

Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

Lesson 5-False Teachers, God's View, Our Response



Discernment is being able to tell the difference – from rightly handled, in context Scripture – between sound, biblical doctrine and false doctrine.

[Read These Passages](#)

Isaiah 30:9-14, 2 Corinthians 11:12-15, Ephesians 5:6-11, Matthew 7:15-23, Matthew 23:1-36, Titus 1:9-16

Questions to Consider

1. Examine today's passages and answer these four questions about each (if applicable):
 - How does God describe false teachers in this passage?
 - What is God's opinion of false teachers in this passage, and what consequences will they face?
 - How does this passage describe the way people respond to and/or *should* respond to false teachers?
 - What is God's opinion of people who follow false teachers, and what consequences will they face?

Using your answers to the first two questions, write a character sketch of a typical false teacher.

Using your answers to the last two questions, write out a description of the way God is generally disposed toward those who follow false teachers and how He wants us to regard and respond to false teachers instead.

2. Considering the Isaiah passage alongside [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#), are people who follow false teachers innocent victims of these teachers? Why or why not, according to these passages? How do these passages describe people's disposition toward God *before* they start following false teachers?

3. Examine the 2 Corinthians passage. Who do false teachers disguise themselves as? (13,15) Instead of "apostles," "workmen," and "servants," what words or titles do we generally use for these people today? (Hint: Think of a popular [false teacher](#) (***)see link). What position or title does s/he hold?) How do false teachers characterize their work or "ministry"? (12) Rather than serving Christ, who do false teachers really serve? (15) How does verse 14 connect to [Genesis 3:1-5](#)?

4. Compare the light/darkness, and the fruit/unfruitful motifs of the Ephesians passage to verses 17-19 of the Matthew 7 passage.

How does verse 11 of the Ephesians passage refute these ideas held by some professing Christians?

- "I know Teacher X teaches some things that are false, but I just chew up the meat and spit out the bones." (11a)
- "You shouldn't warn against false teachers, you should just pray for them." (11b)
- "I don't name the names of false teachers in my sermons, I *only* preach sound doctrine. That's the way people learn to recognize false teachers. After all, that's how bank tellers learn the difference between counterfeit and real money, by *only* familiarizing themselves with real money." (11b, see also verse 9 of the Titus passage- Consider this: If there were counterfeiters running around your town passing fake money, what do you think the police and news media would do to alert the banks and the public so they could catch these criminals, stop them, and mete out justice to them?)

5. In the Matthew 7 passage- explain in your own words what the sheep and wolves metaphor in verse 15 means. How do the examples in verse 16 relate to the sheep and wolves metaphor in verse 15, and also to the concept of false teachers disguising themselves in the 2 Corinthians passage?

In Matthew 7:17-19, who are the healthy and unhealthy trees? What is the good and bad fruit of these trees? Who is the fruit of a false teacher's ministry, and how would you characterize them? Who is the fruit of a sound teacher's ministry, and how would you characterize them?

Think about people you know who loyally and diligently follow false teachers. Are they growing in holiness as the Bible describes it? Forsaking sin more? Growing in spiritual maturity? Increasingly exhibiting fruit of the Spirit? Studying their Bibles (not the teacher's books and materials, but the Bible) and praying better and more frequently? Increasing in their love for and service at a doctrinally sound church? Becoming more skilled at rightly handling, understanding, and obeying God's Word in context? These things are the fruit of a teacher's ministry.

Christians often wonder whether false teachers knowingly teach false doctrine and deceive people, or if they're so deceived that they actually think they're genuine Christians teaching biblical truth. Compare Matthew 7:21-23 with the 2 Corinthians passage. What do you think? Could there be some of each?

6. Think back to [Lesson 3](#) and the difference between antinomianism and legalism. In the Matthew 23 passage, is Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for being antinomians or legalists?

If your pastor preached Matthew 23 to or about a specific false teacher or group of false teachers and posted the video of it on social media, what do you think non-Christians would say about him? What do you think most *professing* Christians would say about him? Some professing Christians think it is mean, hateful, unloving, unkind, even un-Christlike to call out a false teacher or even suggest that people shouldn't follow a certain false teacher, no matter how gently and kindly it is done. Is that true? How do you know, based solely upon Matthew 23?

