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity.** Should I let myself be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: **Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes according to the multitude of his idols,** that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from me by their idols.' ...Thus says the Lord God: **'Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.'**" (Ezekiel 14:1-6)

4. Judge with Righteous Judgment

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, NIV)

Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that **you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.**" (Revelation 2:2) That was a compliment.

Jesus said, "**Judge not, that you be not judged.** For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." (Matthew 7:1-2) Jesus said, "Do not judge according to appearance, but **judge with righteous judgment.**" (John 7:24); But **he who is spiritual judges all things,** yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. (1 Corinthians 2:15)

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Judgment belongs to the Lord only and not to any human being. Jesus told us not to judge according to our flesh (Matthew 7:1-2), but to judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24). When 1 Corinthians 2:15 says that the spiritual man judges all things, it means that we discern the righteous judgment of God by the Holy Spirit. The difference between the two types of judgment is that one is of the flesh, and the other one is of the Holy Spirit. One is forbidden, and the other is absolutely indispensable.

5. How to Judge with Righteous Judgment

Jesus said, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, **first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**" (Matthew 7:3-5)

The prerequisite of righteous judgment is that we die to ourselves and get the log out of our own eyes first. As long as we ourselves are deceived, we will forcibly misjudge others.

5.1. Study the Written Word Diligently

Study to show yourself approved by God, a workman who need not be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** (2 Timothy 2:15, MEV)

"Is not my word like a fire?" says the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ... **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.** (John 1:1-5; 14)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

... speaking of these things in all his (Paul's) letters. Some things in these (Paul's) letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures. (2 Peter 3:16)

In his second temptation, the devil took him (Jesus) to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Matthew 4:5-7)

... knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation**, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

5.2. Listen to the Master Teacher, the Holy Spirit

We need the Holy Spirit to teach us the Scriptures, lest we be misled by the teachings of men (Mark 7:7) and the futile ways of our forefathers (1 Peter 1:18).

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and teachers of the Law of Moses knew the Scriptures inside out. But Jesus gave them the verdict, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29). While they had an intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures, they did not understand the Word of God. Not only did they misunderstand the Scriptures, they were under a spirit of deception that blinded them. Jesus commanded his disciples to leave them (Matthew 15:14). They were so deceived that they failed to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah they were waiting for. They considered him a demonized blasphemer (Matthew 12:24; John 10:33). They were fully convinced of their deception, even though Old Testament prophecy was being fulfilled before their very eyes.

Right after Jesus's resurrection, two of the disciples traveled on the road to Emmaus. Jesus met them and pretended to be a stranger. **And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he (Jesus) expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself;** And

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they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and while **he opened the Scriptures to us?**"; Then, Jesus appeared to all the disciples and said to them, "**These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you**, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me." **And he opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:27; 32; 44-45)

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth. **It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.**" (John 16:7)

Jesus wants the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. He said, "**But the helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and remind you of all that I said to you.**" (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit came to teach us all things and remind us of the words that Jesus spoke when he walked the earth. That means that the Holy Spirit will teach us the Word of God. "**However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come.**" (John 16:13) Knowing the truth will set us free. "**And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" (John 8:32)

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us sound doctrine. And as for you, **the anointing which you received from him remains in you**, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as **his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie**, and just as it has taught you, you remain in him. (1 John 2:27) The Holy Spirit teaches us twofold: He reveals the word to us and gives us an inner witness as to the origin and truthfulness of doctrines and anointings.

6. Leadership in the Body of Christ

6.1. Legitimate Leaders

And he (Jesus) gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.** (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the

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Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.** (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come - all are yours. And **you are Christ's**, and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

Leadership and submission are the two sides of the same coin. A true leader in the Body of Christ is a follower. He must be completely submitted to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. A leader discerns God's will and brings it to the people. He does not build his own kingdom. He speaks and does only as he hears and sees. A leader never manipulates, dominates, or forces people. Instead, he shares his heart which is actually the heart of God. He has received it from above. As the believers hear his heart, they are drawn to him by the Holy Spirit. Leadership, just like ministry, is spiritual. It knows no gender, racial, social, or age definitions. It follows the call of God and is marked by the anointing. A genuine leader knows that he is only one of many, placed in the body for the edification of the body. His or her goal is to lead the body into maturity.

6.2. Illegitimate Leaders

Most deception is propagated from behind the pulpit. Just because a person preaches or teaches does not make him or her right. Signs and wonders can be false. Teaching is only correct when it lines up with the Word of God. How do we know if someone is preaching false doctrine - whether it be intentionally or out of ignorance? The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. He will teach us the true meaning of the word of God. His anointing will witness to us whether something is true or false. The Holy Spirit will cause us to discern the lies that deceived us in the past. If we lay everything on the altar, he will lead us into all truth and inoculate us against false teaching.

Any minister who tries to bind the sheep to himself and his church/sect/cult is false. Our desire should always be to edify the believer. We should fellowship and be equipped where God wants us, not where carnal men want us. A true leader has no need to puff himself up and talk about himself, his great ministry, his unique revelation, his grand anointing, etc. A genuine minister recognizes and works with other genuine ministers. Any minister who tries to prevent people from leaving his group is false. Anyone who threatens or even curses believers who (want to) leave is engaging in witchcraft.

There is no place for dominating, manipulating, or lording it over others in the body of

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Christ. Jesus said as much, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:24-28)

If you are in a place where the minister openly or subtly conveys that he is the only one who has the truth - run as fast as you can. Do not let soulish relationships bind you in a place. Do not be fooled because the blind guides who are teaching you appear to be nice, kind, and loving. If they teach falsely, they are robbing you of your identity, your inheritance, and your calling. Whether they know it or not makes no difference in the effect the leaven will have on you. Have the guts to get out of such a place.

All glory to Jesus.