

How Would You Know if You Were Believing a Strong Delusion?

I was once deceived. Or, you might say, I've been deceived more than once.

Like you, I was deceived before I was saved. My plan was to live however I wanted, repent when I got into my 40s and start going to church. I figured all would be well with my soul when I was ready to stop living in sin. God, in His mercy, had different plans for me. He encountered me in an undeniable way when I was 30, broke the deception and delivered me from evil.

Soon, though, I fell into another deceptive pit in a hyper-apostolic church that publicly taught "God, family, ministry" but secretly demanded, "Ministry, ministry, ministry." Our Bibles literally fell open to Ephesians 4:11. And we spelled apostolic like this: w-o-r-k. This deception crept in through unbalanced—even extreme—teachings and superhuman expectations that wearied the saints.

When I began to question the status quo, they told me I was deceived. Ironically, I only escaped this abusive church after I began praying for God to break the deception over my mind. See, when the deception accusation came, I knew I was indeed deceived. I just didn't know if I was deceived by the church or deceived by wanting to escape it.

Strong Delusions Rising

Deception—and even the strong delusions that will characterize the end times (2 Thess. 2:11)—is already rising in the body of Christ. And it's far beyond the much-hyped prosperity gospel that mimics New Age philosophies in pursuit of the mighty dollar. Mind you, I'm not against prosperity, and indeed I'm

very prosperous. But the love of money is a root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), and too many prosperity preachers have fallen into deception by getting caught up in the Babylonian paradigm instead of seeking first the kingdom.

Yes, there is a strong delusion manifesting in the church today that goes far beyond the much-hyped prosperity gospel. As Steve Hill pointed out in his recent article, "The 7 Great Lies in the Church Today," there's also an exaggerated view of grace, antinomianism, the deification of man, the challenge of the authority of the Word, the rejection of hell and universal reconciliation.

How do these (and other) deceptions creep in? And how can you guard yourself from strong delusion? One way is to take heed to the many warnings sounding out from prophetic voices in this generation—and in the Bible. Jesus warned us not to be deceived. Paul warned us not to be deceived. Peter warned us not to be deceived. John warned us not to be deceived. James warned us not to be deceived. You can hardly read a chapter in the New Testament that doesn't issue a warning against deception. And yet deception is dominating some camps in the church.

Accepting Charismatic Heresy

Again, what's going on? Deception is a major sign of the last days, and we're seeing deception rise at a rapid clip as megachurch preachers stand before the masses, preach heresy and sell thousands of books. The saints heap praise on false apostles, false prophets and false teachers. Pride is driving people, many of whom aren't even called into fivefold ministry, to don extravagant titles like "Official Prophetess" and "Chief Apostle Bishop Dr." and "Master Prophet Bishop." What happened to the bondservants? The lack of discernment in the body of Christ is disturbing. Where are the lovers of the truth (2 Thess. 2:10)?

How do you protect yourself from the spirit of error? I believe being a student of the Word is one safeguard against deception. Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Right after that, he spoke of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had "strayed concerning the truth" and were "saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18). In other words, they were preaching a false gospel.

Charismatic heretics are overthrowing the faith of some even now, preaching a false gospel. That's why you can't just be a lover of the Word someone else preaches. You have to study the Word yourself. You have to measure every message you read or hear against the Word of God for yourself. Don't just check to see if the Scripture is in your Bible, but study its meaning in the context of the chapter, book and entire Bible. When you do, much of the heresy is quickly discerned. But the church at large is lukewarm and lazy, preferring to feast on flashy sermons without lifting a finger to open their own Bibles.

A Prayer Challenge

I don't have all the answers, but I've been praying about this for years now. I started praying for God to break deception off my mind and to guard me from deception several years ago. Again, I don't have all the answers. But God has granted me discernment to escape much of the "religion" and deception that has risen in the church in this hour. And I am grateful for that grace.

See, the problem with deception is that you don't know you are deceived. If you knew you were deceived, you'd walk away from the lie and embrace the truth. Lovers of the truth are less likely to be deceived, but anyone can fall into deception. And if you think you are above the possibility of falling into deception, you are walking in a deception called pride. So I challenge you: Begin to pray for God to break off any

deception that has clouded your soul. Beseech Him by His mercy to deliver you from the grip of deception, to shine light on your mind and to give you discernment.

If you aren't deceived, that prayer won't hurt you. And, in fact, I believe we are all walking in some level of deception—even if it's on minor issues—because our minds are not completely renewed. If our minds were completely renewed, I believe we'd be walking in greater authority and seeing more miracles, signs and wonders in our lives. In other words, I believe we're all believing something that doesn't completely line up with God's Word.

So, again, I challenge you—I beg you—to begin to pray for God to break off any deception that has clouded your soul. Beseech Him by His mercy to deliver you from the grips of deception, to shine light on your mind and to give you discernment. You've got nothing to lose by releasing this petition, and you've got possibly your eternal soul to gain as God breaks in with light, exposes the enemy's lies and sets you free—or protects you—from the strong delusion that sends many to hell. Amen.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at jleclaire@charisma.com or visit her website [here](http://www.jenniferleclaire.com). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.