

Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

Lesson 8-Ewes Need to Take Care to Avoid the Wolves



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

[Read These Passages](#)

2 Timothy 3:1-8, Genesis 3:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:11-14

Questions to Consider

1. Carefully study the first five verses of the 2 Timothy passage. Using your cross references, any other related passages, and perhaps a [side by side comparison](#) (**see link) with other reliable translations, or an [interlinear](#), (**) define or explain each of the characteristics listed in these verses:

- lovers of self-
- lovers of money-
- proud-
- arrogant-
- abusive-
- disobedient to their parents-
- ungrateful-
- unholy-
- heartless-
- unappeasable-
- slanderous-
- without self-control-
- brutal-
- not loving good-

- treacherous-
- reckless-
- swollen with conceit-
- lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-
- having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power-

Is Timothy saying these things are characteristic of the world, the visible church (Christians and non-Christians), genuinely regenerated Christians only, or some combination of these three? Why do you think so?

From the immediate context and the context of the Bible in general, does verse 5's admonition to "avoid such people" mean only the people described in verse 5 or all of the people described in 2 Timothy 3:2-5? Generally speaking, [why](#) (1 Corinthians 15:33, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) would God want us to avoid all of these types of people, especially if they claim to be Christians (2 Timothy 3:5) while acting this way? Go back through your list above and explain why it would be detrimental to your character and your walk with the Lord to associate with people of each of these character types.

2. Now, more specifically, why does verse 6 say to avoid these types of people? (Note: What word does verse 6 start with? What's another word we could use there in place of "for"? When you're looking for the reason God said something, words like "for" and "because" can help you answer the question, "Why?")

Compare the phrase "those who creep into households" in verse 6 with the metaphor we saw Jesus use in [Lesson 6](#), particularly in [John 10:1](#). Who are both of these verses talking about? How do both of these verses describe the infiltration of false teachers into the church and home? Are false teachers above board, walking in the truth of Scripture?

Compare the concept of "capturing" in 2 Timothy 3:6 with the concept of "thief and robber" in John 10:1. What does it mean to capture someone and to commit thievery and robbery? Why does God use this imagery for false teachers? Compare this idea of false teachers absconding with or luring away people to whom they have no right with [John's description](#) (John 10:2-5) of doctrinally sound "gatekeepers" (pastors and teachers, v. 3). Do doctrinally sound pastors have to deceptively lure or steal people away to the true teaching of Christ? Why not? What do they do instead (3)?

3. At this time, I'd like "ewes" :0) to focus on the second half of verse 6. Who, *precisely*, does God say the false teachers creep in and capture? Does He say "weak men"? "Weak Christians"? "Weak people"? Considering the fact that God never misspeaks and always says exactly what He means, why (6b) does God specify that "weak *women*" are in danger from false teachers?

What does God mean (***) (that these women are "burdened (***) with sins" and "led astray by various passions" (***)? Why would a woman in this spiritual condition be especially vulnerable to false teachers? What would a doctrinally sound pastor or teacher tell her about her sins or her fleshly cravings and feelings? Read 6b in light of 2 Timothy 4:3-4. How would a false teacher scratch her itching ears about her sins and passions?

4. Really ponder the meaning and weight of 2 Timothy 3:7. Gaggles of weak, sinful women always reading a book or listening to a podcast by a false teacher, going to "Bible" study after "Bible" study featuring materials by false teachers, spending hundreds of dollars year after year on tickets for conferences and simulcasts headlined by false teachers. Always learning, but **never** able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Jesus said, "I am the truth," (John 14:6) and "[Father,] Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth." (John 17:17) Think about it. If your friends who follow false teachers are **never** able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth, Who and what are they **not** learning about?

5. And why is that? How do we **know** they're not learning the truth from these false teachers according to verse 8? In what three ways does God characterize these false teachers in 8b? What does it mean that they "oppose the truth," are "corrupted in mind," and are "disqualified regarding the faith"? How do each of those characteristics prevent vulnerable women from arriving at a knowledge of the truth?

6. Remember that 2 Timothy is a pastoral epistle, so the passage we just read may be instructive to us as women, but to whom is it primarily written? (Lesson 7). How is God demonstrating His love and care for women in this passage by instructing pastors to watch out for these false teachers who prey on women, and keep them out of the church?

7. Read Genesis 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 2:14 through the lens of what we've just looked at in 2 Timothy 3. Why do you think Satan may have approached the woman in the Garden instead of the man? How do these

passages work together to alert us as women to vigilantly watch out for a potential blind spot we may have regarding false teachers and deception?

God created women with some incredible strengths. Generally speaking, women are usually much better nurturers than men. We're usually better communicators than men. And, frequently it's much easier for women to trust, love, and give the benefit of the doubt to others than it is for men.

And along with those unique strengths come unique challenges. For example, being trusting is a fantastic character trait, but it's imperative that we be vigilant not to put our trust in the wrong person – like a false teacher.

Why is it especially important that **women** learn and practice discernment?

Homework

- Second Timothy 3:5 instructs us to “avoid” ungodly people, especially those who claim to be Christians and turn out to be false teachers. “Avoid them.” Does this command leave room for the “chew up the meat and spit out the bones” approach so many Christians think is appropriate to use with false teachers today? What about the common idea that it's OK to use songs with “biblical” lyrics from heretical groups (like [Bethel, Hillsong, and Elevation](#)) (***) in our worship services? Does “Avoid them” allow for that? Read #8 [here](#). (***)
- Some professing Christians defend false teachers by saying, “Look how many people she's helping!”. If false teachers' audiences are “never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth,” are they *really* helping anybody? Read #3 [here](#). (***)
- For more on women and deception in Genesis 3 (and 1 Timothy 2, and 2 Timothy 3), read my article [Women and False Teachers: Why Men Don't Get It, and Why It's Imperative That They Do](#)

Suggested Memory Verse



side-by-side—<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+ti+3%3A2-5&version=ESV;LEB;LSB;CSB;NKIV>

interlinear— https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/2ti/3/2-5/s_1128002

<https://michellelesley.com/2023/05/24/choose-what-is-right-a-study-in-discernment-lesson-6/>

“mean”—<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20ti%203%3A6&version=ESV;LEB;LSB;CSB;NKIV>

“burdened”—<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4987/esv/mgnt/0-1/>

“passions”—<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1939/esv/mgnt/0-1/>

<https://michellelesley.com/2023/06/08/choose-what-is-right-a-study-in-discernment-lesson-7/>

<https://michellelesley.com/2020/02/11/sermon-why-our-church-no-longer-plays-bethel-or-hillsong-music/>

#8 and #3—<https://michellelesley.com/2016/06/17/answering-the-opposition-responses-to-the-most-frequently-raised-discernment-objections/>

<https://michellelesley.com/2017/09/22/women-and-false-teachers-why-men-dont-get-it-and-why-its-imperative-that-they-do/>