

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 11: BEWARE THE FALSE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Introduction to Evangelism. This series of lessons aims to prepare participants to effectively share the Gospel with others. Understanding how God equips us for ministry and how to prepare our Gospel message for various worldviews will help us bring the unchanging message of the hope found in Jesus Christ to a world that does not yet know Him.

The Student's Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 11: BEWARE THE FALSE GOSPEL

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to learn how to recognize false teachers and false prophets. You will learn to ask the Holy Spirit for discernment, and learn practical ways to deal with false teachers.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Have you ever heard someone talking about Christianity where the message sounded quite different than any you had heard before? Maybe they had changed the message of what a person must do to be saved, or spoke differently about Jesus? We must be careful when we listen to others – God said there would be false Gospels. If you have ever encountered a cult, or church group that has drifted away from the true teaching of the Bible (perhaps adding to its message with other books or writings) you will see the false Gospel. It is important for believers engaging in evangelism to be aware of how they may be perceived by others, and to help people recognize the difference between a Biblical Gospel and one made up by man.

GETTING STARTED

1. What do cults and false teachers promise in order to attract converts?

2. How can you be sure that your beliefs are true and not based on wishful thinking or the words of skilled speakers?



STUDY

- ❖ **WHAT IS A FALSE PROPHET?** A false prophet is someone whose teaching is contrary to God’s Word. They are not always easily recognizable. You must be on guard. Although they may seem harmless, the message they give will not lead to eternal life and salvation.
- ❖ **BIBLICAL WARNINGS ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS:** The Bible warns us that others will come to deliver a similar message in order to lead people astray, or that some will use the name of Jesus to gain power or wealth for themselves. Satan can corrupt religion for his own purposes, and we should be watchful of those who add to or take away from the Biblical Gospel.

➤ Read these verses and write down what the Bible says about false teachers:

Matthew 7:15	
Galatians 1:7-8	
2 Corinthians 11:13-15	
Matthew 24:11	

- ❖ **HOW TO RECOGNIZE A FALSE PROPHET:** You may be familiar with a large organized group that gives a false message of salvation and is led by a false prophet, but you may not be. They are not always easy to recognize. Some false prophets are a part of an organized group and some are not. Make note of the reference of a ravenous wolf that comes dressed in sheep’s clothing.

- The following actions could identify someone as a false prophet:
 - Places other books above or in equal importance with the Bible.
 - Claims to have special insights that are not revealed in the Bible.
 - Claims that salvation comes through works or rituals.
 - Focus is on the leader and not on God.
 - Teachings are not in agreement with the Bible.
 - The approach to the Bible is not balanced and is focussed on a few particular books or passages.
 - Promises of wealth or prosperity if you perform certain tasks or give money to the leader or his organization
 - False prophets will often seek to control people’s lives and daily routines.



- ❖ **HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FALSE PROPHETS:** The first thing to do is to be aware that not everyone coming in the name of God is sincere in their faith or motives. Putting your trust in God rather than in people is sometimes difficult, but is important for a Christian. If you are sure of what is true from God’s Word you can compare what a new teacher says against God’s Word. Knowing God’s Word will protect us.

God’s Word – Consider the central truth of God’s Word.

- **The Saving Message:** Read the following verses and write down what we learn about the truth of salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18	
Ephesians 2:8-9	
Ephesians 1:13	

The focus of the saving message is on Jesus Christ Himself, His death, resurrection and God’s grace to us through Jesus. It is not through works or anything we could earn.

- **The Saving Person**

- The only way to salvation is through Jesus (John 14:6; 3:16).
- Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse our sin (1 John 1:7).
- Jesus is God (John 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20).
- Those who deny Jesus are false prophets (2 Peter 2:1).

- **The Saving God**

- There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6,8).
- He exists in three forms: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

❖ **WHAT NOT TO DO:**

- Don’t argue or debate.
- Don’t rely on your own strength.
- Don’t see them as a personal challenge or threat.
- Don’t see it as your sole responsibility to change their point of view.
- Don’t be afraid to disagree, even if they hold a position of power or status.

❖ **WHAT TO DO INSTEAD:**

- Be confident but not arrogant.



- Engage in discussion. Ask them questions about their beliefs in order to encourage them to examine their doctrine against the Bible.
 - Rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.
 - Be confident that God works in hearts and hears our prayers.
 - Recognize this is a spiritual battle. Ask friends to pray for you when you plan on witnessing to someone you believe to be a false prophet or is involved with one.
- Our battle ultimately is not against other people, but against the spiritual realm. People with a false Gospel have been deceived by Satan. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What action does this verse tell us we must take when engaging in battle?

- Read 1 John 4:2-3 – how do you know whether someone is speaking truth?

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ A false prophet is someone whose teaching is contrary to God’s Word. They are not always easily recognizable.
- ❖ Some false prophets are a part of an organized group and some are not.
- ❖ Many actions could accompany a false prophet, especially placing other writings above the Bible in importance, claims to have special insights or knowledge, focus being on the leader and not God, or teachings that are not in agreement with the Bible.
- ❖ We can protect ourselves from false teaching by knowing Gods Word ourselves – and focusing on the saving message
- ❖ We should not argue or debate with false teachers, but engage in discussion about their beliefs. Encourage them to examine their doctrine against the Bible
- ❖ Be confident that God works in hearts and hears our prayers
- ❖ Arm yourself with God’s strength, and be on the watch for anything that would lead you astray from the truth.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you effectively discuss truth with followers of a false teacher? What do you need to do to prepare yourself for these discussions?

2. How do you know what you believe is the truth? Can you support your ideas with the Bible?