



Life Principles Notes™

Exposing False Teachers

Summary:

The good news about Christ is the most amazing, wonderful, and liberating news that our world has ever heard.

Is it any wonder, then, that God's Word is the battlefield of Satan? The devil does his best to undermine the authority of the Bible at every opportunity. Jesus told His disciples that His Word and His church would prevail in the end. While the devil is already defeated, his teaching is still dangerous to us. How can believers identify and correct those who twist what Scripture says? The best way to guard

against those who spread false doctrine is to know the truth. In 2 Peter 1:12 – 15, the disciple teaches that even though believers have been established in the truth, he considers it right to “stir you up by way of reminder.” Peter addressed this issue near the end of his life in his second letter.

Key Passage: [2 Peter 1:12-15](#)

Supporting Scripture: *Matthew 7:15-23; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Peter 2:2-3; Jude 4; Jude 12-13; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Peter 3:17-18.*

Scriptural Principles:

1 A false teacher's message deceives.

Peter warns us that false teachers are everywhere. How can we recognize them? There are several traits of a false prophet. The first is that he preaches a deceptive message. Jesus said in Matthew 7:15–23 that false teachers are ravenous wolves clothed as sheep, and that we recognize them by their works. These teachers come into churches with an agenda of their own, and they use deception to further that agenda. They will often mention “different views” about God's Word. Ephesians 5:6 warns us, “Let no one deceive you with empty words”. Make no mistake about it, deception brings about the wrath of God.

2 A false teacher's message denies the truth.

We can also recognize a false teacher by the fact that he denies the truth of the Word of God. They deal in half-truths, affirming some parts of the Bible while picking at certain other key sections of God's Word. A false teacher knows that if he can undermine only one portion of the Scriptures, then it will be much easier to destroy our faith in the rest of it. All of our doctrine, the basis of our beliefs, is found in those Scriptures, so the false teacher attacks us right there at the source.

3 A false teacher's message is sensual.

Third, the message of the false teacher is marked by sensuality. Peter writes, “Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned” (2 Peter 2:2). Why their sensuality? False teachers deny the authority of God's Word and become permissive. They encourage others to do the same, living without moral restraints and counting on God's forgiveness after the fact. Jude 4 reads, “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.”

4 A false teacher's message is motivated by greed.

Peter continues, "In their greed they will exploit you with false words" (2 Peter 2:3). Greed and sensuality are often connected. We notice that false teachers follow a particular pattern in taking advantage of people. They play to the emotions of their audience, then make their appeal for money. False teachers offer many unscriptural ideas about giving in order to get something from God. There is no guarantee of how God will choose to bless us, we can only obey His Word and trust Him.

5 A false teacher's message is divisive.

Peter and Paul helped young churches grow during the first century. In many of these congregations they discovered trouble created by false prophets, who constantly sought to destroy the unity of the local church. These teachers ruined many friendships because they wanted to separate godly people from any opportunity to hear the truth. This still occurs in the modern church, as false teachers disrupt the fellowship at every opportunity. They challenge the teaching of Scripture by offering "new ideas," that are permissive and sensual.

6 A false teacher's message is exploitive.

False teachers want people to follow them because it feeds their ego. They find pride in being leaders. As they convince or persuade a few, they also continue to attract new followers. That involves exploiting other people by claiming a false authority. Inevitably they become involved in many kinds of personal disobedience before God, because they now believe themselves to be above His divine authority. In the end, they destroy the credibility of the church.

7 We recognize a false teacher by his character.

What kind of fruit do false teachers produce? The false prophet is dictatorial, self-willed, and resistant to any form of authority, including the Lordship of Christ. We must observe the lives they lead and the character they exhibit, and therefore recognize that they are teachers of a false gospel. Jude described them as "hidden reefs" (dangerous), "clouds without water," (empty of refreshment), "trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted," and "wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 12-13).

8 We recognize a false teacher by his followers.


What kind of people listen to and obey false teachers? If we pay attention to how they live, we can observe the fruits of hearing a false message. In 2 Timothy 4:3-4, we learn that many people will find false teachers to "tickle their ears" with a message they want to hear, and they will turn away from truth. "They will not endure sound doctrine," Paul writes. (v. 3) People follow false teachers because the message is convenient and soothing to them. It becomes so comfortable that the truth seems unendurable to them.

9 We can protect ourselves from false teachers.

To be safe from false teachers, we must study the Word of God, which reveals His truth on every subject. We should be able to speak clearly the truth about Jesus Christ, His teachings, death, Resurrection, and return; we should know about the three persons of God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and many other doctrinal issues. Second, we should also expose false doctrine and show its errors. Third, we should always be on the alert for false doctrine. Finally, when we encounter false teachers, we must separate ourselves from them.

Conclusion:

It matters what we believe; it matters to our families, the world around us, and to ourselves. What we believe determines how we live our lives. If we live by false doctrine, we ultimately face the consequences. Peter writes, "Be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of

unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:17-18). Are you on your guard? Are you a student of the awesome Word of God? 

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