

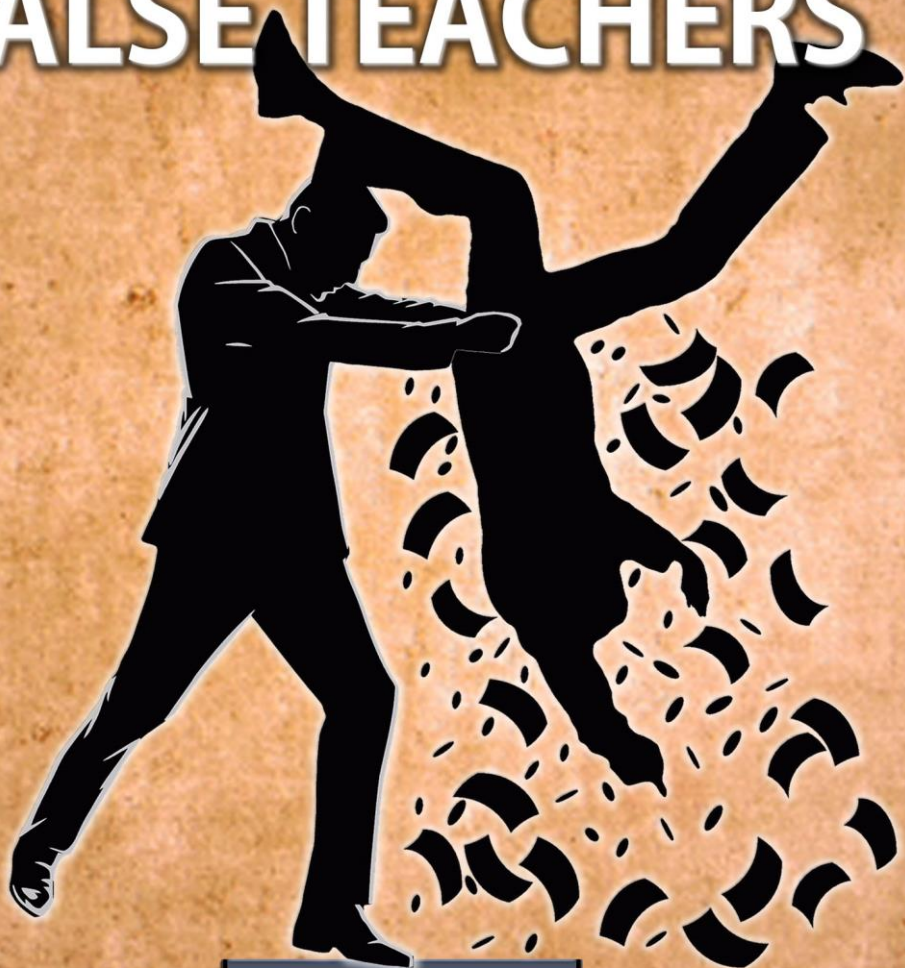


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FALSE TEACHINGS

VOLUME 3

HOW TO IDENTIFY FALSE TEACHERS



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VOLUME THREE

HOW TO IDENTIFY FALSE TEACHERS

Written & Compiled By

Stewart Kabatebate

FALSE TEACHINGS – Volume 3

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INTRODUCTION

False teachers are on the rise today. They exist in all forms and they can also be difficult to identify. However it is necessary to understand how false teachers can be identified because one's spiritual life is always at stake.

HOW TO IDENTIFY FALSE TEACHERS aims to equip readers with a basic and brief understanding of how to discern false teachers and false doctrines that they teach.

Should Christians Expose False Teachers?

The Bible encourages us to expose the errors of false teachers. Genuine Bible-believing Christians should never keep silent in the face of false teachers who spread their false doctrines.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 describes false teachers as being agents of the devil who disguise themselves as righteous people but yet they work against God and against the Christian faith.

In **Matthew 7:15** Jesus says: *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

For example, in the world there are many false teachers who preach false gospels and who teach false doctrines such as the **prosperity gospel, seed-faith teachings, hyper-grace / antinomianism, spiritual covering doctrines and word of faith theology and New Apostolic Reformation** teachings. Many false teachers especially within developing countries are also in the habit of deceiving followers through the **selling of “anointing oil” and various “anointed” objects for cash.**

It's important to understand that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness (**Ephesians 6:12**). Part of the Christian life is that our Christian walk consists of a battle between good and evil.

Therefore just as God uses His people to spread the gospel and share the works of Christ, the devil has his false teachers who will attempt to distort and destroy anything that represents the kingdom of God.

It is therefore essential in this battle between good and evil that Christians understand who the enemy is and what the Bible says about how to deal with false teachers.

False teachers are not friends of the kingdom of God. They are enemies of God's kingdom because many of them are influenced by wicked and demonic motives. False doctrines can be compared to a disease that destroys the body. Therefore false teachers and false teachings must be exposed in order to save those who are lost and deceived.

