

Who Are The False Prophets

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living by the high standards set by Jesus in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, which surpass even the Ten Commandments. It highlights the need for believers to take sin seriously, seek freedom from sin, and prioritize the fruit of the Spirit over the gifts of the Spirit. The message warns against false prophets who focus on outward displays rather than inner transformation, urging listeners to seek intimacy with God and live a life that truly reflects Christ.

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Scripture: Matthew 5:21, Matthew 6:1, Matthew 7:15, Ephesians 5:31, 1 Corinthians 6:16, Philippians 4:4

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Description

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Transcript

But it's good to see when is the first time that Jesus spoke about false prophets. And that is at the end of this Sermon on the Mount, which is in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. So, whenever you read something in a big sermon, you must see it being connected to that sermon. Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is one message.

That is one of the longest messages of Jesus in the Bible. Another long message like that is at the Last Supper in John 14, 15 and 16. Those you must read together.

And in John 17 is a prayer at the end of that long passage. So, when we look at Matthew 5, 6 and 7, this is something similar to the Ten Commandments given in the Old Testament. See, before Moses, there were no standards among the Jewish people.

But with Moses came the law and ten commandments. And God said, now you are a nation, you are my people, this must be your standard. Now you are a nation, you are my people, this must be your standard.

Out in the world, they have so many other standards. That's what God said to the Israel. They commit adultery, they worship idols, they do so many things.

But in your midst, it must be different. You must not worship idols. You must keep the Sabbath day holy.

You must honor your father and mother. You must not murder, you must not commit adultery. You must not steal.

You must not even desire your neighbor's wife. Those are the Ten Commandments. And as Israel kept those commandments, they became higher than all the other nations, morally.

Then Jesus came. And Jesus abolished the old covenant. And said, now I am making a new covenant.

So, if the standard of the world was down here, Israel with the Ten Commandments was above that. And Jesus came and established the church with a higher standard than all that. And that is what he taught in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. And that is why in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, he said things like this.

And that is why in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, he said things like this. Matthew 5, 21 That in the old covenant, the law was you shall not commit murder. But I say to you, verse 22, you shouldn't get angry.

See, old testament standard was don't murder. New testament standard is don't get angry. And don't call your brother bad names.

In the old testament, the standard was, verse 27, don't commit adultery. But I say to you, don't even lust in your heart after a woman. In the old testament, it said, verse 31, if you divorce your wife, make sure you give her a certificate.

But I say to you, you must not divorce at all. Again, verse 33, in the old testament they said, you should not make false vows. That means, you should not swear and then tell a lie.

But I say to you, you must always speak the truth, verse 37. Not only when you put your hand on the bible, all the time you must speak the truth. And in the old testament it said, verse 38, that you must an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

And that you must love your neighbor, verse 43, and hate your enemy. But I say to you, higher standard, love your enemy also. So, do you see how Matthew 5 is replacing the ten commandments? And saying, I am raising the standard above the ten commandments.

So, when Israel obeyed the ten commandments, their standard was higher than the nation. When they disobeyed it, God rejected them. Now today, God, Jesus has raised the standard above even the ten commandments.

And said, this is the standard for the church. Matthew chapter 5. Now you ask yourself, many of you have been Christians for many years. And you have been in other churches also.

You have heard many preachers. Here in Tumericorin, there is always some type of public meeting with preachers coming and preaching. And in all these years in your life, that you have heard hundreds of sermons.

Have you heard people teach you, that you must not get angry? Or that you must not lust with your eyes after a woman? That you must speak the truth. That you must love your enemies. Bless those who curse you.

There are many more things. Like when you give money, verse 2. Don't let even your left hand know, verse 3, what your right hand is doing. That means when you give an offering even to God.

Nobody must know what you are giving. How many churches obey that? Somebody comes and brings a bag in front of you, offering bag. Can you obey that verse when you put money into the bag? Everybody who is putting money into an offering bag is disobeying that verse.

Because people around him are seeing. And then in some churches, they give you an envelope and say, put your name there. What are these churches doing? They are making you disobey the word of God.

But have you understood that? That is why God needed another church. Where we teach these things. So how do we collect money in our church? We keep a box.

