

False Prophets

2 Peter 2:1-22

MEMORY VERSE

2 PETER 2:1a

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you,”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Four to six trays, a magnet and various small items (some metal and others non-metal).

Various small prizes (stickers, erasers, pencils, etc.) and a few small worthless things (like rocks, paper wads, etc.).

Masking tape and two envelopes.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Magnetism

You will need 4 - 6 trays and a magnet for this activity.

Set up the trays for children to gather around in groups of 4 or 5. On each tray, put about 20 items (if you can fit them all!). Some suggestions are: a button, a penny, a paper clip, a rubber band, a pebble, a nail, a screw, another magnet, a piece of paper, a wire, a bobby pin or hair pin, a toothpick, a small metal toy (micro machine or hot wheels), a marble, a ball bearing, a ring, a necklace or other similar items.

Let the kids take turns testing the things with the magnet to see which ones are attracted to the magnet or will follow the magnet.

Explain to the children that the word of God is what we use to “test” what teachers are saying. Are the things we are hearing our friends or others say “attracted” to the Word of God? Do they “follow” the Lord? **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

LESSON TIME!

Jesus warned us that false teachers would come and lead many people astray to follow a lie (Matthew 24:11). History has proven this warning to be true and we see the evidence of it today. There are many false teachers who try to lead people astray and they do it for many different reasons. Some do it for money and others for power over people. But we are told in God's Word to watch out! **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

In our lesson today, we will see that we need to be on guard for false teachers who will try to lead us away from the truth of God's Word.

2 PETER 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

In this first section, Peter explains who false prophets are. The Old Testament frequently mentions false prophets. We can sometimes think that we don't have to worry about them today, but that is not the case.

Our world is filled with those who claim to receive messages from God, and yet they teach their own doctrine. Like the false teachers of old, they tell people what they want to hear. Even today popular Bible teachers teach a false gospel such as "God wants you to be rich," or "Do whatever your desires tell you," or even "There is no such thing as sin or hell."

False teachers have come and twisted the words of Jesus and His teachings. They have belittled the significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Some have claimed that He couldn't be God, while others claimed that He couldn't have really been a man, just a spirit.

The false teachers that the apostle Peter tells us about allowed and even encouraged all kinds of bad things. Even though the false prophets may be popular, Peter warned that they would be destroyed. **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

2 PETER 2:2,3

And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

(Also see verses 10-19.)

Next, Peter talks about the characteristics of false prophets. You have to wonder why anyone would want to follow the teachings of those who twist the truth with lies. It's simple. Their teachings appeal to the sinful desires of the flesh.

The tragic fact about many false teachers is that they are successful because people like what they hear them say. Because it appeals to their flesh, people will gladly follow their shameful ways. Because of this, the truth of the gospel is slandered.

These false teachers sought to lure the unstable by appealing to the lustful desires of the human nature (verse 18). The teachers were using things that people desired as bait to entice the people back into sin when they had just turned away from such wicked living.

Another motive of the false teacher was greed (verse 3, 14). Those who teach God's word should be supported by those they teach, but these false teachers were attempting to make even more money by distorting the truth and saying what people wanted to hear. The apostle Paul also condemned greedy, lying teachers (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

The Apostle Peter taught us to live a life of holiness yet these false teachers denied the standard of purity and cleanliness before God (verses 10-12, 14). They were men given over to the desires of their own flesh, and dragging others down with them. **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

Bold and filled with pride, they speak falsely of celestial beings, scoffing at the spiritual realities they do not understand. So great was the pride of these slanderers that they knew no bounds in their attack on all who disagreed with their teachings.

The evil heart of these false teachers made sin their main ambition and as a result, they cannot cease from sin (verse 14). Because of their lust, all they could think about was adultery. They lived like animals, consumed by a life of uncontrollable sin (verse 12).

Peter compared them to a prophet that had a heart of evil motives and greed (verses 15-16, 18). Balaam did what God desired for a while, but eventually gave in to his pride and greed and was hired by a pagan king to curse Israel (Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16). Like the false teachers of Peter's day, Balaam used religion for personal gain, a sin God does not take lightly.

Good or Worthless?