It's interesting to note that whenever Jesus encountered the Pharisees, Christ was mostly direct, forceful and even confrontational when speaking to them. Jesus was never as friendly with the Pharisees as He was with other people.

Jesus was not afraid to expose the heresies of the Pharisees because they were false teachers who were

leading the people astray. In **Matthew 23:1-39** Jesus exposed their wicked hearts and their wicked motives without fear or compromise.

Christ new the terrible spiritual danger that the Pharisees posed to the people. Their false doctrines were not creating followers who would eventually enter the kingdom of Heaven but the false teachings of the Pharisees was creating followers who would end up in hell as result of following them.

In **Matthew 23:15** Jesus said that the Pharisees created proselytes who would become twice as much a child of hell as themselves.

In **Matthew 3:7** John the Baptist also exposed the Pharisees as a “brood of vipers” because of their evil deception.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO FALSE TEACHERS?

1. We should TEST false teachers.

1 John 4:1 says *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.*

The Bible does not discourage us from exercising spiritual judgment. God does not discourage us from testing or judging the character or nature of others. It is

essential in the discernment process to have the ability to test and judge in order to discover if people are who they claim to be. In **Matthew 7:15-20** Jesus said that we would know false prophets by their fruits. Therefore we cannot discern the fruits of a false teacher unless we have tested the spirits.

According to **1 John 4:1** we are encouraged to “*test the spirits*” because of false prophets who exist in the world. **1 Thessalonians 5:21** we are encouraged to “*test everything and to hold fast what is good.*”

To “test everything” means that there is no idea; no philosophy; no argument; no object and no individual that is immune to being judged or discerned through the lenses of God’s word. All things and all individuals must ultimately submit to Christ and the word of God.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Therefore in order to avoid spiritual abuse and deception, which is growing rampant – it is necessary to test all ideas, doctrines and philosophies and all preaching through the lenses of God’s word and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (who is also known as the Spirit of Truth).

The Bereans were said to be noble people and they also

tested Paul's words and preaching through the Scriptures (**Acts 17:10-11**).

2. We should EXPOSE false teachers

There are cases where it may be necessary to mention specific people or specific groups that are perpetrators of false teachings as long as there is sufficient, consistent and provable evidence.

Paul named Hymenaeus and Alexander (**1 Timothy 1:18-20**). In his letter to Timothy, Paul said the following regarding Hymenaeus and Alexander: *This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

Notice that Paul speaks to Timothy about waging “the good warfare” because living the Christian faith requires that we expose false teachers and warn other people about them.

As mentioned above, in **Matthew 23:1-39** Jesus specifically exposed the Pharisees because of their false teachings. Without fear or compromise He exposed their wicked hearts and their hypocritical nature.

In **Ephesians 5:11-14** Paul says: *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light...*

3. We should AVOID false teachers

Romans 16:17 says: *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.*

Why is it necessary to avoid false teachers? It's because they do not edify the Church. They are enemies of the Church. Their false doctrines corrupt the body of Christ.

Galatians 1:8-9 says: *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

The body of Christ should have no association or partnership with the works of darkness nor with false teachers. Many false teachers can be persuasive and charismatic. Many are able to seduce people through smooth talk and various manipulation techniques. Therefore discerning and avoiding false teachers prevents one from being polluted by their false

teachings.

2 John 10-11 says: *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*

The background behind the **Book of 2 John** was that John the author of the book is concerned regarding false teachers who were not teaching the exact doctrine of Christ and who maintained that Jesus did not actually rise in the flesh but only spiritually. John is therefore giving warning that true Christian believers should not fellowship or allow these false teachers into their home and must have nothing to do with them.

Why Should You Expose False Teachers?

1. You are obeying the commandments of God as a soldier of Christ
2. You help prevent the deception from spreading to others
3. You help evangelize to those who are presently misled by false doctrines with the hope that they will know the truth and be set free from bondage
4. Exposing false teachers is an expression of love specifically to those who are led astray or those who could be potential victims of the false teachers

According to **2 Timothy 3:16** the purpose of Scripture is for *“teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in*

righteousness that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

In **2 Timothy 4:2-5** we are instructed to "... reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" because we are currently in an age where people no longer "endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

It is therefore necessary to deal with the issues of false teachers and false doctrines in a Biblical manner. Christians should not remain silent while false teachers spread a false gospel and false teachings. The spiritual lives of people are at stake and Christians need to be bold and courageous to expose the unfruitful works of darkness.

LIFE QUESTIONS

1. Why is exposing false teachers a good thing in Christianity?
2. Discuss or outline the dangers of blindly following anyone who claims to speak for God.
3. Discuss or outline how you would help someone who has been deceived by a false teacher.