You put it there, when nobody is watching, you can go and put it. See, we have had a box in Bangalore for nearly 40 years. I don't know who puts and who doesn't put.

And nobody can get any honor for putting, because nobody knows who has put it. We have tried to obey this verse. And the Bible also says that God loves a cheerful giver.

How can you give cheerfully when somebody puts a bag in front of you? In some churches, they make you walk down to the front of the box and you have to put it there. In some churches, they make you walk down to the front of the box and you have to put it there. Everybody has to come, you cannot escape.

Everybody is disobeying this verse. I am not here to judge them, God is their judge. I am only saying, this is the standard for the church.

Do you think Jesus just said these things not to be obeyed? How many Christians take it seriously? Or he said, when you pray, don't let anybody know about your praying. Verse 6 When you pray, don't let anybody know about your praying. You must not let anybody know how long you pray or any such thing.

But I hear so many pastors and preachers talking about they spend 2 hours in prayer or 3 hours in prayer. But I hear so many pastors and preachers talking about they spend 2 hours in prayer or 3 hours in prayer. When you hear a preacher say, this morning I had to spend 2 hours in prayer.

What is the thing that comes to your mind? Oh, what a holy man. You know what comes to my mind? Here is a person who is disobeying God's word in Matthew 6. Here is a person who is disobeying God's word in Matthew 6. Why don't you feel like that? Because you have not taken Matthew 6 seriously. When I hear a man boasting about how long he prays, I don't see him as a holy man even if he says he prayed for 4 hours.

I don't see him as a holy man even if he says he prayed for 4 hours. I see him as a man who is disobeying God's word in Matthew 6. Then Jesus said, when you fast, verse 18, don't let anybody know about it. Haven't you heard pastors say, I fasted for 7 days or 21 days and so many things like that? And you think, oh, what a wonderful thing.

But Jesus said, when you fast, nobody must know about it. When I hear people boasting about how long they fasted, I think there is a man who is utterly disobedient to God's word. Why don't you think like that? Why do you think, oh, what a holy man? And maybe you also start following such people and talking about your fasting.

Dear brothers and sisters, that is how churches have lowered the standard of God's word and disregarded it. It has become a tradition in some churches for pastors to boast about how much they fast and pray. I think of what Jesus said in Mark 7. Verse 13.

He said it three times. Let me read it all three times. Mark 7, verse 8. You neglect the commandment of God and you hold to your tradition.

What is the commandment of God? Don't let anybody know when you give, when you pray, when you fast. What is the tradition of men? Write your name on the envelope and give the money. Tell people how long you prayed.

Tell people how long you fasted. That is the tradition of men. Jesus says, you neglect the commandment of God and you keep the tradition of men.

And he says it again. Verse 9. You set aside the commandment of God to keep your tradition. And he says it a third time.

Verse 13. You invalidate the word of God by your tradition. When Jesus says three times in the space of one minute, it must be a pretty serious thing.

How many times have you heard anyone preach to you that when you pray or fast or give, nobody must know what you gave? Or another thing he said in Matthew 6. Verse 24. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and money.

How many times have you heard a sermon on that? Or another thing he said. Three times. Not once, but three times.

I just showed you something he said three times. Now, this praying, fasting and giving also, three times he said, don't tell people. Don't tell people, don't tell people, don't tell people.

Now, here's another thing, three times. Matthew 6.25. Do not be anxious. And Matthew 6.31. Do not be anxious.

Verse 34. Do not be anxious. How many times have you heard a sermon on do not be anxious? I'm just trying to tell you that the things, Jesus raised the standard but that standard is not being preached in most churches.

So, if people don't hear about it, how will they live with that standard? Supposing God gave Moses the ten commandments and he never told anybody about it. Supposing Moses had said, Oh, don't commit adultery. How can we preach that? People are so weak in this area.

They will fall now and then. Don't lust after your neighbor's wife. How can we preach that? People will do it.

But he didn't say that. He said, these are the ten commandments God has given you. Now, when Jesus raised that standard, it is the responsibility of every servant of God to say, this is the standard which God, Jesus has laid down for the church.

