

False Teachers: Be on Guard!

Acts 20:28-31 _____

II Corinthians 11:3,4,13,14 _____

Galatians 1:6-9 _____

I Timothy 1:3,4 _____

II Timothy 2:14-18 _____

Titus 3:9-11 _____

Hebrews 13:9 _____

II Peter 2:1-3 _____

I John 2:18-24 _____

II John v.7-11 _____

Jude v.4 _____

Revelation 2:14,15 _____

Revelation 2:20-23 _____

How would you recognize counterfeit Christianity?

In 2 Peter 1 we read about genuine believers. And in 2 Peter 2 we read about counterfeit believers. If you put these chapters side by side you will see the difference between authentic and counterfeit believers.

1. **Different Source**—Where does the message come from?

Peter says, “We did not follow *cleverly invented stories* when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:16). And then he says the false teachers exploit you “with stories they have made up” (2:3). So the true teacher sources what he says from the Bible. **The false teacher relies on his own creativity. He makes up his own message.**

2. **Different Message**—What is the substance of the message?

For the true teacher, Jesus Christ is central. “We have everything we need for life and godliness in Him” (1:3). For the false teacher, Jesus is at the margins: “They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them” (2:1).

Notice the word *secretly*. It’s rare for someone in church to openly deny Jesus. Movement away from the centrality of Christ is subtle. **The false teacher will speak about how other people can help change your life, but if you listen carefully to what he is saying, you will see that Jesus Christ is not essential to his message.**

3. **Different Position**—In what position will the message leave you?

The true Christian “escapes the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (1:4). Listen to how Peter describes the counterfeit Christian: **“They promise . . . freedom, while they themselves are *slaves of depravity*, for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him” (2:19). The true believer is escaping corruption, while the counterfeit believer is mastered by it.**

4. **Different Character**—What kind of people does the message produce?

The true believer pursues goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brother kindness, and love (1:5). **The counterfeit Christian is marked by arrogance and slander (2:10). They are “experts in greed” and “their eyes are full of adultery” (2:14). They also “despise authority” (2:10). This is a general characteristic of a counterfeit believer.**

5. **Different Appeal**—Why should you listen to the message?

The true teacher appeals to Scripture. “We have the word of the prophets made more certain and you will do well to pay attention to it” (1:19). God has spoken, and the true teacher appeals to his Word. The false teacher makes a rather different appeal: “By appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error” (2:18). So the true teacher asks, “What has God said in his Word?” **The false teacher asks, “What do people want to hear? What will appeal to their flesh?”**

6. **Different Fruit**—What result does the message have in people’s lives?

The true believer is effective and productive in his or her knowledge of Jesus Christ (1:8). The counterfeit is “like a spring without water” (2:17). This is an extraordinary picture! **They promise much but produce little.**

7. **Different End**—Where does the message ultimately lead you?

Here we find the most disturbing contrast of all. The true believer will receive “a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:11). **The false believer will experience “swift destruction” (2:1). “Their condemnation has long been hanging over them and their destruction has not been sleeping” (2:3).**

Jesus tells us that there will be *many* who have been involved in ministry in his name, to whom he will say, “Depart from me; I never knew you” ([Matthew 7:21](#)). Who are these people? Surely Peter is describing them in this passage. Colin Smith The Gospel Coalition 2013