

James Goll: Your Top Weapon Against Satan's Sneaky Deception

Satan's No. 1 weapon is deception. Your No. 1 need is discernment!

"To be forewarned is to be forearmed." That is why you need discernment in this hour.

That old saying captures a scriptural truth: Discernment forewarns us so that we do not fall prey to subtle deceptions.

Forewarning gives us courage, too, as we find out what we are dealing with and what to do.

"The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1, NASB).

The above Scripture begins with the phrase, "The Spirit explicitly says ..."

The Holy Spirit is the one who forewarns us, in this case, that some people will abandon their faith in Jesus because other attractions will draw their attention; they will be allured by convincing voices that will manipulate their attention and cause them to give up on their belief. 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 have been underway for centuries, and the warning especially holds true for us today.

These words were not written for unbelievers, but rather for full 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.

The Spirit's warning in 1 Timothy 4 does not relegate those who fall away to the trash heap. It does not say that they cannot recover.

The truth is—we all need this word of warning and discernment to detect the motivating spirit is behind a particular activity.

Deceitful Spirits Lurk in the Shadows

Even as we follow the Lord faithfully, deceitful unclean spirits are lurking in the shadows, looking for some way to dissuade us from following Him.

We need to be on our guard at all times. We can count on the Holy Spirit to give us discernment to detect the presence of enemy spirits.

The brilliant light of heaven not only shines like a beacon to guide us, but it also exposes whatever is hiding in the darkness. By this light, we both discern deceitful spirits and elude their manipulations as we pursue the one true God.

I have stated for years, "New light from God and His Word exposes old levels of darkness." We can find references to God's light throughout the Bible.

Here are some examples from the New Testament:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12).

"You are all the sons of light and the sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5).

"Do not err, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of

lights, with whom is no change or shadow of turning" (James 1:16–17)

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 instability in an attempt to capture them in their web of lies.

We must learn to expose demonic tactics. They operate in different ways in different circumstances, perpetrating error in the most advantageous way possible, using a number of strategies. Most of the time, the demonic forces do not hit you with all guns at once.

They tend to inch their way in step by step, lie by lie, temptation by temptation, allurements by allurements and attempt to create a haven where darkness then breeds more darkness.

We have welcomed what we thought was "permissible," only to find out later that it was an enemy of deception.

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, hmmm?"

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, in which truth is mingled with falsehood. 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. 3:1a, 3).

By Contradicting the Word of God

One of the schemes of the enemy is to speak to us in first-person language.

We think the thoughts are from us and about us.

But let me expose that trick: The devil loves to talk about himself. He feels sad. He feels sick. He feels like he does not belong. He feels rejected.

So wise up and let’s learn to expose the devil’s tactics.

Don’t take the devil’s bait!

Discernment will help you distinguish the truth from a lie and an exaggeration from reality. 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?

Therefore, we must always remember that the Holy Spirit never contradicts God’s Word, and the spirit of deception always distorts the authority of the Word of God!

The Truth Will Set You Free

According to the New Testament, the possibility of deception

is very real.

But that does not mean that everyone has to be deceived or has to stay deceived.

We can be kept safe in Jesus.

The Lord can bring us into a wide place where we can be firmly rooted and secure, and it is for that very reason the Bible often says to us: "Be not deceived."

Beloved, let's learn to walk in humility and with gratitude, letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (see Col. 3:15.)

Let's walk in accountability. Let's honor the Word of God. But I have some good news for you. You can know the truth, and the truth will set us free! (see John 8:32).

God gives us grace to live in His love: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and in godliness in this present world" (Titus 2:11–12).

You can regain your place in that grace if you've stepped out of it, but only if you surrender your claim to know what is right apart from God's written Word first.

I want to be a person who starts well by grace—and who also finishes well. Don't you?

Let's be the antidote for this day and hour. Let's walk in discernment in Christ Jesus!

Prayer of a Discerning Heart

Gracious Father, in Jesus's mighty name I pray, thanking You for the light of Your Word. I admit my total dependency 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. Help me to respond well to You and to extend Your grace to my family and friends. I choose to revoke my alliance with any form of darkness and to step into proper alignment with Your ways.

Guard me against further 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 would do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ever ask for and that You would 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! {eoa}

James W. Goll is the president of God Encounters Ministries and has traveled around the world sharing the love of Jesus, imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry and life in the Spirit. He has recorded numerous classes with corresponding study guides and is the author of more than 40 books, including *The Seer*, *The Lost Art of Intercession*, *The Coming Israel Awakening* and *The Lifestyle of a Prophet*. James is the father of four wonderful children with a growing number of grandchildren and makes his home in Franklin, Tennessee.

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