And then he said, Matthew 7, verse 14 This gate for this new life that I've been talking about is very small. The way is very narrow. There is a broader way.

But I am preaching a narrow way. We can compare it to the Old Testament. Here is a broad way that says, don't commit murder.

But I am saying, a narrow way, don't get angry. Here is a broad way which says, don't commit adultery. But I am showing you a narrow way, don't even lust in your mind.

Here is a broad way which says, when you put your hand on your Bible, speak the truth. But here is a narrow way which says, you must always speak the truth 24 hours a day. Here is a broad way which says, you are permitted to hate your enemy.

Here is a narrow way which says, you must love your enemies also. Here is a broad way which says, when you give some money, it's quite alright if you get a little honor in the church for that. But here is a narrow way which says, when you give money, don't get any honor, don't let anybody know that you gave.

Here is a broad way which says, when you pray and fast, it's alright to testify about it. Because you will get some honor, people will respect you as a man of God. But here is a narrow way which says, don't tell anybody.

God will honor you, why do you want the honor of men? Do you see now the difference between the narrow way and the broad way? And I want to tell you, in most churches, they do not preach the narrow way. Am I saying something which is not in the Bible? You know, many times when I preach, people come to me and say, Brother Zach, I didn't even know that was in the Bible, now my eyes are being opened to see it. How is it I didn't see it after reading it for so many times? The Bible says, these things are hidden from the clever and the intelligent.

God reveals it to babes. That means those who come with a humble attitude and say, Lord, teach me your word. Those who are willing to get rid of all the traditions they have got from preachers in all their years.

And to see the standards of God. And then Jesus said, verse 15, Beware of false prophets. So, now that you have heard me say all this, now do you know what a false prophet is? A false prophet is not the one who says Jesus Christ is not God.

A false prophet is the one who says Jesus Christ is God. He died for your sins. He rose again from the dead.

But, it is not serious if you get angry. It is not serious if you lust with your eyes. It is not so serious if you tell a few lies.

Do you think that is a false prophet? That is a false prophet Jesus is speaking about. It is not serious if you tell other people how much you pray and how much you fast. It is not serious if you tell other people how much money you gave for God's work.

If you get anxious, that is not a serious thing. If you love money, that is not a serious thing. Do you know how many false prophets there are preaching in Christendom today? Do you know how many false prophets there are preaching in Christendom today? When you read a verse, read it in the context of the whole message.

So, when you read, beware of false prophets. What is he talking about in the verses before that? What is the purpose of false prophets? You read in the Old Testament, the purpose, the Old Testament, false

prophets were all sent by the devil. So that God would not be happy with Israel.

There were hundreds of false prophets. The true prophets were the ones who mentioned God's standard and they were not very popular. The true prophets were the ones who mentioned God's standard and they were not very popular.

You read all the true prophets in the Old Testament. Their main ministry was to tell Israel, this is the standard of God, not what these false prophets are saying. Their main ministry was to tell Israel, this is the standard of God, not what these false prophets are saying.

This is the main need of the church of Jesus Christ today. God has started another church with the purpose of proclaiming this standard. It is very easy for something to start so well.

And then after 20-30 years we descend to the level of all the other churches. What I want to ask you, especially elder brothers, all of you who have been in the church 20-25 years, all of you who have been in the church 20-25 years, how many of you have taken Matthew 5, 6 and 7 very seriously? I am not asking you whether you obey all of that. I am asking you, do you even try to obey that? The devil is trying to bring our churches down to the standard of the denominations.

Then he has accomplished his purpose. You will get a lot of people coming to your church. They will all be people who have no interest in overcoming anger.

No interest in overcoming the lust of the eyes. No interest in seeking the honor of men. They will never think that getting anxious and worried is a sin.

They will be people who don't forgive their enemies and who hate their enemies. There could be people sitting like that in your church. And the devil will send more and more people like that.

And you are rejoicing that your church is increasing in size. And the devil is rejoicing that your standard is going lower and lower. I would rather have a small church where Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is preached regularly and people are at least trying to live there, even if it takes time for them to come to that life.