7. Examine the Titus passage. Who is "he" in verse 9 (see [verses 5-9](#))? What two things does God require of pastors and elders in verse 9? If a pastor only preaches sound doctrine and never rebukes, preaches against, or warns against false doctrine and false teachers, is it fair to say he's only doing half his job? Why or why not? (Support your answer from rightly handled Scripture, not emotion or personal opinion.)

Consider verse 11 alongside [2 Timothy 3:6-7](#). What is the impact on the family when women follow false teachers and bring their false doctrine into the home?

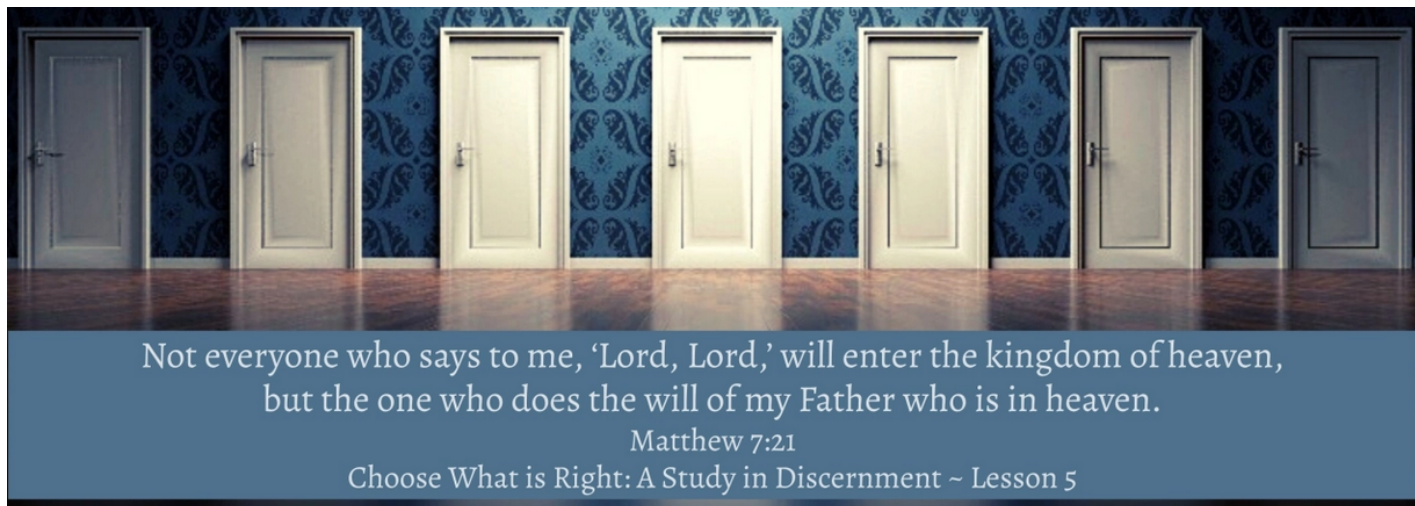
Note the word "rebuke" in verses 9 and 13? Why are pastors to rebuke false teachers and those who follow them?

8. Sometimes Christians wonder whether or not false teachers (at least some of them) are truly born again. In today's passages, carefully examine together [2 Corinthians 11:15](#), [Ephesians 5:6](#), [Matthew 7:15, 19, 21, 23](#), [Matthew 23:15, 33](#), [Titus 1:15-16](#). What do these verses indicate is the answer to that question? Think about the way Scripture describes and characterizes the life and eternity of Christians. Do these verses about false teachers match Scripture's description and characterization of Christians?

Homework

Read my article [Answering the Opposition- Responses to the Most Frequently Raised Discernment Objections](#) (***) . Which of the Scriptures you studied today answer some of these objections? How? Are there other objections to discernment that you've heard that are not on the list, but are answered by today's passages? Which objections would you add to the list, and how would you answer them from today's passages (and others)?

Suggested Memory Verse



<https://michellelesley.com/popular-false-teachers/>

<https://michellelesley.com/2016/06/17/answering-the-opposition-responses-to-the-most-frequently-raised-discernment-objections/>

<https://michellelesley.com/2023/05/10/choose-what-is-right-a-study-in-discernment-lesson-5/>