4 Types Of False Teachers

Charles Spurgeon once said: *“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.”*

As Spurgeon says – discernment enables us to know the difference between right and almost right because satan has mastered the art of disguise and counterfeiting. Deception always has a mixture of both truth and lies. Evil is not as easily recognizable because the devil is able to disguise himself as an angel of light and therefore even satan’s false teachers will do the same.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says: *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

So due to the rise of false teachers within Christianity, we live in a world where spiritual discernment has become more important than ever.

It is therefore important that we learn to study God’s word and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to avoid walking into deception.

Below are 4 types of false teachers whom we need to beware of in Christianity today

1. The False Prophet

The False Prophet claims to speak fresh and new revelation from God. The False Prophet claims to have knowledge of a person's future or knowledge of future events that will occur. However, none of the false prophet's predictions are sourced from God nor from scripture. The False Prophet's predictions are either staged, calculated or sourced from a demonic source through methods such as divination.

Jeremiah 14:14-15 says *"And the Lord said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart"*

If we breakdown **Jeremiah 14:14-15** we can learn the following facts and characteristics about false prophets:

1. False prophets prophesy *lies* using the name of God
2. False prophets are *not* sent or commanded by God
3. False prophets do not hear from God because God does not speak to them
4. False prophets prophesy a false vision; a false prediction and false dreams
5. False prophets may use divination as a source of

power to predict the future or speak about a person's life.

6. False prophets deceive out of their own heart

Matthew 24:11 says *"And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray."*

The keyword in this scripture is the word "many" because the more false teachers that exist, the more the multitude of people who will be deceived.

So Jesus warns us that many false prophets will rise and that many people will be led astray by these false prophets.

Matthew 24:24 says *"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect"*

Jesus is saying that false prophets will also perform great signs and wonders and use miracles as bait so as to lead people astray.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says: *And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?' — 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.*

The Bible encourages us to discern and test false prophets. The prophecies of a true prophet of God are always 100% accurate and 100% correct. However the

prophecies of false prophets are inaccurate and incorrect.

1 John 4:1 says: *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.*

2. The Prosperity Preacher

The Prosperity Preacher serves his own belly. He is in it for the money. He is a charlatan whose true “god” is mammon. He is usually the founder of his church and if he dies he will pass on the reigns of leadership to his wife and children so as to keep all the money and assets within the family.

His church is his business enterprise and a pyramid scheme. He is the managing director and the main marketer, whilst his followers are the weekly donors to the business enterprise. He has commercialized Christianity.

2 Peter 2:3, KJV says: *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”*

The main theology of the prosperity preacher is the false **health & wealth / prosperity gospel, the seed-faith doctrine, word of faith theology and New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) teachings**. It is through these false doctrines that he will amass his wealth from his followers.

The prosperity preacher is good at twisting the scriptures and using psychological and coercive techniques to manipulate his followers to continue to donate money to him and for his lavish lifestyle.

In **1 Timothy 6:3-5** we are warned of false teachers who are *“imagining that godliness is a means of gain”*.

This means that they see the things of God or the work of God as an opportunity to make money rather than to serve God out of a pure heart.

According to **Philippians 3:18-19**, people who are like the prosperity preacher are *“enemies of the cross”* whose *“god is their belly... with minds set on earthly things.”*

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24**: *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

However, the prosperity preacher serves money even though he pretends to serve God. He is like Balaam who would sell the souls of others into sin and covetousness and idolatry in order to personally gain a financial reward (**Numbers chapter 22-24**).

3. The Smooth Talker

This one mostly speaks the wisdom of the world and is a master of flattery. The Smooth Talker is charismatic, very contemporary and he is a good orator and speaker. He is

skilled in linguistics and the art of articulation. However his teachings lack sound Biblical doctrine. Instead the Smooth Talker compensates his lack of sound doctrine through speaking catchy but unbiblical phrases, humanistic philosophies, worldly wisdom and deceptive stories in order to project the appearance of knowledge and originality to his listeners. Even though he may sometimes quote from scripture, his primary doctrines are psychology, humanism and new age philosophies. So for example, the Smooth Talker may use loaded language, including unbiblical and deceptive phrases and concepts like: *“God cannot do anything without your permission”*; *“You can live your best life now”*; *“You are enough”*; *“If you believe in yourself anything is possible”*; *“You are a little god”*.

Colossians 2:8 says: *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

The focus of the Smooth Talker’s teachings are related to elevating man’s self-worth and building man’s confidence and trust in himself rather than having total dependence and trust in God.

His message is about outward self-improvement and encourages a self-centered approach to life. He preaches very little on being Christ-centered and rarely teaches followers to deny the self (**Matthew 16:24**).

He is all about happiness and does not teach the biblical necessity and normalcy of suffering. There is an absence of a doctrine of suffering because he may deem it as an unpopular message. He is a motivational speaker whose doctrine exalts the work of man and not Christ.

The focus of his message is also in building man's dependence in his own personal abilities and own wisdom rather than in drawing wisdom and direction from God first.

