

Lesson 1 – Taking Deception Seriously
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Introduction: Our God wants us to take deception very seriously.

- A. The *entire battleground of salvation and damnation* surrounds deception.
 - 1. What is the core work of Satan? (**Jn 8:44-48**)
 - 2. Satan’s work results in men being *unwilling to see and acknowledge* what is true. Think about the tragedy that follows in the lives of such people.
 - 3. The essence of salvation is *finding the truth that makes us free*. (**Jn 8:31-32**)
 - 4. Truth is *often painful and challenging*. Truth brings us to know God and the grace and guidance He abundantly provides.
- B. Deception continues to be *a major threat to the Christian*.
 - 1. How *many times* did Jesus say beware, take heed, be not deceived and many other warnings to His disciples concerning deception. (**Lk 12:1-3**)
 - 2. *Satan is relentless*. We can easily be moved from faithful service to hypocrisy.

I. We can be easily be deceived

- A. Imagine trying to play chess with a grandmaster. We *do not have a chance*.
 - 1. Now imagine trying to match your mind against *the powerful spiritual being called Satan*. (**Eph 4:14, 6:11-13; 1 Pt 5:8**)

Wiles - *μεθοδεία*, ας, ῆ (also μεθοδία) method, procedure; in the NT in a bad sense, as scheming to deceive *craftiness, cunning, deception* (EP 4.14); plural *stratagems, cunning attacks, tricks* (EP 6.11)

- 2. Jesus tried to warn Peter about *the power of this great deceiver*. (**Lk 22:31-34**)
- 3. What kind of thinking could have led Peter to ignore this warning? What kind of thinking can we similarly engage in?
- B. All men *must prioritize the subjects* that they carefully think about.
 - 1. We do not have the time or energy to carefully analyze *every decision and action* we take.
 - 2. We need to heed scripture as to *the things we carefully consider!* (**Deut 12:28-30; Lk 8:18; 12:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 10:12**)
 - 3. What do we *put at the forefront* of our thoughts each day?
- C. Six *shortcuts from facts and reason* in making decisions.
(From the Psychology of Persuasion – Robert Cialdini)

1. **Reciprocation**

“Little wonder, then, that the influential French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, in describing the social pressures surrounding the gift-giving process in human culture, can state, “There is an obligation to give, an obligation to receive, and an obligation to repay.”

2. **Commitment and consistency**

This is “...our desire to be consistent about what we have already done. Once we have made a choice or taken a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment.

3. **Social proof**

“We view behavior as more correct in a given situation to the degree that we see others performing it.”

4. **Liking**

“People prefer to say ‘yes’ to those they know and like.”

5. Authority

“We tend to follow authority figures. An order from an authority is usually seen in isolation instead of the situation as a whole. We are as vulnerable to the symbols of authority as to its substance.”

6. Scarcity

“Opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited. The thought of losing something motivates us more than the thought of gaining something of similar value.”

II. We must learn to see through deception

A. There will be some who seek to draw disciples unto themselves. (Acts 20:30)

1. They will appear humble, loving and often have a great ability to speak. Sadly, they have a different motive than what is outwardly shown. (Col 2:18-19, 23)

2. How can I know when this is happening?

B. Good people often have a hard time identifying deceptive people. (Rom 16:17-18)

1. “Simple” or inexperienced people assume that all have honest hearts.

2. We can be just, merciful and wise! Our Lord tells us how to discern.

C. Honest men want to teach God’s truth so that all may plainly see it for themselves from God’s word. Able teachers point to “knowing the truth.” (Jn 7:16-17; 8:28-32)

1. Dishonest people work to obscure and hide their beliefs from others.

2. A common characteristic of deceptive men is that they are commonly “misunderstood.” They are rarely plain. (Mk 11:30-33)

3. One brother described a man’s preaching as “veiled subtleties that leave you uneasy after hearing the sermons.”

C. Why do many brethren talk in “code?” (Summary of article “Talking Code”)

However, when the intent of users is to deceive or maintain secrecy they resort to a more intense form of jargon called “code.” A “code” is a system of words, letters, or symbols which only the sender and receiver know. Its purpose is to withhold information from those who are not instructed or initiated in the code’s meanings and who might jeopardize the mission of the users before the time when such secrecy is no longer possible or necessary.

Talking in code offers several advantages to those who would, consciously or not, abuse the truth:

1. The primary advantage of talking in code is the power it gives its users to conceal what they believe from those who might oppose their teachings if they understood what they were really saying. In this, they rely on the dishonesty of equivocation, or the use of words which are susceptible to different meanings. Thus, if false teachings are challenged, their proponents simply fall back on the defense that what they are accused of meaning is not what they meant and that they have been misrepresented. In short, it disarms opponents by offering its users credible deniability.... (2 Pt 2:1-2)

2. For this reason, code-talk also serves to save the conscience of the false teacher. He is able to convince himself that he is really the one who has come to understand the true meanings of Biblical terms and that it is not his fault if others are too ignorant to know them. Hence, trying to expose the false teacher might ironically confirm him in his suspicion that he is simply being “persecuted for the sake of righteousness” by brethren who are jealous of his growing knowledge and influence.

http://www.aubeacon.com/Articles2015/Article_TalkingCode.html

John R. W. Stott, an Anglican writing in Christianity Today (November 4, 1977, p. 35), questions whether public exposure is the best way to deal with such problems because “heretics are slippery creatures” who often disguise their true intentions by the misleading usage of familiar language. “Besides,” he says, “in our age of easy tolerance, the arraigned heretic becomes in the public mind first the innocent victim of bigoted prosecutors, than a martyr, then a hero or saint.” - **The Gospel: Bound or Bent?**

By Steve Wolfgang