Rather than have a big church that ignores all these commands of Jesus. This is the narrow way that leads to life. You know it is a narrow way.

The Old Testament way was much broader. A lot of people who could fit into the Old Testament way can't fit into the narrow way. Why has God made this standard? Because He wants us all to be 100% free from sin.

Because He is a loving father. Let me ask you. Do you want your children to be 100% free from sickness? Supposing your children have got 3 or 4 sicknesses.

And you take them to a doctor. Will you say, Doctor, if you cure my child of just two of those sicknesses, that is enough. One or two sicknesses, if they remain, it is okay.

No father or mother will be like that. You will say, Doctor, I want my child to be completely free from sickness. That is how our heavenly father is.

He wants us to be completely free from sin. We all have grown up with so many sinful desires and habits that we have got from Adam. Let me tell you the good news.

Jesus wants to save you from all of that. Not 50% or 90%. I thank God that I have a father who is interested in taking all sin out of my life.

It won't happen in one day. I know. I used to be such a slave to anger.

Even after being born again. But I read in the word of God. That if you are angry, step by step you can go to hell.

Matthew 5.22 He said that. If you are angry with your brother, you are guilty before the court. Then you open your mouth and say something in anger to your brother.

Then you will be guilty before the supreme court. Then you open your mouth and say something more serious to your brother. Then you will go to hell.

Is that written in your bible? I said Lord, I don't want to go to hell. Why is it no preacher ever told me that if I keep on living in anger, I will finally go to hell? Because the devil has blinded those preachers that they won't tell people that. Let me ask you.

Do you think the devil wants you to be free from anger completely? God wants it. The devil does not want it. Because he wants you to be with him forever.

Even if you don't believe Matthew 5.22, the devil believes it. So a day came in my life many years ago when I decided to take Matthew 5.22 seriously. Lord, I am surrounded by false prophets in Christianity who never told me this.

I am going to take it seriously. And I tell you, it took me not days, not months, but years to finally get rid of it. Years and years and years.

I said Lord, I don't care how long it takes. I am going to be 100% free from this sickness. What about lusting with the eyes? Every young man, every older man is guilty of it.

Every one has fallen in this area. Even after they are born again, they fall in this area. But how many fight it and battle it? I was just like any other young man.

But a day came in my life when I decided to take Matthew 5.22 seriously. I said, I am going to fight this and fight this and fight this and finish with it in my life. In the mind, it took me years.

But if I had not fought it, I would be a slave to it even today. Why is it some of you who have sat in CFC so many years are still slaves to this sin? Some of you elders are slaves to it. I will tell you why.

You don't think it is serious. It is somebody who has got cancer and he says, ah, it is not serious. See, if a doctor tells some illiterate, uneducated woman, you have got cancer.

She is not bothered, she doesn't know what cancer is. She thinks it is just like having a little cough or a cold or something. No, she is not bothered.

But you tell an educated person that he has got cancer, he won't be able to sleep at night. He will spend lakhs of rupees to be free from it. The same way, when you understand that these sins are destroying you, you will really be eager to get free from them.

If you don't take these sins seriously, it is because you are uneducated. You are very educated in worldly things. You may be post-graduate or doctor, but spiritually you are uneducated.

That is why you think this is not a serious thing. Ah, lusting with the eyes. Anger.

It is not serious. It is like some uneducated person saying, Ah, cancer is not serious. Ah, tuberculosis, it is not so serious.

Only uneducated people talk like that. And Christendom is full of spiritually uneducated people who don't take seriously what Jesus has said. One of the greatest burdens in my heart is that all the brothers and sisters in CFC churches will start taking these sins seriously.

And will say, Lord, if it takes me 10 years to get rid of it, I am going to fight it for 10 years. If it takes me 20 years, I will fight it for 20 years, but I am determined to be free from this sickness. I am not going to listen to the false prophets who make the way broad and say, Oh, it is alright, it is not serious.

There is a narrow way that leads to life, to the abundant life that Jesus promised. That is a life of fellowship with the Father. Where we live in constant fellowship with the Father.