In the false theology of the Smooth Talker, man is exalted above God; man is the hero and God is his sidekick; man is in charge and God is his servant who can be used to achieve man's personal desires.

2 Timothy 4:3 says: *For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of*

teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear
So the Smooth Talker tickles the ears to an audience who have itching ears. His focus is to flatter his listeners through his smooth talk. He subtly encourages **narcissism** instead of humility.

The Smooth Talker is usually an **antinomian**. He hardly preaches on sin nor does his message teach one to be humble or broken before the Lord. Instead the message of the Smooth Talker is to subtly encourage pride in

one's self. He preaches and teaches a false gospel of self instead of **the true gospel of Jesus Christ**.

Romans 16:18 says: *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

4. The Miracle Magician

The Miracle Magician is the one who loves to perform signs and wonders. To the Miracle Magician, the pulpit is the stage, the congregation is the audience and he is the performer. He can only "heal" on the stage or in front of the cameras so that he may be adored by an audience. He cannot heal behind the closed doors of a hospital where people are verifiably sick and ill. He cannot heal behind the closed doors of somebody's home where there is no audience to watch him.

His motive is to razzle and dazzle. He wants to amaze his followers with "miracles", "testimonies" and even "prophecies". His signs and wonders are what draws more followers to him. This false teacher will also resort to **selling all kinds of so-called "anointed" objects from water to oils** with the promise that whoever buys them will encounter blessings and protection and healing.

Matthew 24:24 says *"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."*

The problem with The Miracle Magician is that his signs and wonders are not sourced from God.

With the Miracle Magician:

1. God is not involved in the signs and wonders
2. Magic and sorcery is used
3. The miracles are planned and staged with paid participants
4. The signs and wonders are staged illusions and coordinated tricks

We know that Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate some of the miracles that God performed when Moses came to demand the release of the Israelite people (**Exodus 7:11,22**).

However, while Moses was a true prophet of God who represented God, the magicians of Egypt did not worship the God of the Israelites. Pharaoh's magicians sourced their power from Satan and his demons and this is why they could copy some of the signs that God performed.

In **Acts 8:9-24** is the story of Simon the Sorcerer. Simon practiced sorcery and magic to the extent that the people in Samaria thought that he had the power of God whenever he performed.

Acts 8:10-12 says: *They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.*

When we read **Acts 8:9-12** we learn some interesting things about the relationship that Simon the Sorcerer had with his followers. We learn that:

1. People misunderstood Simon's magic for the power of God.
2. The people of Samaria paid attention to Simon for a long time because Simon amazed them with his magic
3. The Samaritans elevated Simon to the level of a "god" because of his sorcery. They called him *"the power of God that is called Great"*
4. In **verse 9** it says that Simon himself said that *"he himself was somebody great"*.

The relationship between The Miracle Magician and his followers is very similar to the relationship that Simon the Sorcerer had with his own Samaritan followers.

1. The Miracle Magician has an attitude about himself where he portrays himself as somebody great and special
2. The followers of The Miracle Magician follow and pay attention to him because they are amazed and dazzled by his illusions and sorcery
3. The followers misconstrue The Miracle Magician's signs and wonders as acts from God when in fact they are not sourced from God
4. Due to the signs and wonders that they witness, the followers of The Miracle Magician tend to elevate The Miracle Magician to deity or godlike status.

What Do These 4 False Teachers Have In Common?

What are the combined or common traits and characteristics of all these 4 false teachers that have infiltrated the church today?

- There is always an undercurrent of pride, arrogance and **narcissism** in their conduct and lifestyle. There is consistent hypocrisy. They secretly or openly desire the praise and adoration of men. They believe they are God's gift to their followers and therefore they lack genuine humility.
- They are heretics. They do not rightly divide scripture. They consistently misinterpret the word of God or quote it out of context. They twist the scriptures in order to achieve their personal objective and so they have no respect for the word of God.
- They very hardly focus on the **true gospel of Jesus Christ**. While they may mention scriptures in their messages, they ultimately point people to follow after them and not after Christ.
- Many false teachers have the traits of **cult leaders** who use their authority to abuse others especially their followers. Many false teachers around the world are known for exploiting or exerting spiritual, psychological, emotional, sexual and physical abuse on their members. They are controlling.

- Ultimately they seek personal and material gain. They live lavish or expensive lifestyles similar to celebrities. The money which they so easily receive through their blind followers allows them to live an expensive lifestyle.
- They see themselves as “**spiritual fathers**” or “**spiritual coverings**” through the use of heavy shepherding doctrines. So they become false mediators and false christs to their followers.

Conclusion

The Christian life is not a playground. It has always been a battleground. It is spiritual warfare between good and evil and we do not fight against flesh and blood.

The devil is always at work to blind people from **the true gospel of Jesus Christ**. He is blinding people through false teachers who masquerade as true believers. It is therefore important to know and understand the traits of false teachers.

Matthew 7:15 says: *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

It is therefore necessary to always be alert and to carefully discern between good and evil.

