

True Or False? Are You Prepared To Answer?
1 Timothy 6:3-5

Third, by learning to recognize when the Bible is being used deceitfully.

1. In 2 Corinthians 4:2, Paul said that he and his missionary team had not handled the Word of God deceitfully.
2. In 2 Corinthians 2:17, he said something similar, “*For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*”
3. As you can see, even in Paul’s day there were false teachers busy quoting Scripture, but they were corrupting it and using it for their own deceitful, selfish purposes. Why would anybody do such a thing? Titus 1:10-11
4. For the same reason people do it today—for money. Religion has always been a big money business that charlatans use to fleece the flock. Jesus himself knew and taught this. Matthew 7:22-23
5. You may be thinking, “Why does God let them get away with this?” For the same reason He doesn’t zap us when we sin—it’s His longsuffering and grace. But rest assured, they are not getting away with it. They will be held accountable before God one day and be judged.
 - Peter makes that clear in 2 Peter 2:1, 12.
6. In the meantime, if you are a believer, you’d better be on your guard and be ready to protect yourself.
7. In our text, Paul mentions false teachers and a certain doctrine they were promoting at that time. Look at verse 5; “*...gain is godliness...*”
8. There are two applications to this doctrine they were advancing that “*gain is godliness.*”
9. First, they were religious racketeers. To them, Christianity was a business—a way of financial gain. They were using their teaching as a cloke of covetousness. Peter mentions false teachers that “*make merchandise*” of their followers. 2 Peter 2:3
 - Paul was so careful not to do this or to even give this impression. 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 9
 - Unfortunately, we have many religious racketeers today that prey on gullible people and promise people “blessings,” while taking their money. They play on people’s emotions, guilt, and sicknesses.
 - They do it on TV and the radio, behind church pulpits, and through the Web and books.
10. Second, they taught that the more material possessions you have, the godlier you are.
 - Your financial status (blessings) indicates what kind of Christian you are. They indicate whether you are walking in divine favor or not.
 - Gain is godliness—material gain is evidence of God’s blessings. What a pity and a complete sham. This is a great example of what we talked about earlier; people using the Bible deceitfully for their own profit.
11. This teaching is still very popular today. It is commonly referred to as prosperity preaching or health and wealth theology. It goes like this:

- “God is up in heaven just longing and desiring to shower you with earthly, material, financial blessings. If you are walking by faith and in His divine favor, you will see these tangible blessings every day.”
 - Prosperity theology says it is God’s will for you to be wealthy and financially prosperous.
 - The more you have materially proves how close you are to God and how great your faith is.
 - And of course, it works out great for teachers of this doctrine. They live extravagantly with \$1,000 suits, ride around in limos, and wear expensive jewelry on every finger; and they respond, “If you’re going to preach it, you have to live it.”
12. A Bible believer’s first reaction is to say, “That is preposterous. John the Baptist was poor. Jesus was poor. The apostles were poor. Paul was poor.”
13. But these false teachers quote Bible left and right to support their teaching. They have an endless barrage of proof texts to convince people. Jeremiah 33:8-9
- The idea of God-sent material prosperity **is** in the Bible. The problem is that they lift the verses out of their context and dispensational setting.
 - For example, what does Jeremiah 33:7 say? Jeremiah is referring to the kingdom age when Israel is in their land; Satan is bound, and Christ is ruling and reigning on His throne.
14. The verses dealing with God’s prosperity have to do with Israel, either under their law system or in their future kingdom.
15. **The Law**—God made a covenant with His people, Israel, when they came out of Egypt. We call this the Old Testament or “the law.”
- According to the covenant, God gave them specific commands in regards to giving and many other things.
 - If they kept God’s law, they could fully expect God to look down from heaven, bless them and bless their land (proper rain and sunshine), and make them high above the other nations.
 - God said, “I will bless you physically and materially in such a way that you won’t have room to store it all.” **Example:** Malachi 3:7-12
16. **The kingdom**—Jesus announced that He was their Messiah and that the kingdom on earth was at hand. They’d better prepare themselves.
- Jesus instructed the believing flock of Israel to divest themselves of all their earthly assets and give alms (Luke 12:33). They would enter a time period right before the kingdom arrived where a total 100% commitment must be made. Luke 18:22
 - When Christ returns and the kingdom arrives, they could expect to receive back a hundredfold! How is that for interest! This is the context of verses like Luke 6:38.
 - I’ve heard preachers use this verse in an effort to get believers today to give to their ministry. But that verse has a context. It’s funny; they don’t live by Luke 6:30.
 - With the kingdom at hand, the believer could expect to receive back whatever they gave up with manifold interest when the kingdom arrived. Matthew 16:27

- Do you see how a religious charlatan could take these kingdom verses and twist them, make big promises, and influence people to give money to their ministry?
17. What is correct doctrine for today, for the church age? We are not Israel living under the law, and we are not Israel living in the kingdom on earth. What did Paul teach the church? Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4, 7
- In the initial discipleship of these believers, Paul warned them that suffering and tribulation would come. Sure enough, it came to pass, and Paul said, "Now you know firsthand what we were talking about."
 - Isn't it interesting that Paul did not paint a picture of worldly prosperity for these new believers? He never assured them that if they would just exercise enough faith, they would be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous.
 - Paul told them just the **opposite** of what you hear so often today from "name it and claim it" television preachers. Paul wasn't trying to get in these people's pocketbooks, or win a popularity contest, or sell books, or increase TV ratings.
 - He loved these people dearly and desired for them to know the **truth** so they could be prepared for the problems and afflictions of life.
 - As you read Paul's letters to the churches you can readily see that the teaching today that is so popular that God wants to bless you with material blessings, and you can expect special favor from everybody, is a result of **wrongly** dividing God's Word and is diametrically opposite of Paul's teaching to the church.
 - Paul's said about himself, *"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace."* 1 Corinthians 4:11 Did Paul lack faith and lack a close walk with Christ?
 - Paul makes it very clear where our blessings are today (Ephesians 1:3). This is why he said to set your affection on things above, NOT on things on the earth. Colossians 3:1 cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

In Conclusion:

1. If you desire to be able to detect false teachers, you must study Paul's writings thoroughly and understand how God is working today. All of the Bible is written for us, but it is not all written directly to us.
2. False teachers ignore this basic concept and use the Bible deceitfully for their own selfish needs.

End Part 3