
Directives for Dealing with Deceivers

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Where there is true, there is usually false. It is not surprising for us to see plenty of falsehood surrounding the truth of the Bible. If you read the Old Testament, you will find that the false prophets outnumbered the true servants of God. In the New Testament, the writers constantly talked about false teachers. As an example, 2 Peter 2:1 states, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.” Heresies are false teachings. A person that teaches false things is called a heretic.

As believers, it is important to know that there are false teachers all around us. We work with them, go to school with them, and even live next door to them. How do we deal with them? How are we supposed to operate when we know that the person next to us teaches heresy? Fortunately, the Bible teaches us how to treat false teachers. As we look to the Bible, we will see that it gives us four directives related to false teachers. We will look at these in the order that they appear in the Bible.

Directive #1

Mark and Avoid

In the book of Romans 16:17, Paul teaches that we are to mark and avoid people who teach false doctrine. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” In order to put this into practice, we need to learn to pay attention to our surroundings. For instance, you may, on occasion, hear someone promoting the “lost books of the Bible.” Mark that person. There are no lost books of the Bible. We have all 66

books. If you are careful to mark this person in your mind, or even on paper, you will have fulfilled half of Paul's directive. Once you have marked them, the Bible teaches to avoid them. There is nothing wrong with avoiding someone. In this case, it is the right thing to do. If you mark and avoid such teachers, you will do well.

Directive #2

Rebuke

The first chapter of the book of Titus deals with false teachers. Titus 1:10 says, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision.” This is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it tells us to expect deceivers all around us. Second, it tells us to be on alert for those that promote circumcision. This passage provides two actions that we are encouraged to take concerning such deceivers. First, we are to do everything possible to stop them. Titus 1:11 says, “Whose mouths must be stopped.” This is mainly a directive to church leaders; even so, if we can stop the mouth of the deceivers we have done well. The second action we can take is to rebuke them. Titus 1:13 states, “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.” Based on this verse, it could be that if we rebuke them sharply enough they may repent and be true believers. You will notice that this change does not come by the usual witnessing techniques but from sharp rebuke. If the circumstances are right, you can attempt to stop their mouths by rebuking them and thus fulfill this directive.

Directive #3

Admonish Twice then Reject

Also in the book of Titus, we are taught that there is a limit to the number of times we should try to correct a heretic. Titus 3:10 says, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject." If we choose to follow this directive rather than directive #1, we should only do so twice. Once we have admonished (another word for rebuke) the person twice, we need to reject them. This may sound strange to your ears. Why should a Christian reject anyone? Aren't we supposed to love everyone? Aren't we even commanded to love our enemies? We are to love our enemies, but in Titus we are told to reject false teachers. Don't get tripped up about this. If you try to love this kind of enemy by receiving them, it will be a barrier to your relationship with Christ. Plus, you may wind up falling into their deceptions.

Directive #4

Refuse Hospitality and Courtesy

You may wonder how far you should go in your rejection and avoidance of false teachers. Fortunately, the Bible has an answer for almost every question we might ask. The small book of 2 John teaches us how far we should take this. 2 John 10-11 says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." We are given two things that we must refuse to do.

First, we must refuse to allow them to enter our house. It is very interesting to note that many false teachers make a deliberate effort to enter into houses. Many unsuspecting Christians fail on this point by inviting them to come inside. You must not do this. Leave

them outside. Some of them try to enter your home through literature. Don't let it happen. Let them leave with whatever they bring. Don't bring their teachings into your home.

Second, we are not to bid them God speed. God speed is an old expression that has been replaced in modern English. It is very similar to the expressions we use to greet people we know. We might say "Have a great weekend," or "Drive safe." John teaches us that if we show this kind of courtesy to a false brother, God counts his sins against us. We are a "partaker of his evil deeds." This sounds extreme doesn't it? Just imagine that you know a false brother that says to you, "Have a great weekend." Do you have the nerve to simply say nothing in response? This not only sounds extreme, it is extreme!

Why do you think that God would go to such extremes as to hold you guilty for another man's evil deeds? It may teach us just how much God hates false teaching. He wants us to hate it too. He wants us to mark and avoid these people. He wants us to rebuke them and stop their mouths. He wants us to admonish them only twice before rejecting them completely. He wants us to refuse them hospitality and courtesy. Why is God so extreme? He is so extreme because he loves us enough to keep us from danger. False brothers are all around us. They talk about religious things, and they look like sincere seekers of truth. They carry Bibles and read them often. They love to talk about the Word of God, but in reality, they are servants of the enemy. They are like open traps waiting for the simple to be snared. Will you be the next victim? If you follow the directives given in the Bible, you won't. This is a matter of life and death! It isn't a wonder it is so extreme!