LIFE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss or outline out of the 4 kinds of false teachers, who do you believe is the most common?
2. How can you identify or discern a false miracle performed by The Miracle Magician?
3. What techniques and false teachings does the Prosperity Preacher use to fleece his followers of their money?

When False Teachers Have A Seared Conscience

Have you ever wondered why many false teachers/prophets are capable of hypocrisy, manipulating, cheating and even abusing many of their followers and yet not feel a single ounce of guilt, shame or remorse for their actions?

Have you ever wondered if false teachers actually comprehend or care about the kind of spiritual damage that they cause to people when they spread false doctrines & teachings in order to brainwash and manipulate people for their own personal or financial gain?

Do you wonder why false prophets are capable of performing false or staged miracles & healings in order to deceive their followers that they are men of God who have been given healing powers?

Why do these false prophets speak false prophecies or hire people to give false testimonies in their churches and not feel any shame or guilt?

Why do false teachers deliberately twist and misinterpret God's word in order serve their own appetites or for monetary gain?

Why do such false prophets / teachers seem to lack an authentic fear of God when they consistently manipulate, control or brainwash followers to satisfy their own ego and pride?

Where is their moral compass and do they actually comprehend the wrong that they are doing?

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

The ESV version of **1 Timothy 4:1-2** says: *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared*

Therefore a seared conscience is the reason for why false prophets / teachers can behave badly without feeling any shame, guilt or remorse.

What Is A Conscience?

A conscience is defined as a person's moral sense of right and wrong. Our conscience is our internal moral compass that enables us to know and feel when we have behaved badly or correctly in life.

The Greek term for conscience in the Bible is [*suneidesis*] which means "moral consciousness".

Therefore our conscience helps us to distinguish between what is morally good or morally bad and our conscience is supposed to illicit the appropriate feelings depending on our moral behavior.

God has placed in every individual whether religious or not, a basic understanding of what is fundamentally right or wrong.

For example, you don't have to tell an 8 year old child when he/she has done something wrong. Children already have an inbuilt moral compass that gives them knowledge of sin.

However a seared conscience is when a person has a conscience that is so damaged and deceived because of rebellion and pride to the extent that the person no longer feels shame, guilt, remorse or any appropriate feelings whenever he/she has committed sin.

A seared conscience no longer distinguishes between right and wrong because the conscience has become uncaring and insensitive due to consistent disobedience and pride.

Therefore when people have a seared conscience they have become insensitive to basic human morality and they no longer care about what is morally or spiritually right or wrong.

False Teachers With A Seared Conscience

According to **1 Timothy 4:1-2** there are many people who are going to be deceived by false teachers and

therefore depart from orthodox Christian faith (**vs 1**).

Why will many people depart from the faith? It is because people will be coerced into believing and following deceitful spirits and the doctrines of demons (**vs 1**).

Any doctrines or teachings that contradict the word of God and attacks the gospel of Christ is either inspired by the sinful nature of man or such doctrines are sourced from deceitful demonic spirits (**vs 2**).

However, for any demonic doctrine to spread, both the teachings and the deceitful spirits who create the doctrines require a host in order to spread or propagate the false doctrines.

Hence in *verse 2*, Paul explains that men with a seared conscience are the hosts through which doctrines of demons are spread “through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared”

So in **1 Timothy 4:1-2** we learn the following about why false teachers can deceive without guilt, shame or remorse:

1. False teachers have the characteristics of insincere or hypocritical liars whose consciences are seared. They have no moral compass and they no longer distinguish between right and wrong when they deceive their followers.
2. The seared state of their conscience makes false teachers to be eligible mouthpieces for evil deceitful

spirits. Hence in **1 John 4:1** Christian believers are encouraged and warned *“not to believe every spirit but to test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone into the world”*

Therefore by comparing **1 Timothy 4:1-2** and **1 John 4:1**, it is revealed through these scriptures that there is always a spiritual or demonic link & influence between false prophets / teachers and the demonic doctrines they teach. According to these scriptures, evil spirits influence the behaviours of false teachers / prophets.

3. Thirdly we learn from **1 Timothy 4:1-2** that many people will depart from the faith due to the influence of false teachers who propagate the doctrines of demons.

This reveals in the broader context that the battle between good and evil is not physical, but it is a spiritual battle between God and satan with his demons (**Ephesians 6:12**)

Evil spirits are at work to influence men whose consciences are seared so that they may spread false doctrines and lead people astray from God's word and truth.

A seared conscience enables a person to perform acts of wickedness and deception without the desire to repent or the comprehension that his/her actions are wrong. False teachers with a seared conscience are easy

instruments for the devil and for performing the works of the devil.

In **Matthew 23:13-33** Jesus describes the Pharisees as being hypocritical and deceitful and lacking basic moral conscience.

