

How To Identify False Teachers

This study follows Jesus' "Parable of The Shrewd Manager" in Luke 16:1-13. That parable was about a manager who was unfaithful in managing a rich man's money. He used it for his own pleasure. Jesus' purpose in giving that parable was to teach that some believers are just as guilty as unfaithful managers and need to be faithful to God who owns the money He has given to them. Money should only be a tool that is used to accomplish God's purposes. Jesus taught that Christians might worship money too. That reveals we can be very self-centered. The most shocking statement in the parable was a rebuke that Christians are not as wise as non-Christians because they do not wisely use money to spread the gospel about Christ. Such individuals distort what God has said and in turn we fail to please Him. In this study, Luke 16:14-18, Jesus warns us against false teachers.

LOVERS OF MONEY. We must start by asking a serious question. Do you love money? Your answer must not be influenced by what you believe the correct answer should be. The answer must be influenced by your practice. To love money does not mean that you love the metal it is made of, how it gleams in the sun, its size or its design. To love money refers to what you do with it. Research has shown that most Christians

hardly give anything to God or use their money to spread the good news about Jesus Christ. According to Christianity Today, in 2011 American evangelicals gave 2.43 percent of their money to a church annually.[1] By 2017, the Nonprofit

Source reported that the percentage was almost unchanged.

Christians are giving at 2.5% of income; during the Great Depression it was 3.3%.

The average giving by adults who attend US Protestant churches

is about \$17 a week.¹

The statistics indicate that Americans spent about \$3,008 on restaurant meals in 2015[3] or \$57.85 per week. At the same time Americans spent \$4015 on groceries annually or \$77.21 per week. Since research has shown that the behavior of most Christians is similar to the general population, this

means that they spend more on restaurant meals than they give to the ministry of their church and to the spread of the gospel. Yet, the missionary in Ghana is struggling to obtain money to provide a Bible for a new Christian or a Christian website is



struggling to spread the gospel. Some missionaries do not have enough for medical services while a Christian is sitting in Starbucks drinking a pumpkin spice latte.

FALSE TEACHERS LOVE MONEY. The truth is many

1. "The Ultimate List Of Charitable Giving Statistics For 2018." Non-profit Source. March 2018.

Christians love their money and what it will buy. The spread of the gospel is not important to them, but their pumpkin spice latte is! They seek to please themselves. So we should not be surprised that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, for loving money more than God. Luke 16:14-15 begins our study with a condemning statement about them.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. Luke 16:14 (NASB)

What a horrible description of the Pharisees. Imagine being called a lover of money. The Pharisees were lovers of money! Are you? Matthew 6:1-2 tells us that when the Pharisees did give money to the poor, they wanted everyone to know. The passage says they had someone blow a trumpet so that everyone would turn and look to see them

giving their money in acts of charity. Yes, they loved their money and the honor they believed it gave them as they gave it away. Isaiah 56:11 reveals that one of the marks of a false teacher is that they are like greedy dogs. Their teaching is crafted to make them wealthy. 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 10 and 2 Peter 2:3 add that false teachers exploit others with false words in order to gain money. Apparently, the Pharisees did that constantly and were very successful because people lacked discernment. The Pharisees were false teachers who

exploited others.

Jesus tells us that the Pharisees were listening and scoffing at Jesus. Such reactions reveal a proud and unrepentant heart. The Greek word that is translated as “scoffing” is *ekmykterizo*. It is also translated as “sneer.” It is in the imperfect tense which implies that they were mocking or sneering at Jesus while He was speaking. They were repeatedly disrespectful. They had a choice, to either repent and stop loving money or to make excuses for their behavior. That is, they

justified themselves. They told themselves they were righteous people. Many today do the same! We do not think of ourselves as being proud and self-deceptive. Jeremiah 17:9 warns us that . . .

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

It is a warning that when someone or the Scripture rebukes you, it is time to seriously evaluate your-

self. It is easy to ignore criticism, especially from people who are angry with us. What I have found is that often there is an element of truth in the criticism that I receive. Many friends are slow and hesitant to criticize. Therefore, when someone risks the relationship by telling us the truth about ourselves, we need to listen. But we often do not. We are too proud.

