

Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

Lesson 7-Refuse to Heed the Shepherd and You'll Have the Wool Pulled Over Your Eyes



Questions to Consider

1. **We need a firm foundation. What is that firm foundation?** First and Second Timothy and Titus comprise what are known as the “pastoral epistles”. They are God’s instructions, via Paul, to Timothy, Titus, and all other pastors about how to run the church. I often liken the pastoral epistles to a “policy and procedure manual” for the church.

Even in these three very brief epistles, God has a lot to say about sound and false doctrine, and sound and false teachers. [Read these passages](#) (1 Timothy 4:6, 13, 16, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Titus 1:9, 2:1) from the pastoral epistles (you may wish to read more of the surrounding verses for context). What is the *foundation* of a healthy church? How does a foundation of being intentional and purposeful to preach and teach sound doctrine protect a church against the infiltration of false doctrine and false teachers?

Meditate on Paul’s solemn charge to pastors in the 2 Timothy 4:1-2 passage. Explain exactly what he is saying in these verses. Would you liken this charge to a vow or “oath of office”? Why or why not? Put yourself in Timothy’s sandals. Do you feel the weightiness of this charge and responsibility? How so?

As Paul is preparing to leave the Ephesian church, he mentions two ways, in [Acts 20:29-30](#), in which false teachers can infiltrate the church. What are those two ways? How does a solid foundation of sound doctrine help guard against false teachers coming into the church from the outside, *and* prevent those who are already church members from believing false doctrine and becoming false teachers inside the church?

2. Regarding discernment, *why* do we need the firm foundation of the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine? [Examine these passages.](#) (1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Timothy 4:1-4) (Compare the verse references to the passages from question 1. See the proximity and context?) Why, in the context of discernment, is the teaching and preaching of sound doctrine so crucial? What will happen to those who refuse to heed sound doctrine? Which adjectives does Paul use in the 1 Timothy passage to paint a picture of the deceitfulness of false teachers? How does Paul address the idea of people being deceived and departing from the faith in these passages – as a possibility or a certainty? (Hint: Look for the word “will”.)

3. **How is this deception accomplished?** Are these people who “depart from the faith” deceived solely by the false teachers, self-deceived, or both?

[Study these passages.](#) (Isaiah 30:9-14, 2 Timothy 4:3-4) What do they tell us about a person’s role in her own deception? Who is taking the initiative in these two passages, the false teachers/prophets, or the people who want to follow them? In the Isaiah passage, before the people turn to the seers and prophets in verse 10, how does verse 9 describe them? What have they already turned from? In the 2 Timothy passage, before the people turn to false teachers (3b) and myths (4b), what have they already turned away from (3a, 4a)?

Compare 2 Timothy’s “they will accumulate for themselves” and “teachers to suit their own passions” (3b) with Isaiah’s 10-11. How did the people in Isaiah proactively pursue or accumulate false teachers? What were “their own passions” they wanted to suit? Are people who turn to false teachers hapless, powerless victims of those false teachers or willing participants in their own deception?

Again, what happens when you “refuse to heed the Shepherd” (Jesus, His Word, sound doctrine, etc.)? Think about the nature and definition of the word “deceived”. Do deceived people *know* they’re deceived?

But if every teacher out there *only* taught sound doctrine, would self-deceived people be able to accumulate teachers to themselves to suit their own passions? It’s kind of a symbiotic relationship, isn’t it?

[Study these passages.](#) (2 Corinthians 11:12-15, Galatians 2:4, 2 Peter 2:1, Titus 1:16) What do all of these passages say false teachers disguise themselves as? Make a list of the words and phrases from each passage that led you to your answer:

- 2 Corinthians 11—

- Galatians 2—
- 2 Peter 2—
- Titus 1—

Think about some of the false teachers you're aware of (or [check here](#) (***)see link) if you need a little help). Do any of them go by the title "False Teacher"? Introduce themselves as false teachers? Write books and give interviews as experts in the field of false teaching? What titles do they go by? What do they want to be known as?