In **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** we are warned of false apostles who are described as *“deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”*

In **Matthew 7:15-20** Jesus warned us to beware of false prophets who will come disguised in sheep’s clothing but yet they are wolves. Jesus said they will be recognized by their fruits.

In **Matthew 24:24-25** Jesus further warned about false prophets who will perform signs and wonders in order to lead people astray.

It is therefore clear that such actions by false teachers reflect the characteristics of people who have a seared conscience because they do not have any genuine fear of God.

False teachers will use the Bible and deliberately misinterpret it in order to manipulate and deceive others. They will stage false signs and wonders, speak false prophecies and spread false doctrines for personal and monetary gain without any moral compass or shame for deceiving others.

Men with seared consciences are consistently open to demonic influences because the truth of God's word does not truly reside in their hearts. False teachers lack the true conviction of sin of righteousness and of judgment that comes from the Holy Spirit (**John 16:8-11**).

Therefore the only way to prevent having a seared conscience is by having a genuine relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In the life of the Christian it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin. It the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to all truth regarding the word and will of God for our life.

So as we yield more to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will have the conscience and the mind of Jesus Christ.

LIFE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss and outline how false teachers eventually acquire a seared conscience?

2. Why is it difficult for a seared conscience to distinguish between right or wrong?
3. Discuss or outline: How much does the issue of pride a factor in creating a seared conscience in the mind of a false teacher?

9 Dangers of False Doctrines & Teachings

The Bible warns us that spiritual deception will increase in the last days in preparation for the eventual arrival of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-11).

Jesus Himself warned people of the inevitability that many false teachers will arise who will propagate false doctrines and perform false signs and miracles (Matthew 24:24-25), (Matthew 7:15).

False doctrines have a dangerous and life altering effect on people. When you accept false doctrine it can be likened to accepting a disease in your life. The disease infects you and it begins to methodically and slowly weaken and destroy your body if the disease is not removed.

In the same way, false doctrines subtly infect the spiritual life of a person and are methodically capable of leading to a person's spiritual destruction. Such examples of false teachings that are popular in this age are the **prosperity gospel, spiritual covering / shepherding doctrines, seed-faith teachings, antinomianism / hyper-grace, the word of faith teachings , New Apostolic Reformation** teachings and many more.

Many false teachers especially within developing countries are also in the habit of deceiving followers through the **selling of “anointing oil” and various “anointed” objects for cash.**

False doctrines not only affect an individual, but false doctrines can affect entire generations and masses of people at the same time.

THE DANGERS OF FALSE DOCTRINES / TEACHINGS

The consequences or dangers of false doctrines are as follows:

1. False Doctrines Cause Followers to Submit to Spiritually Blind Leaders

False teachers are themselves both deceived and blind. They are deceived and in the process they are deceiving others.

Jesus spoke of the blind leading the blind in **Matthew 15:14** by saying *“Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit”*.

Therefore both the false teacher and his followers will fall into the same pit. Jesus is thereby warning that false doctrines are capable of leading both the false teacher and his followers to destruction in hell.

2. False Doctrines Cause Followers to Obey the Teachings of Men Instead of the Doctrines of God

False doctrines will always oppose the word of God and cause people to disobey God's values and principles.

Matthew 15:1-3 says *Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?*

Therefore you will discover that various religious groups, cults or false teachers might put their own group traditions & beliefs above the authority of the scriptures.

3. False Doctrines Create Hypocrisy and a Counterfeit Christianity

When followers who profess to be Christians have a culture of disobedience against the word of God because of their false doctrines, this type of culture ultimately leads to hypocrisy.

Jesus says the following to the Pharisees in **Matthew 15:7-9** : *"You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"*

The Pharisees were hypocritical teachers who only honored God with their words. However by their actions, the false teachers considered their own doctrines

& traditions as being better than God's commandments through their lifestyle and conduct. They reflected their hypocrisy by twisting scriptures and coercing their followers into obeying the traditions of men rather than God (**Matthew 15:3-7**).

4. False Doctrines Lead to People Becoming Followers of Men Instead of Followers of God

People who obey false doctrines are ultimately followers of men and not followers of Christ. Victims of false doctrines and teachings tend to have more of an adoration of men or their leaders rather than Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:29 says: *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."*

Acts 20:29-30 says: *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

By using deceptive teachings or deceptive words, false teachers ultimately encourage their followers to be loyal to *them* above their loyalty towards God or towards His word.

We learn in **Matthew 15:1-9** that Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and some of their false

teachings. Jesus also exposes the fact that the Pharisees were not teaching their followers to obey the scriptures but they were teaching their followers to obey their own personal man-made traditions and twisted interpretations of the scriptures.

Hence blind men were leading blind men instead of blind men following God.

Colossians 2:8 says that we should be cautious about receiving philosophies of men and evil spirits – or any principles which oppose the teachings of Christ.

5. False Doctrines Lead to Spiritual Bondage and Legalism

Galatians 2:4-5 says *Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.*

The Christian life is not meant to bring people into a life of spiritual bondage but instead when you are in Christ you are set free from bondage and you have liberty in Christ.