SELF-DECEPTION LEADS TO EXCUSES. If we want to become more like Christ, we must truthfully evaluate ourselves. We must remember that God knows our hearts and



we need to give serious effort to understand ourselves as God does. In the next verse, Jesus described the Pharisees as those who justify themselves in the sight of men.

And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.”
Luke 16:15 (NASB)

They caused others to believe that they were righteous men. That is the goal of false teachers. They seek to convince us that they are godly men — men of God! If they are successful, the audience will believe everything they teach. One of the sad realities that occurs in some churches is that the adoring congregation believes almost anything the preacher or teacher says and makes excuses for his sins because they reason that “He is a godly man who is close to God.” We are respecters of leaders. We faun over charismatic leaders. About the only sin that is considered to be unacceptable and disqualifying in our modern churches is adultery or fornication. Other sins are often excused or justified.

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NOTICE THAT JESUS SAID, “. . . for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.” God looks at the heart and not at the outward appearance, the size of the congregation, the financial health of the church or how many people can use the parking lot. God does not look at the size of your home, your bank balance or how

many people like you. Money is not a sign of God’s approval. It is a sign of God’s financial blessing, but not necessarily of God’s approval. He looks at our hearts. He knows what your heart loves! The question is do you know what your heart loves? Do you love Him more than your money? Do you honestly know the answers to these questions or has your heart deceived you? False teachers are not the only ones who love money! But they really love their money!

EVERYONE IS FORCING HIS WAY. Beginning with verse 16, Jesus shifted to a new topic. He began to reveal that the Pharisees were guilty of another symptom of false teachers. They distorted the Scriptures.

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. Luke 16:16 (NASB)

Jesus said that the message of



The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John.

Torah Scroll

the Law and Prophets had been proclaimed up to the arrival of John the Baptist. The phrase, the Law and Prophets, refers to the entire Old Testament since the Law and Prophets were two of the three major divisions of the Jewish Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. The third section contained the Psalms and it was called the Writings. The wording of verse 16 might seem to imply that Jesus was saying the Old Testament Scriptures had been faithfully taught up to the time of John the Baptist, but such a conclusion is not true. One example that the Scriptures were not faithfully taught is found in Malachi 2:6-8 where we are told that the priests were partial in teaching the Scriptures.

Jesus' point is that the entire Old Testament pointed to the time of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the promised Messiah who would establish the kingdom of God and rule forever. When John began his ministry, he announced that the kingdom was near (Matthew 3:1-3) and the Messiah was coming (Mark 1:1-7; John 1:29-34).

The Greek word for "until" is *mechri*. The word refers "to a continuous period of time up to a certain point," and that point is John the Baptist. Matthew 11:12-14 helps us understand that John the Baptist partially fulfilled the prophecy of the coming Elijah. Or, as is commonly stated in theology, John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy about Elijah "already, but not yet." The promised coming of Elijah in Malachi 4:5-6 will occur in the tribulation period (Revelation 11:1-6).

The good news about the kingdom of God was still being preached by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2) and Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15), but people were "forcing themselves into the kingdom." Now what did Jesus mean by "everyone is forcing his way into it"? Luke 13:24 gives us a hint as to the meaning of Jesus' statement.

Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Luke 13:24 (NASB)

That is, many will try to enter through their own effort. In Luke 14:25-35 Jesus also taught that no one can be His disciple who does not sacrifice themselves for Him. Verse 33 is very specific and we need to seriously consider it.

So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Luke 14:33 (NASB)

Why did Jesus say this? The answer is that the Pharisees taught that salvation was the result of performing good works. But the truth is — salvation is the work of God and not of human effort. No one can save themselves. That is the message of John 3:3. The NET Bible correctly gives the sense of the verse.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is

born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3 (NET)

Notice that instead of "born again," the NET Bible translates the Greek word *anōthen* as "born from above." That is the correct meaning of *anōthen*. A person is born from above. God is the causative agent in our salvation. He is sovereign in salvation. God causes individuals to become Christians. We cannot force our way into heaven by human effort. Salvation is found only through faith in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Repentance and submission to Christ is the response of true faith (Luke 13:5; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:25). Saving faith is a gift from God and not a choice of our minds and intellect (Acts 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1). Matthew 7:21-22 illustrates that there are religious people who think they are going to heaven, but they are going to hell because Jesus will tell them, "I never knew you." In that sense people were and still are trying to force their way into heaven by their own efforts.

