

DECEPTION

Ever since Adam and Eve, **deception** has filled the world. All of us are deceived at times in various areas of life. To be deceived is to believe that something is true when it is actually false. **It is to believe a lie.** Lies blind us, lead us down dead end paths and rob us of blessings in this life. Even more serious, they can adversely effect our eternal destiny. **False beliefs can be fatal.**

I am afraid that just as Eve was **deceived** by the serpent's cunning, your **minds** may somehow be **led astray** from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches **another Jesus** than the one we preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** from the one you received, or a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

The disciples asked Jesus what would be the sign of his coming and the end of the age. Jesus gave them a list of various signs of chaos in nature and social life but he began first with these words about spiritual deception.

Watch out that no one **deceives** you. For many will come in my name claiming 'I am the Christ' and will **deceive many**. - Matthew 24:4

We are being lied to regularly, therefore we must have more discernment. Corrie ten Boom once said that the **greatest need of the church in the last days would be.....discernment.**

In this series we will look at various deceptions and discover ways to be more discerning. We will concentrate mostly on spiritual deception, but also throw in some examples from other areas of life such as: health, history, current news, science, archaeology, government statistics etc. I may even go on a short rant once in awhile which may make you either glad, sad or mad (sure beats indifference!) If you read the book of Galatians you will see that Paul was agitated with the Christian church in the province of Galatia which was in bondage to false beliefs.

***O You poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians!
Who has fascinated or bewitched or cast a spell over you?.....Galatians 3:1 Amplified***

Paul was upset because they doubted that faith in Christ's finished work at the cross was enough to make them righteous before God. They were adding their own laws, rituals and works to salvation. Today there are many false religions, belief systems, cults and also elements of Christian church that have wandered from the foundations of faith as given in the Bible. In this process, we will seek to emulate the model that Jesus gave us. He was **full of grace and truth**. - John 1:14.

When he brought **correction** to the churches in the book of Revelation, he prefaced those words with ones of **commendation** if he could find something they were doing right. (We will look later at the time when Jesus cleansed the temple because of the religious hypocrisy and greed). The apostle Paul said that we should seek to restore Christians with gentleness (Galatians 6:1). The original Greek there refers to being as gentle as one setting a broken bone.

God has called us to be **TRUTHERS** and **LOVERS** (i.e. **Rational** and **Relational**)

Knowing the truth sets us free. However, without love we are in error, for we are to **speak the truth in love**. - Ephesians 4:15. Love is also a factor in having discernment. The Pharisees were blinded to the truth as they were filled with hatred for Jesus. Saul hated Christians but then was transformed by the presence of Jesus on the Damascus road. He went from being a terrorist to one who was filled with love and wisdom from God. Listen to his words:

This is my prayer: that your **love may abound** more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be **able to discern** what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. - Philippians 1:9-11 NIV

One can be right in their beliefs but be wrong.....if they do not walk in love.
Yes, we are to **guard our minds.....what we think and believe**

Take every **thought** captive to make it obedient to Christ. - 2 Corinth. 10:5

However, just as important, we must **protect our hearts**, which is the seat of our emotions, motives and desires.

Above all else, **guard your heart**, for it is the wellspring of life. - Proverbs 4:23

The neglect of this was clearly on display in the early 1200's when the Roman church began Inquisitions against perceived heretics. The Cathars were spreading a false Gnostic Christianity, however the Waldensians were not. They were the Biblical forerunners to the more famous protesters and reformers such as Huss, Zwingli, Tyndale, Luther and Calvin. These groups and persons along with others faced persecution, torture or even death for their belief in the Bible as the only basis for doctrine. Over several centuries the established church had added many pagan traditions that came from Babylon, Egypt and the Roman emperors. The Protestants were right in seeking to reform and revitalize the church, but some of them forgot about love in their quest for truth.

***Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire love (as mentioned in 1 Cor.13)
- make it your aim and great quest. - 1 Corinthians 14:1 Amplified***

I remember the afternoon in the late 1970's when I took an encyclopedia out of our bookcase at home and read about how John Calvin allowed the killing of Michael Servetus because he did not believe in the Trinity. As E. Stanley Jones points out, we must not only have right belief (orthodoxy) but also right practice (orthopraxy). Sometimes those who are intent on getting their doctrines and creeds just right, forget about the way to live as given in the Sermon on the Mount. **Right beliefs** are the **root** of our faith, but **right living** will be the natural **fruit** that comes forth from those beliefs. As apostle James wrote, faith without corresponding works.....**is dead!**

Sources of Truth:

1) Jesus Christ/ The Living Word

I am the way, the truth and the life....no one comes to the Father
except through me. - John 14:6

(**Jesus** is not only **the way to life** but also **the way to live** in this life)

2) The Holy Bible / The Written Word

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for

Teaching (something to believe)

Rebuking (something to stop doing)

Correcting (something to do better)

Training in righteousness (something to start doing) -2 Timothy 3:16 NIV

So that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, **equipped** for
every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:17 NRSV

The church is meant to be a faithful representative of Christ and accurate purveyor of the
truths in the Word of God.

It is difficult to keep up with all of the deceptive groups and doctrines going around in the
world. Thankfully, we do not have to know about all of them. What we do need to know is the
Word of God.....**all** of it. Paul proclaimed that he was innocent of the blood of all men because
he gave them the **whole** counsel of God - Acts 20:26-27. As somehow has said:

A whole Bible is needed to make a whole Christian.

I spent time with some other American missionaries in London who subscribed to the
common teaching that we cannot get our doctrine from the book of Acts but instead from Paul's
letters. They felt that Acts was only for historical information (I think they were skittish about
some of the supernatural stuff therein). There are those who believe that the apostolic ministry
which included miracles is no longer relevant for us today. I would remind them that Jesus
taught his disciples to 'teach them to obey **everything** I commanded you.' - Matthew 28:20.

Federal agents and bank tellers are taught how to recognize counterfeit money. What they do
is concentrate on the study of genuine money so that they will be able to detect fake money when
they encounter it. (Just to be sure this was still practiced I went to the internet to confirm it). Tim
Challies had the same idea but he went to visit the Bank of Canada instead to see if this was so.
You might like to read his two part report on '**counterfeit detection**' to see what he discovered.
Go to [www.challies.com.](http://www.challies.com/) / counterfeit detection

A Canadian friend of mine came to Florida a few years ago with several 50 dollar bills.
When he went to spend one of them he discovered that it was counterfeit, as were all of the other

bills. (which shows that we should know how to detect fake money!) It is one thing to accept counterfeit money but quite another to pass it on to others. Fortunately, my friend did not get into trouble for seeking to spend the counterfeit money as it was determined that his intentions were innocent. How much more should we be aware of false teachings. **Those who accept and teach false doctrine are walking in dangerous territory.**

When Christians encounter aberrant teachings, their Holy Spirit radar will recognize that something is not quite right if they have a comprehensive view of key Bible truths.

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