Galatians was written by the apostle Paul because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis pertaining to the gospel. The essential truth of justification by faith rather than by human works was

being denied by the Judaizers. The Judaizers were legalistic Jews who falsely taught that salvation was by human works or obeying the Mosaic law rather than by faith alone in Christ.

Paul therefore wrote Galatians in order to set the record straight that salvation is a free gift received by grace through faith in Christ alone and not by our own works or human effort (**Galatians 2:21**).

We therefore consistently see through many of the epistles which Paul wrote that false gospels and doctrines were being spread during Paul's lifetime & ministry. Therefore in many of his epistles, Paul himself had to consistently correct and warn his readers pertaining to the existence and rise of false teachings.

6. False Doctrines Lead to Devotion to the Teachings of Demons

1 Timothy 4:1-2 says *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,*

The Bible is clear that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against evil forces of darkness (**Ephesians 6:12**). Therefore it's important to understand that false doctrines are teachings which have been inspired by demonic spirits who ultimately report to Satan.

In other words, every false doctrine or false gospel that

opposes the scriptures – especially **the essential Christian doctrines** is most certainly demonically inspired.

1 John 4:1 says: *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.*

Why does **1 John 4:1** link the testing of spirits to the existence of false prophets? It's because false prophets and false teachers are mostly inspired by demonic spirits whether these teachers are aware of it or not. Therefore their false teachings are also inspired by evil spirits.

The Bible itself and all its scriptures was inspired by God (**2 Timothy 3:16**) and God used men. Therefore the devil himself will inspire false teachings to oppose God's word and he will use men whose consciences are seared to spread false doctrines.

7. False Doctrines Create A Counterfeit Christ or a False Concept of the Biblical God

2 Corinthians 11:4 says: *For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.*

False doctrines are able to create a *different* Jesus than the actual Jesus that is mentioned in the Bible. For example

there are false doctrines that deny the deity of Jesus Christ. These doctrines claim that Jesus is not God and that Jesus was only a man. There are also some false doctrines where Jesus is not seen as the ultimate Mediator between God and man. These doctrines have false teachers and cult leaders who claim that it is *they* who either mediate or co-mediate on behalf of their followers before God. Yet the Bible is clear in many verses of scripture that Jesus is God and that Jesus is the *only* Mediator between God and man (**1 Timothy 2:5**).

There are also false doctrines that falsely teach that God exists to give you any material possession that you can desire because Christ died for such a purpose. Other false doctrines teach that you can buy or earn the favour, the gifts and the blessings of God with money or by the amount of money that you donate or “seed”.

These kind of doctrines and many others do not speak of the Biblical Jesus or the God of the Bible. These false doctrines speak of *another* Jesus. Therefore while false teachers may read from the Bible and mention the name “Jesus” in their teachings, their false teachings do not represent the *true* Biblical character and nature of Jesus Christ. Hence false teachers will present a different Jesus by misinterpreting and twisting the actual meaning and context of various Scriptures.

Popular false doctrines and teachings that are taught today such as the **prosperity gospel, spiritual covering / shepherding doctrines, seed-faith teachings, antinomianism / hyper-grace, the word of faith theology and New Apostolic Reformation** teachings and many more, all create a false concept of Jesus Christ and the true character of God. They propagate a false gospel and another Jesus instead of the Biblical Christ.

These false doctrines and others tend to diminish and distort the authentic nature and character of Christ. Therefore following a counterfeit Jesus results in counterfeit Christians which then results in a counterfeit Christianity.

Jesus said *"not everyone who says "Lord! Lord!" will enter the kingdom of Heaven."* When we read **Matthew 7:21-23** we learn the tragedy that there are those who presume they will enter heaven but they will end up in hell simply because they lived hypocritical lives. They lived a counterfeit Christianity.

8. False Doctrines Encourage Sin, Pride and Rebellion

False doctrines do not lead people to Christ nor do they lead to authentic Christian living. Instead false teachings will energize the flesh and encourage the desire to sin or

rebel. False doctrines will also encourage a spirit of pride and arrogance rather than Christ-like humility.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 says that false teachings not only lead to “empty chatter” but it also leads to ungodliness and is capable of spreading like a disease.

When you read **Titus 1:10-11** it says that false teaching leads to

- a) Rebellion or insubordination against God
- b) Empty talk or mischievous conversations
- c) Deceptive or manipulative behavior
- d) Upsetting or division of families

In verse 11 it says that the motive of some of these false teachers is that *“they teach for shameful gain what they ought not to teach”*.

This means that false teachers teach false doctrines for their own personal gain even if they know that they are sinning and rebelling against God.

The result of continuous rebellion is that false doctrines eventually leads to both false teachers and their followers having a seared conscience.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 connects false doctrines to having a seared conscience because of people devoting themselves to teachings of demons.

