

Lesson 2 - The Character and Fruits of the Deceiver (Hypocrite)

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Introduction: The Lord expects each of us to learn how to identify a deceiver.

A. It is folly to think that when the Lord says “beware” that *it has no application to us*.

(Mt 7:15-20)

1. As a young Christian *I had no concept* as to how this worked.
2. It has been only after years of experience that I better understood this.

B. This lesson is dealing with *a certain kind of deceiver*, the hypocrite.

(Lk 12:1-3; Mt 23:27-28)

1. We are not dealing with an honest heart that is mistaken. *Only a few* become deceivers like this. We must always act by showing true justice and mercy.
2. Our primary focus will be on *the hypocrite with an agenda* to influence Christians. (Acts 20:29-31)
3. Recently there have been several churches divided in our state by such men.

I. The character of the hypocritical deceiver

A. He must build both within and without *an imagined view of himself*. (Ps 36:1-4)

1. This describes the classic narcissist. There are other factors that feed deception.

Signs and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder: 1. Grandiose sense of self-importance. 2. Lives in a fantasy world that supports their delusions of grandeur. 3. Needs constant praise and admiration. 4. Sense of entitlement. 5. Exploits others without guilt or shame. 6. Frequently demeans, intimidates, bullies, or belittles others.

2. God describes this one as having *no fear of God* and thus is given to deceit.

3. This man will not see himself and will *hate those who try to point out his faults*.

B. He is quick to hatred and bitterness but *seeks to conceal it*. (Prov 26:20-28)

1. Jesus said they appear as a sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Mt 7:15)

Ravenous - ἄπρᾶξ, gen. ἀγρός (1) vicious, ravenous, destructive, like a wild animal (MT 7.15); (2) violently greedy (LU 18.11); substantively robber, swindler (1C 6.10)

2. If you become a threat to this one *he will discard you in a moment!* Those that come under his influence will come to “live in the land of throw-away people.”

C. He is *quick to spot unstable people* and move to meet their “needs.” (Jude 16-19)

1. Absalom is a classic example of this character. (2 Sam 15:1-5)

2. Needy people are very vulnerable to flattery and attention. The deceiver will try to draw them away from other relationships *by creating “wedges.”*

II. How the hypocritical deceiver views and treats others

A. He will make judgements of others based on *their potential “usefulness”* to them.

1. If you have experience and *an ability to discern you likely will be a threat*. He (they) will work hard *to destroy your reputation*.

2. If you are unstable or inexperienced he will *try to draw you closer* by speaking to you based upon *your perceived needs or interest*. (Jer 9:3-4, 8-9)

3. This is why he publicly speaks in “code.” He wants to pacify the discernor while seeking *a private opportunity to draw in the unstable*. (2 Pt 2:1-3)

B. He will try to *bind (ensnare) one emotionally to him*. (2 Pt 2:18-19)

1. Watch how he deals with emotional issues. He views issues as a way *to inflame and separate brethren* (wedges) while the faithful seek to solve problems.
2. He is quick to *read the minds of others and demonize them*. There is an old saying among politicians: “A crisis is a terrible thing to waste.”
3. Consider *how one handles* issues: the term “church of Christ,” “legalism,” how we conduct assemblies, restoration history, CENI and “worship.”
4. They make *sweeping, emotional generalizations* of which they cannot know as true. They are quick to believe a falsehood and slander others. (**Jude 9**)
5. In the end they plant an *irrational bitterness that cuts off those who love them*. (**Gal 4:16-17**)

III. How to “break the code” of a deceiver

A. Seek to have *key words and phrases defined*.

1. Ask the speaker to clarify. Unfortunately a dishonest person *will rarely cooperate*. You may be called a name or laughed at.
2. It may take an enormous effort to finally get the truth out if the teacher is willing to be questioned. (Ex. Ed Bragwell taped discussion 45 years ago)
3. These teachers often “put handles on their words!” Depending on who talks to them will *change what these words mean*. (Ex. Depends on what “is” means)
4. Men who love God’s word will try to “speak as the oracles of God.” They prefer to use Bible words that can be defined! (**1 Pt 4:11; Jn 8:28-29**)

B. *Research unusual words or phrases*. Often these terms are used by popular teachers and in popular books.

C. See how these words are used *by the teacher’s disciples and friends*.

1. Often the less-experienced disciples of the teacher will plainly reveal what the code means! (Facebook discussions can be very useful)
2. Some have *not learned to be as deceptive as their teacher*.

D. **Class Discussion:** Let us seek to break the code in an example paragraph. Take a moment and underline or circle key phrases or words to be defined.

“I believe we should go back to the Bible – free of any shackles of doctrinal issues of churches of Christ – and just read it as a story (which is what it is). Not seeking to find justification or argumentation over some preconceived notion about righteousness, holiness, patterns, etc. But, reading it as a Christological document (see the Art of Reading Scripture), I think we will be greatly enriched and many of our rigid rules will become more nuanced and refreshed. We may even drop some rules; and we may actually add some depth of commitment to the call to discipleship. As we do that, and as we begin to glean the true intent of this story and reinvestigate the real meaning of various contexts that have dominated us – in our issues – we will have done ourselves a great favor. We will not be propositional Baconians – nor will we be relativist postmoderns (though, to one degree or another, we will miss some points and probably lean in one or both of those directions at different times in specific instances). But, we will be Bible storytellers.”

1. What words or phrases need defining?
2. What prejudicial language is used? *Who is it used toward?*
3. Is there sufficient specificity *to understand any specific problems* he wished to solve?
4. What other terms (not in this paragraph) have you heard in controversies that are not well defined? Let’s make a list and discuss possible meanings.

(Legalist, Biblicist, Biblicism, propositional Baconian, patteredism, opposition to CENI)