In the 2 Corinthians passage, what does Paul say the false apostles claim? (12) Are their claims true? (13) What three words in verse 13 indicate that these men are not honest? Compare verses 14-15 with Jesus addressing the Pharisees (the false teachers of His day) in [John 8:42-47](#). Who is the spiritual "father" of these false teachers in both passages? Who do they actually serve? Are they *actually* Christians, as they claim to be? What does Paul mean, "Their end will correspond to their deeds." (15)? What will their end be? (Hint- use your cross references)

Why do you think some professing Christians believe even the most egregious false teachers are actually Christians despite what these passages teach to the contrary? Is it fair to say they are believing the false teacher's word over God's Word?

Compare the 2 Corinthians passage and the John 8 passage above with [Genesis 3:1-7](#). What similarities do you see when it comes to the descriptions of Satan's character and methods?

Homework

Read [1 & 2 Timothy and Titus](#). Carefully examine each passage that deals with either the need to preach and teach sound doctrine or the need to rebuke and refute false teachers or false doctrine. Why is the proactive, purposeful, and intentional teaching of sound doctrine vital to the health of the church? How does sound doctrine itself refute false doctrine? Why is it imperative to rebuke and remove unrepentant false teachers from the church?

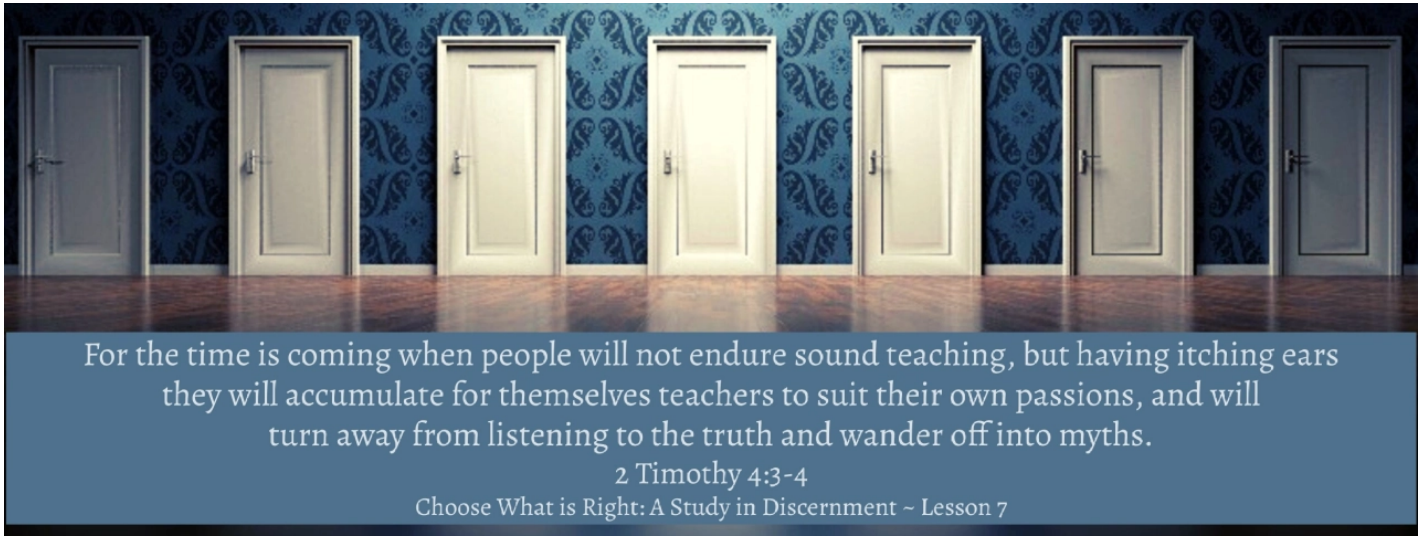
A common argument against the public rebuke and refutation of false teachers is that, "You shouldn't warn against them, you should just pray for them." (see #10 [here](#) ***). How would you answer that argument with the passages you examined in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus?

You may wish to refer to parts of my studies on the pastoral epistles as you study:

[1 & 2 Timothy: The Structure and Spirit of the Church](#) (***)

[Titus: God's Order of Service](#) (***)

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/category/12-timothy-bible-study/>

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