9. False Doctrines Give False Teachers Abusive Control Over Their Followers

This happens especially within **religious cults or groups**

that exhibit high control behaviour. False teachers and **cult leaders** tend to twist scriptures to enable themselves to intimately control, manipulate and spiritually abuse their deceived followers.

1 Peter 5:3 says that the church leader should not lord over or be domineering towards his followers but he should be an example to the flock.

In **Matthew 20:25-28** Jesus gives His disciples the template for Christian leadership. He basically mentions that Christian leadership is when:

1. the leader becomes the servant
2. the leader serves the flock and not himself
3. the leader imitates Christ's leadership style

Another name for Christ's leadership style is Servant Leadership.

However false teachers will teach false doctrines that cause their followers to fear them, idolize them and follow them without exercising any critical spiritual thinking.

Many false teachers have caused divorces, separated families, sexually abused members and destroyed lives because of the application of false doctrines upon blind followers.

Conclusion

The Bible consistently warns believers to beware of false prophets and false doctrines. The key to avoid being deceived is to seek a sincere relationship with God and to imitate the example of the Bereans who studied and verified the scriptures for themselves irrespective of who preached it (**Acts 17:11**). For example, even though Paul was an apostle of Christ, the Bereans would fact-check Paul's message by going back to the Scriptures to see if what Paul had preached was really true.

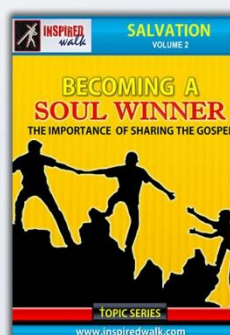
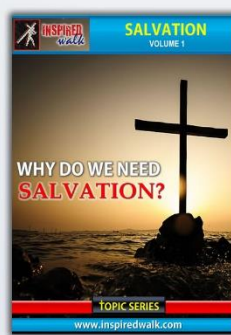
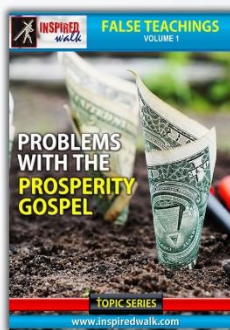
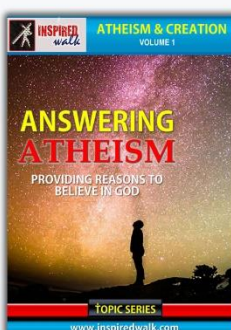
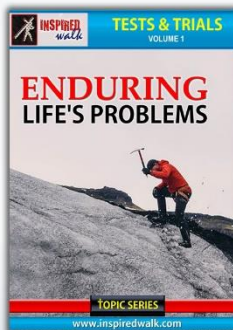
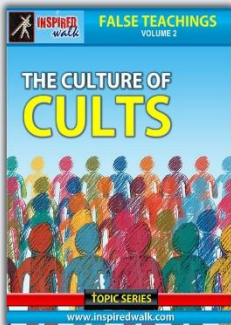
In this age of deception, this is the kind of Christian that is needed: a Christian who tests the spirits and diligently studies and rightly interprets the word of God. It is necessary that as we grow in our walk with God that we avoid a culture of being spiritually spoon-fed, but instead we grow into a culture of personally studying and obeying God's word (**2 Timothy 2:15-19**).

False teachings and doctrines lead people to hell rather than to eternal life with Christ. They encourage idolatry by creating a false concept of the true nature of God so that people are deceived into worshiping a false god and a false christ. It is therefore necessary that the truth be preached and the deception exposed because the spiritual lives of people are at stake.

LIFE QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the most popular false teachings or false doctrines that you know of today?
2. How can you help or counsel someone who is deceived by false teachings?
3. Have you ever been deceived by some false doctrines? How did you eventually discover the truth or escape the snare of false teachings?

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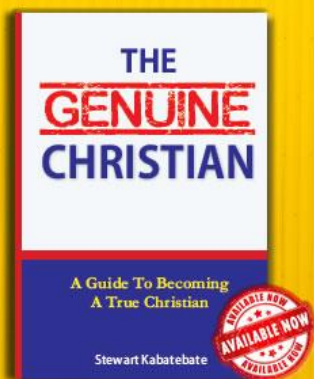
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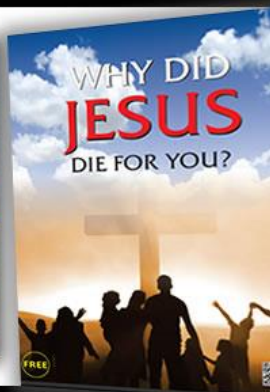
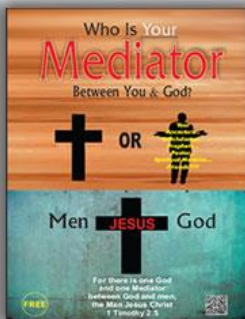
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