

3 Errors the Spirit of Deception Uses to Seduce You

Satan loves to deceive—it is vital that we discern. I have an urgency that is arising in my heart to blow a trumpet and to warn the body of Christ. The devil is a liar and the father of lies (see John 8:44). Now hold on as I share my heart with you.

Recently, a well-known leader and author whom I know, has gone off the deep end into aberrant sexual exploitation, all under the guise of “being free in Christ.” But the grace of God is meant to lead us to repentance and the knowledge of the truth (see Titus 2:11-12)—it is certainly not a license to cast off restraint and cause others to stumble. In other prophetic settings I am aware of strange doctrines emerging that each believer has an individual angel assigned to them to be their personal mentor. But Scripture says this is to be the job of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and authentic humble leaders in the body of Christ (see John 16:13-15).

Forewarned Is Forearmed

“To be forewarned is to be forearmed.” That old saying captures a scriptural truth. Discernment forewarns us so that we do not fall prey to subtle deceptions.

“Now the Spirit clearly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils’ (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Holy Spirit is the one who forewarns, in this case that some people will abandon their faith in Jesus because other attractions will draw their attention. They will be allured by believable voices which will manipulate their attention and cause them to give up on their faith. Their walk with the Lord will seem too wearisome and strenuous and they will start to

look for something more “fulfilling.”

The “later times” referred to in the passage have been underway for centuries; but the warning still holds true for us today. These words were not written for unbelievers, but rather for members of the church, and they expose the fact that it is easy to fall for the slick lies of the enemy, even in a church setting.

Note that the Spirit’s warning does not relegate those who fall away to the trash heap. It does not say that they can’t recover. It is not referring to the great apostasy of the end times. The warning comes with hope, conditional upon the response of those who heed it.

Walking the Balance Beam

Followers of Jesus Christ must continually keep their balance by keeping their eyes on Him. The moment we turn our attention to the side, our steps weave and waver. If we try to follow anything or anybody but God, we can get off the narrow track altogether, and it takes a lot of effort to get back where we belong.

We can walk in a straight line only if we focus our attention on Him, following the Lamb step by step as He leads us: ““These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev. 14:4). His personal invitation, we are followers of Christ, no longer followers of the devil:

“And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. ... They immediately left the boat and their father and followed Him” (Matt. 4:19-20, 22).

“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s station. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ And he rose and followed Him” (Matt. 9:9).

“And great crowds followed Him, and He healed them all. ... when the people heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities” (Matt. 12:15b, 13:13b).

Please join me in declaring your intention to follow the Lamb wherever He may lead you, and to turn your eyes away from distractions that would lead you astray.

How Do Evil Spirits Deceive?

The deceitful spirits who lie in wait in the dark shadows aim to deflect God’s people from the right path. Their insinuations are deceptive, manipulative, seductive, alluring. Demons lure people from a position of stability into a place of instability in an attempt to capture them in their web of lies.

We must learn to expose demonic strategies. They operate in different ways in different circumstances, perpetrating error in the most advantageous way possible, using a number of strategies:

1. Error by exaggeration—truth wrapped in a lie: Much of the seductiveness of the enemy’s lies comes from the fact that they contain a kernel of truth. “You are sad, aren’t you?” he whispers. “You will never get over that thing your brother did to you. It’s really affecting your personality. Why not do something about it? Why not get even with him?”

It is true that your brother did something hurtful to you. It is true that you are sad. But the rest is an exaggeration and the beginning of an accusation. Soon a supposed “truth” is ringing in your head, and you lose sight of the real truth. An insinuation turns into a motivation to retaliate. You may have begun the day as a faithful follower, only to end it off in the weeds.

Paul was exasperated with the people of the church in Galatia because they so often fell for this trick of the devil. He

wrote: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? ... Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1, 3).

2. Error by exalting a special revelation above the Word of God. Uh-oh. This is a tricky one for people who are zealous to know God's revelation. If they do not watch out, they start holding the latest prophetic word higher than the Word of God.

"That was revealed to him by an angel, so it must be reliable!"

"The Bible can't cover everything; that's why God sends extra-special revelation like this."

"Get outta my way! Personal experiences don't lie!"

Obviously I believe that God does send special revelation to his people—but never, ever should it be held in higher esteem than the written Word of God. Even though I myself have experienced a number of angelic visitations and supernatural experiences that are almost indescribable, I want to remain open to correction at all times, and I return to the "main and plain" message of Scripture all the time.

The extras are just extra. My happiness and especially my salvation do not depend on them. God helping me, I will always take seriously Paul's warnings to the believers under his care:

Do not let anyone cheat you of your reward by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels, dwelling on those things which he has not seen, vainly arrogant due to his unspiritual mind, and not supporting the head, from which the entire body, nourished and knit together by joints and sinews, grows as God gives the increase (Col. 2:18).

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who

called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not a gospel. But there are some who trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Although if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than the one we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so I say now again: If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than the one you have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

People too easily fall for the appeal of an exciting new message or its messenger, or they begin to say, "Oh well, if I can hear God for myself, then I don't have to pay as much attention to the truth of God's Word and what I already know to be true, because now I can just listen and He's going to direct me." They may even back it up with a proof text such as this one: "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21).

Sometimes we become more susceptible to deception because of desperation. We so badly want healing or some kind of miracle for ourselves or someone else that we will cling to a "word" that did not originate with God. Our emotional weak spots become entry points for the enemy's alluring, fraudulent message.

It is a slippery slope. One mild-sounding deception leads to worse ones. How else do you think people end up in cults or seriously off-balance?

3. Error by prideful self-promotion. The devil loves to persuade people that they are better than others. Even though the Bible says clearly, "Do not forsake the assembling of believers" (see Hebrews 10:25), such people become convinced that they are too big (too elite, too important, more educated, above criticism) to fellowship with ordinary Christians in an ordinary church. They position themselves

above accountability, exalting their own giftedness or experience level.

The only cure is humility. I saw this at work back when I was part of the Kansas City prophets and we were accused of all sorts of aberrant practices. I don't think we felt we were all that elite, but some of the people who followed us did. An international uproar broke out in 1990 in the heartland of America. Fame can be so intoxicating and potentially dangerous.

I was impressed with the way Mike Bickle, the senior leader of the fellowship, handled the accusations. Time after time, he responded with humility, acknowledging mistakes and attempting to set things right. In the long run, it opened the way for a lot of healthy adjustments and maturing in wisdom in prophetic development in Kansas City and elsewhere. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, quoting Prov. 3:34).

Join Me in the Prayer of a Discerning Heart

Gracious Father, in Jesus' mighty name I pray, thanking You for the light of Your Word. I admit my total dependence upon you. Shine Your light on me. If there is any form of deception in my life, I ask Your Spirit to send conviction, revelation, discernment and freedom. I choose to revoke my alliance with any form of darkness and to step into proper alignment with Your ways. Guard me against any form of deception. Help me to pierce through the seductive lies of the enemy and grant me wisdom to make use of Your truth. I ask that You do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ever ask for and that You will turn everything in my life to the good.

With a heart full of worship, I magnify Your great name. I rejoice in Your wonderful, complete salvation. Amen and Amen!
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