And when we come into that fellowship with the Father, our joy becomes full. You know why you get so discouraged so often? I will tell you the reason. It is not because there are problems in the life, in the world.

Everybody faces problems in the world. It is because you have not taken sin seriously. I know, I used to be so discouraged in those days.

So discouraged. It has gone from my life completely. Today, I know the reality of Philippians 4.4. Rejoice in the Lord always.

No matter who does something or does not do something, or what happens to me or does not happen to me, I can rejoice. The reason? Because I have started taking sin seriously in my life. I want to recommend it to you.

This is the narrow way. Beware of the false prophets who never preach this narrow way to you. How to know these false prophets? You know, there is the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.

Which is more important? Well, let us look at the life of Jesus. Both are necessary. If Jesus had no gifts of the Spirit, He would never have come into this world.

He would never have healed a sick person. He would never have cast out a demon. He would not have been able to preach.

You know, if I do not have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I cannot preach Him. For 50 years, I have prayed that God would give me the gift of prophecy to preach God's Word. Even now, I pray for it.

I value the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Without the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we cannot serve God. We need wisdom.

We need discernment. We need knowledge. We need faith to solve problems in churches.

We need the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had them and we must seek for them only then we can serve the church. Many people do not seek for it.

That is why there are so many people preaching boring, useless sermons. They do not seek God for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They do not seek God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They do not study the Word of God. I value the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But what I want to say is this, Jesus had the fruit of the Holy Spirit for 33 and a half years and He had the gifts of the Holy Spirit only for 3 and a half years.

So what do you learn from that? Both are necessary but the fruit of the Spirit is 10 times more important than the gifts of the Spirit. So if I value the gifts of the Spirit to some extent, I must value the fruit of the Spirit 10 times more than that. False prophets do not do that.

False prophets do not value the fruit of the Spirit. They only value the gifts of the Spirit. That is what He is saying here.

Listen to this. Verse 15, Matthew 7 Beware of false prophets. They will come to you in sheep's clothing.

Sheep's clothing means the correct doctrine. They look like sheep when you listen to them. But inside they are ravenous wolves.

Now just think of that. Why does a wolf put on sheep's clothing and pretend to be a wolf? Pretend to be a sheep. Why does he want to get inside the fold of the sheep? You think he is coming there to bless the sheep? No.

It's to bite and grab things from the sheep. It's flesh. And whenever a preacher comes to get something from you, there is only one name for him.

He is a wolf. Even if he is wearing sheep's clothing. There are many like that.

And how to distinguish them? Verse 16, you will know them by their fruits. Verse 17, if it's a good tree, it will definitely bear good fruit. If it's a bad tree, verse 19, it will be cut down by God one day.

And a second time he says, you will know them by their fruits, verse 20. So Jesus is repeating something. The way to find a true prophet is look at his life.

See if he's got humility. See if he's got purity. That is fruit.

You say, Lord, what about the gifts? Gifts are necessary. But he warns people. Verse 22, there are many people with gifts who will not enter God's kingdom.

Even people who exercise the gifts in Jesus' name. I want to ask you, do you believe these words? I want to ask you, do you really believe these words? In the final day, verse 22, there will be many people who will stand before the Lord in the final day and say these words. Not one or two, many.

That means there will be thousands and thousands of preachers who will stand before the Lord in the final day. They will call Jesus Lord. Lord, Lord, in your name, we preached God's word.

Lord, in your name, we cast out demons. Lord, in your name, we did not one or two miracles, but many miracles. These are all gifts.

And the Lord will say to them in that day. Remember, this day is coming. You will see it yourself one day.

You and I will see it in that day. It's exactly like this. We will hear Jesus saying to those preachers, I never knew you.

Depart from me, only you who have got sin in your life. What does that teach us? That the most important thing to deal with in our life is sin. Now supposing you reverse the story.

That people come to the Lord and say Lord, I really sought to be free from sin in my life. All my life, I really sought with all my heart to be free from sin. But will the Lord say to them? But you never cast out demons.

You never healed the sick. You never preached. Depart from me.

You think he will say that? No. There you can understand which is more important. To be free from sin or to do miracles.