Sadly, the Pharisees twisted the Word of God when they told others that salvation was obtained by performing good works and being a Jew (Acts 15:1, 5; Romans 2:25-3:1). In Matthew 22:29 Jesus declared that the Sadducees did not understand the Scriptures. In John 5:39 Jesus told the Pharisees that they thought eternal life was found in keeping the Scriptures. But they missed the message that eternal life was found in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 15:6 it is clear that the Pharisees twisted the meaning of the Word of God to please themselves. The religious leaders did not understand the Scriptures. Matthew 23:15 states that as a result they sent many to hell. Nevertheless, the Word of God would remain unchanged. That was Jesus' next statement.

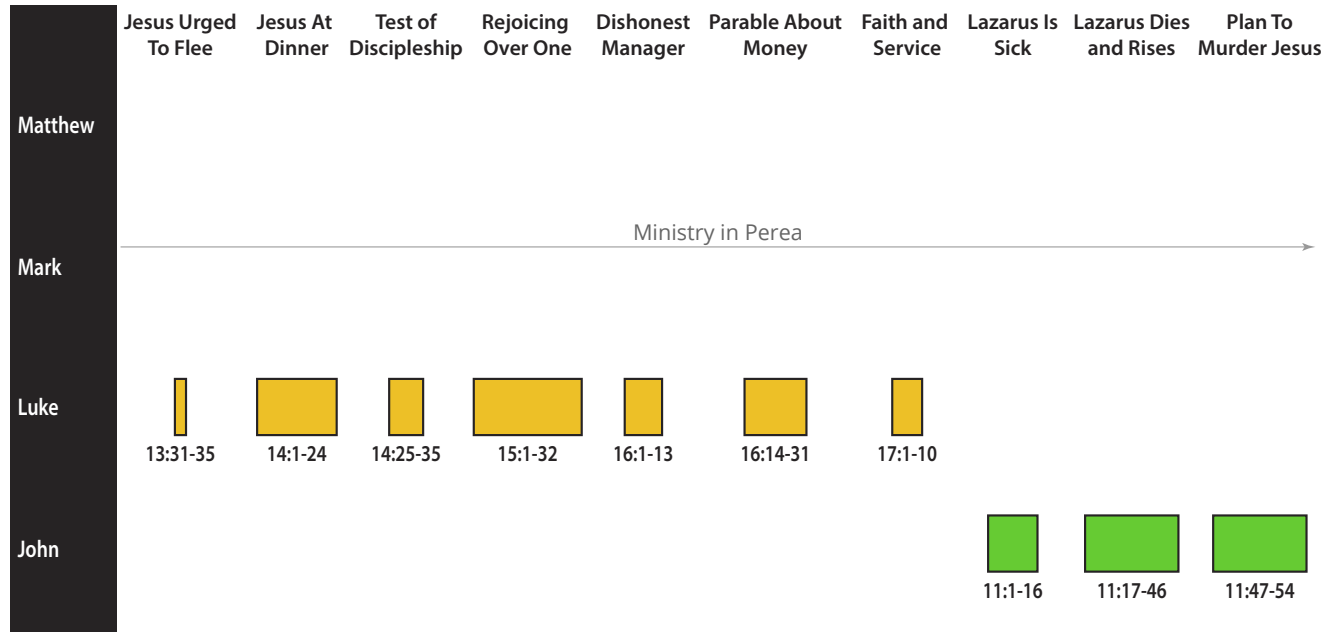
But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. Luke 16:17 (NASB)

The message is simple. The Pharisees distorted the meaning of Scripture. Jesus warned the crowds to not trust them but to trust the written Word of God.

