

Eight Ways of Deceiving Ourselves - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

To avoid deception by the devil and by ourselves, we must recognize the difference between cleverness and divine wisdom and cultivate a humble heart and a willingness to learn from God.

Duration: 9:56

Scripture: Psalm 25:9, Proverbs 3:7, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 22:4, Matthew 11:25, 1 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1, James 4:6

Topics: "Spiritual Deception", "Humility Before God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the danger of falling away from the faith by being deceived by spirits, highlighting the importance of humility and a pure heart in understanding divine wisdom. The speaker warns against relying solely on human intelligence when approaching the Scriptures, stressing the need for humility and dependence on God's teaching to avoid self-deception and falling prey to deceitful spirits.

Transcript

And we have to say that God has allowed the devil to move even in the midst of his children. And we know that it says in 1 Timothy 4 that, it's quite a terrifying verse, where it says that some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to these deceitful spirits. So they were in the faith, that means they were born again, they were children of God, and then they listened, they paid attention to these deceitful spirits, and they fell away.

I've seen cases like that, good believers falling away to deceitful spirits. What is the guarantee that you won't fall away? There are people better than you who have fallen away. And that's why if we study scripture and see these passages, these eight verses I'm going to show you, you take heed to them and save yourself from self-deception, then you can protect yourself from these deceitful spirits.

But if we don't protect ourselves from self-deception, we can't protect ourselves from deceitful spirits. Eve was deceived by Satan, and we fall a prey to that if we don't see where we may be deceiving ourselves. So let me show you the eight ways in which we can deceive ourselves.

The first reference, I'll go sequentially through the New Testament, the first reference is 1 Corinthians 3, verse 18. 1 Corinthians 3, verse 18, it says, Let no man deceive himself. Is he talking about unbelievers, or believers, perhaps both, but then he talks to the Corinthian Christians, and he says in the next sentence, He says, if any among you, if any among you believers thinks that he is clever, according to the

cleverness of this age, if he really wants to become spiritually wise, he must, let me paraphrase, that he must acknowledge, however clever he is, that in spiritual things he is foolish.

That's the first step to avoid these deceitful spirits from making a fool of you and me. Now we have spoken often about that in the church, but in a lot of places they haven't spoken about this. What does this mean? See, cleverness is a matter of the mind.

Divine wisdom is a matter of the heart and the spirit. And you know, just like physically a man's brain may be functioning okay perfectly, and his heart may be weak, he can get a heart attack even though his brain is functioning okay, and vice versa, a man's heart may be strong and his brain may have a problem, spiritually also it's like that. A man's mind may be very clever and he may be a fool in his spirit.

There's no contradiction there. I mean, it's like saying a man's got good hearing but bad eyesight. Can you understand that? Sure.

Or a man may have good eyesight and bad hearing. Why not? It's exactly the same way a man may be very clever in his mind and an absolute fool spiritually. Now, I have discovered that in all the years I've traveled around Christendom, and that's 47 years now, most people haven't understood this.

Most people think if you're clever in your mind, of course you'll understand the Bible. Wrong! That's as foolish as saying if your eyesight is good, your hearing must be good. You've got to be crazy to think like that.

But it's as stupid as that to say that if your mind is clever, you must be having divine wisdom when you come to the Scriptures. No! Jesus said in Matthew 11, 25, See, the only thing that babes have, which clever people don't have, is a humble heart, a pure heart. A humble, pure heart is the essential requirement for knowing the truth about God, not cleverness.

I'll tell you why. If cleverness, intelligence was necessary to understand the truth of God, then we would have to say to God, Lord, you're terribly partial because you've made so many people intelligent in the world, and others who are not so intelligent just don't have a chance. But it's not true.

See, intelligence is something God has distributed in a different way, just like income. You know that all the people in the world don't get the same income. All the people in the world are not equally wealthy.

All the people in the world are not got the same height, or the same weight, or the same color, or the same intelligence. It's all different. And these things make no difference.

Your height or your weight doesn't make a difference to spirituality. Your wealth or lack of it doesn't make any difference to spirituality. And your intelligence or lack of it does not make a difference to spirituality.

But some people think it does. That's why, you know, when we, in our Sunday school, right from the beginning, we decided that in Sunday school we will not give a prize to the children who give all the answers. Who can give all the answers? A clever one, because we are not asking them.

We're not testing their character in Sunday school. We're testing their sword drill, Bible knowledge. Who can turn to Lamentations first or something else in the Bible? And it's the clever people, the people with a good memory.

I said, those guys, those little children are already getting prizes in school for that. For cleverness. Why should we give them more prizes in Sunday school for that? No.

So we decided in Sunday school, right from the beginning, that we won't give any prizes for those who come first. We'll give a prize to those who come regularly. Because that's faithfulness.

It's got nothing to do with cleverness. We do things a lot differently in our church from many others. Because we want to give value to spiritual values.

It's not cleverness. It's recognizing. So here it says, if you want to understand divine wisdom, just humble yourself and say, Lord, I get 100% in maths and I get 100% in chemistry, I get 100% in physics, when I come to the Bible I get zero.

Say that. Then you'll understand the Bible. So does it mean that if we are unfortunate enough to be intelligent, we can't understand the Bible? No.

It says here about intelligent people. Some of you think you're intelligent. I don't believe I'm so dumb.

I think I've got a little bit of intelligence. Maybe not as much as some of you, but I still have some. But when I come to the scriptures, I say, Lord, I can't understand this unless you teach me.

So I put myself at the same level as the other fellow whose intelligence is very low. Exactly at the same level. Now I may be able to beat him in maths and English, but I can't beat him in the scriptures.

I'm at the same level as him. I put myself there. And I say, Lord, I don't understand this.

Unless you reveal it to me, I will get the wrong understanding from the scriptures. And study it, study it, study it like the people do in Bible schools, and they go astray. And I'll go astray too.

So I have to humble myself and say, I just don't understand this. You've got to teach me. And that's how I've studied the scriptures for more than 40 years.

I come to this book and I say, Lord, I'm dumb. And if I try to use my mind and think I can understand it, I'll be wrong.

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