Bring various small prizes to class (stickers, erasers, pencils, etc.) and a few small worthless things (like rocks, paper wads, etc.). Display the prizes alongside the worthless things. Have them all mixed up together. Allow children to choose one thing, whatever they would like. When everyone has made their choice have the class all sit down together.

Probably no one will go for the worthless things. Explain to the children that false teachers are like this example. They may be alongside and mixed in with everyone else in the church, but because they twist the Bible their teaching is worthless. We need to be careful and only listen to those who teach the right things. How can we know? By studying our Bible and seeing the fruit that comes out of their ministry.

2 PETER 2:4-9

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;

and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked

(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds);

then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

In these verses Peter talks about how the false prophets will be judged. If God did not spare angels, or people who lived before the flood, or the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, He would not spare these false teachers (verses 4-6). Some would have us believe that God will save all people because He is loving. But we are foolish if we think He will accept sin and not judge those who practice sin. God judges sin and unrepentant sinners cannot escape. God will judge especially those who lead others astray (false teachers).

Just as God rescued Lot from Sodom, so He will rescue us from the temptations of a wicked world. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (verses 7-9). Lot was not sinless, but he put his trust in God and was spared when Sodom was destroyed.

Like a man sinking in quicksand who refuses to grab the rope thrown to him, the person who turns away from Christ casts aside his only means of escape. A dog and a pig can be scrubbed but not kept clean, for it is in their very nature to return to unclean living (verse 22). The false teachers were never what they seemed to be and in the end, returned to what they had been all along.

Stay true to God's Word and be on guard, alert for anyone who would lead you astray by changing His Word to make you believe a lie. How can we be protected? By testing everything that we hear to the Word of God. **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

2 PETER 2:12-16

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,

and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

(Also see verses 17-21.)

What happens to a false prophet? Peter now lists some of the consequences of following after a false prophet. Because of their greed they will take advantage of as many people as possible. They have no conscience so they don't feel guilty for what they are doing. Unfortunately many follow their shameful ways and they participate with them in their sin (verses 2-3). **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

Peter tells us that they openly do evil day after day. By their deceptive influence in the lives of others, they would participate in the Lord's Supper only to dishonor it with their sin (verses 13-14; Jude 12). We need to be careful so that we don't allow the compromise of sin that others do to influence us.

The false teachers had a heart that loved lies and because of it they forsook the truth (verse 15). As a result their life is a lie and they lead others in error (verse 18). They simply lived a life of selfishness and pride, and they were more than willing to drag others down with them.

Many believe freedom is doing what you want. If we refuse to follow God, we will follow our own sinful desires and become enslaved to what our bodies want. The false teachers were an example of this, though they were free, their corruption enslaved them (verse 19).

If we submit our lives to Christ, He will free us from slavery to sin. Jesus frees us to serve Him, which always results in our ultimate good. We can fully enjoy life as God had intended, truly free.

What a tragedy it is when a person learns about Jesus and how to be saved, and perhaps influenced by the lives of Christians, but then rejects the truth for a lie and returns to sin (verses 20-21). Peter tells us that this person is worse off than before because they have rejected the only way out of sin, the only way of salvation. **God wants us to watch out for false teachers.**

Follow Me!

Set up two courses in your room that curve a lot using masking tape on the floor. Use just one strip of masking tape for each course. The courses should cross and intersect in several places, but shouldn't run side by side. Be sure to remove all tape as soon as the game is finished.

At the end of each course tape an envelope to the floor. Inside one envelope put the message: "Well done, you have taken the right course!" Inside the other envelope put the message: "Sorry, you took the wrong course." Select two leaders and let the kids follow whomever they want (if they are big and coordinated you might have them walk heel to toe). As an option you could possibly have the two leaders try to convince as many of the other kids to follow them. Have the teams stay in their groups as you have the envelope opening ceremony.

Compare to following false teachers. It was kind of tough to figure out which leader would be the best to follow. Praise the Lord that He is faithful to give us better instructions in His Word for deciding who is a false teacher and who is not.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer to ask for understanding to know when they may be exposed to false teaching. Also, pray for help from the Holy Spirit to better understand God's word so that they can identify false teachers. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.