DRIVEN BY SINFUL SEXUAL ACTIVITY. The next verse

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would appear to be inconsistent with what Jesus has told the Pharisees. But it is another characteristic of false teachers.

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery. Luke 16:18 (NASB)

Ancient Jewish literature reveals the Pharisees taught a husband could divorce his wife for almost any reason because Deuteronomy 24:1 says that a man can divorce his wife if “she finds no favor in his eyes.” They interpreted this to mean that a man could divorce his wife for any reason - if she displeased him in some way. Since Deuteronomy 22:22 required the death penalty for adultery, they concluded that a man was free to divorce his wife for any reason. Their reasons ranged from being a bad cook, to no longer being more beautiful than another woman to just not pleasing him in some way. The Pharisees had taught that a husband could divorce his wife if he wanted to engage in sexual activity with another woman. Then after the divorce was final, he could

marry that woman for whom he lusted. Then sometime later he could divorce her and remarry his first wife, if she was not already married, or he could marry another woman. Their rules made it possible for a man to avoid legally committing adultery by engaging in sexual activity with a series of women. The same was true for a woman. One could satisfy his or her sexual passions and appear godly - according to the rules of the Pharisees.

Not only did Jesus expose the false teaching of the Pharisees, but He revealed the sexual perversion of the Pharisees. On this occasion He simply declared that adultery occurred if a husband divorced his wife and married someone else. On previous occasions, such as in Matthew 5:31-32 Jesus added that adultery did not occur if the offending spouse had committed some form of immorality (incest, bestiality, homosexuality or engaged in sexually with anyone other than one’s spouse). Jesus repeated a variation of this statement in Mark 10:11-12.

And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries

another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.” Mark 10:11-12 (NASB)

Once again, Jesus has revealed that the Pharisees were false teachers.

It is understandable that the Pharisees and, maybe, their wives had strong sexual passions so that they committed adultery in their hearts by lusting after others to whom they were not married. But they used Scripture to grant them permission to commit adultery in their hearts and even divorce their spouses so that they could have engage in sexual activities with spouse after spouse. This illustrates another characteristic of false teachers. They engage in sexual sins. 2 Peter 2:2 is another passage that reveals false teachers are given to sexual sins.

Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned . . . 2 Peter 2:2 (NASB)

In the Old Testament false religion and sexual perversion always connected. So it is with false teachers.

CONCLUSION. We have just discovered three characteristics of false teachers. False teachers are so preoccupied with their love for money and craving for sexual activity that they will exploit others in order to satisfy their sinful desires. They will make excuses for their sins and exploit the elderly, women, men and the youth. The third characteristic is that they distort Scripture. Their consciences are seared as with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:1-2). For them it is easy to jump out

of an adulterous bed into the pulpit and distort the Word of God to exploit the congregation for fame, glory and money!

This describes some of the wealthiest false teachers on television. Years ago, one wealthy false teacher claimed that the Holy Spirit gave him “revelation knowledge” and then declared that God was not a trinity but nine different persons. The English idiom “filthy rich” described him according to Costi Hinn.² Other wealthy false teachers have taught that Jesus went to hell and suffered for His sins. Some have convinced Christians that God wants them to be “filthy rich,” but they must give money in order to make that happen. One such teacher said that the reason he drove a Royals Royce was because he was following Jesus. The truth is he was a false teacher who regularly exploited the congregation with false words that promised wealth if they would just give to his church. They taught the doctrines of demons. They twisted the Word of the Lord.

Two of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 are rebuked for false teaching and for encouraging the congregations to engage in sexual sins. False teaching, money and sexual sins are common ingredients of the doctrines of demons. Have you been caught up in a church that minimizes sexual sin, encourages the congregation to desire money and the pastor preaches sensational, “new” teachings? Then be warned because this is the pattern of false religions in the Old Testament, of the Pharisees and of the false teachers about whom the apostle Peter and Jude warn us. If this sounds like your church, do not return and seek a church whose pastor faithfully teaches the Scriptures.

2. Costi W Hinn. God, Greed and the (Prosperity) Gospel. Zondervan Publishing. 2019.