You tell me, my brother, sister. Which preacher do you admire the most? Somebody who does miracles or somebody who preaches freedom from sin? Most Christians today admire a preacher who can do miracles. They do not admire a preacher who talks about being free from sin.

But when Jesus comes back, you will discover whom he admires. And you will get a surprise. You will be amazed.

Be someone who preaches freedom from sin. And seek to be like that in your life first. Otherwise you can't preach it.

What is this meaning I never knew you? That is a question that puzzles people. How can these people who the Lord says I never knew you but they did miracles in his name? What is the meaning of knowing when the Lord says I knew you? When you read in the Old Testament, it says Adam knew his wife and they had a child. It is speaking of that intimate relationship that a husband has with his wife through which a child is born.

That is the most intimate relationship among human beings. You don't have that type of relationship with your father or mother or brother or sister. This most intimate relationship God has designed between husband and wife.

The two shall become one flesh. You can't say that about father and son. You can't say that about brother and brother or sister.

It is only between husband and wife. The two shall become one flesh. What does this mean? Turn with me to Ephesians 5, 31.

A man shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. What am I speaking about? Verse 32 I am speaking about Christ, the husband and his wife the church. That's what he is talking in verse 23.

The husband is the head of the wife like Christ is the head of the church. So, like Adam knew his wife Christ wants to know us not in the body but in our spirit. It says in 1 Corinthians 6 1 Corinthians 6 When you join up with a woman verse 16 1 Corinthians 6, 16 the two will become one flesh.

But when we join with the Lord verse 17 we become one spirit with Him. So, when the Lord says I never knew you He says you never allowed me to become very intimate with you. It's like a wife who tells her husband you can live with me in the house but don't come near and touch me.

You are my husband and all but don't touch me. Some people know Jesus like that. Yeah, I want you to take me to heaven but don't come too near me.

The Lord says okay. I never knew you. Do you want the Lord to really know you in your spirit? To come really close to you like a husband comes to his wife do you want the Lord to come close to you? If he comes that close to you he will point out so many small small small wrongs in your life.

I know times when I lie down in bed with a fever and I say Lord why this fever? And the Lord will show me. A few days ago you spoke one rude word to somebody. You did not repent of it.

I say Lord one rude word you give me a fever? The Lord says yes because I love you so much. I am very close to you. Even a small thing I am going to get rid of from your life.

That has rejoiced my heart so much. I have wept tears of joy. Thank you Lord.

Thank you Lord that you are so close to me that even you will not allow me to speak one rude word. You will not allow me to have one bad thought. You will not allow me to be unrighteous with money even for fifty paisa.

Once I went to a shop one night and I bought something and when I came home it was about ten o'clock at night, I saw he had given me more change than he should have returned. So I said oh I better go back and return that tomorrow morning. And the Lord said to me supposing he gave you less change will you go away till tomorrow or will you go tonight? I know if he gave me less change I will go immediately.

The Lord said if he gives you more change also go immediately and give it. So at ten o'clock at night I got into the scooter and went back to the shop. He said you gave me too much change here is the balance.

Why do I do that? I could have said Lord it's ok tomorrow I will give it. I want Jesus to be very close to me. I don't want to keep him away for one night.

Tomorrow morning we will come close. You know when you are careless like that about what the Lord says to you the Lord says you are like the wife who says don't come near me just stay in the house but don't come and touch me. I don't want to be like that.

Like Adam knew his wife. I want the Lord to know me. I don't want the Lord to say in the final day I never knew you.

He just wanted me to live in your house. I never knew you. Oh you preached you did miracles but I never knew you.

Those are the false prophets. I hope you understood something about false prophets today. Something perhaps you never understood before.

Thank God for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. God is taking us constantly to a higher class and a higher class. Just like your children go from fifth standard to sixth standard to seventh standard.

God is leading you to a higher level today. Do you want that promotion? Or you want to sit in the same class in the new year? Let's say Lord I want to press on. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father we pray you will help us to be gripped by these truths. So that we can honor you in our life. And that you will raise up many true prophets in our midst.

Humble godly men and women that we can be powerful witnesses for you in our generation. And even among our young people Lord raise up true servants of yours.

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