

How to Identify a False Teacher

1. By Their Conduct

TITUS 1:15-16 - ¹⁵ To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but **in works they deny Him**, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

1 JOHN 3:10-12 - ¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: **Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God**, nor is he who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as **Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother**. And why did he murder him? Because **his works were evil** and his brother's righteous.

2. By Their Content

- **man's teaching versus God's Word**

MATT 15:1-6 - Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." ³ He answered and said to them, "**Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?**" ⁴ For God commanded, saying, '*Honor your father and your mother*'; and, '*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death*.' ⁵ But you say, '*Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"*'— ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus **you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition**.

COL 2:8 - Beware lest anyone cheat you through **philosophy** and empty deceit, **according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world**, and not according to Christ.

COL 2:16-23 - ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in **false humility and worship of angels**, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. ²⁰

Therefore, if you died with Christ from **the basic principles of the world**, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— ²¹ "**Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,**" ²² which all concern things which perish with the using— according to **the commandments and doctrines of men?** ²³ These things indeed have **an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are** of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

- **denial of basic truths**

GAL 1:6-8 - I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to **a different gospel**, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to **pervert the gospel of Christ**. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches **any other gospel** to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Gal 2:3-4 – Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was **compelled to be circumcised**. ⁴ And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into **bondage**),

2 PET 2:1 - But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in **destructive heresies**, even **denying the Lord who bought them**, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

1 JOHN 4:1-3 - Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³ and **every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God**. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

- **adding to Scripture**

1 TIM 4:1-5 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to **deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons**, ² speaking **lies** in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³ **forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods** which God created to be

received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

3. By Their Covetousness

MATT 7:15-19 - "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

MATT 23:14 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you **devour widows' houses**, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

1 TIM 6:3-5 - If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, **who suppose that godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.

TITUS 1:10-11 - For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, **for the sake of dishonest gain**.

2 PET 2:2-3 - And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ **By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words**; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

4. By Their Crowd-gathering

MATT 24:4-5 - And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and **will deceive many**.

5. By Their Causing of Division

ACTS 20:29-30 - For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among

yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, **to draw away the disciples after themselves**.

6. By Their Commending Speech (Luke 6:26)

LUKE 6:26 - Woe to you when all men **speak well of you**, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

7. By Their Conceit

2 COR 11:12 - But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things **of which they boast**.

8. By Their Outward Conformity

MATT 23:14 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense **make long prayers**. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

2 COR 11:13-15 - For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves into apostles of Christ**. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also **transform themselves into ministers of righteousness**, whose end will be according to their works.

2 TIM 3:5 - **having a form of godliness** but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

9. By Their Conniving

2 COR 11:13-15 For such *are* false apostles, **deceitful workers**, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

10. By Their Conflict

2 Cor 11:25-26 -²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, ***in* perils among false brethren**;

These do not guarantee accuracy or legitimacy:

- Popularity (deceive many...)
- Ability (Matt 7:21-23; 24:11,24)
- Eloquence (contrasted with Paul's stammering...)