

## Deception

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by Wayne Goff

In studying the Lord's instructions on the subject of deception, it might be surprising to learn that the two greatest warnings were about (1) self-deception; and (2) deceivers. Both Jesus and the apostle Paul warned us repeatedly **not** to be deceived! But the very idea of deception is being fooled into something you don't realize. So how do we avoid being deceived, according to the Bible?

First of all, we must desire to have God's truth in our lives whatever the cost may be. If this is not so, then we set up ourselves to compromise when truth is not convenient.

Second, we must search the Scriptures to see what it really does say, Acts 17:11. We say this all the time, but it's absolutely true. We may listen to a preacher, a teacher, an elder, or even a commentary regarding a certain Scripture, but then we must go about to prove or disprove what we are told. Only as we desire to find out the truth for ourselves can we be sure that we know it.

Third, we must be *"wise as serpents and harmless as doves"* (Matt. 10:16), as the Lord instructed His apostles. We do not want to think that everyone is a spiritual "wolf," but on the other hand we cannot afford to be gullible either. So the wisdom required to avoid being deceived is to listen, study, and contemplate. Truth is not contradictory to other Scripture; error is. False teachers may use methods to harm, like discrediting an opponent while ignoring the real issue. We cannot afford to be duped by that kind of tactic.

Perhaps a good way to end this article is to quote the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3 — *"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."*

Eve was honestly deceived into believing a lie. Doubting God was the beginning place; sin was the result. Paul warned us that our minds can be corrupted by false teaching too. Stick with truth.

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