

Don't Believe Everything You Hear!

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Satan spoke a lie when he told Eve, "*Ye shall not surely die*" (if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, lest ye die; (Genesis 3:4). Not everything that even the first human couple heard was on the up and up. They should have learned at an early time in their existence that, no, not everything you hear in this world is true. We all are aware of this fact, yet for whatever reasons, sometimes we gullibly swallow untruths that others present to us. In some areas of life this may not bring about monumental consequences, but being deceived in the spiritual or moral realm is devastating.

Does not the New Testament repeatedly tell Christians, "Be not deceived," or something very similar? Indeed, it does (I Corinthians 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; Galatians 6:7; James 1:16, 22, and 26). Two truths stand out in such a statement of warning from God. First, it is possible to be deceived. Second, each one of us is personally responsible for seeing to it that we are not deceived. What that means is, if we are deceived, though those that deceive us must also give account of their wrongdoing, we are ultimately the ones at fault for allowing ourselves to be deceived. Remember, it is God's direct command: "Be not deceived."

Don't believe everything you hear in the religious realm. In all seriousness, when it comes to religious teaching, we would be foolish if we believed every religious message that we ever heard. For a moment, let us step outside of the arena of religion. Is three plus four equal to six? If one math teacher says, "Yes," but a second one says, "No," would you believe both answers are correct? Of course not; if we refuse to accept absurdities in secular matters, why do so many people accept obviously contradictory answers in the realm of spiritual affairs?

You can turn on the TV and listen to three consecutive religious broadcasts that give three totally different answers to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" You can listen to two consecutive programs on the radio that give the exact opposite answer to the question, "Is it scriptural for women to preach to an audience that includes men?" A person could get on the internet and view two web sites that give the exact opposite answer to the question, "Is it scriptural to worship Mary, the mother of Jesus?"

False prophets and false teachers abound. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets," did He not (Matthew 7:15)? Indeed, He did. So do not believe everything you hear in the religious realm. Come to think of it, did not God say something about that? Listen to (I John 4:1): "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" Bottom line: don't believe everything you hear in religion.

Don't believe everything you hear on the news. Not long after Ronald Reagan became president, he was shot. Some news agencies reported that he had been killed by the shot. The report, as it turns out, was false. Just because a professional reporter tells it to millions of viewers or readers that does not guarantee that in every instance it will be 100% true. In many cases news agencies just pass along the information they receive. Some time ago it was reported on the national radio news that a former employee of a TV network had sued someone because she had been forced to sit through some planning sessions in which vulgar language was frequently used. Some court shot down her case, saying that in some situations it is necessary to use foul language! Is it "Necessary" to use vulgarity to express ourselves? That is what the court ruled, and the news reported it. The court's statement was ludicrous! The Lord God said, "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth*" (Ephesians 4:29). So many people have become so hardened to sin that using the language of the gutter does

not cause them any sense of shame (Jeremiah 6:15). We must not waver in our commitment to speak and uphold only wholesome language! Others may try to portray us as “having a hang-up,” but we must keep our speech pure and encourage others to accept God’s revelation about how to use the tongue.

Young people don’t believe everything you hear in the classroom at school. Yes, be respectful to your teachers and to their right to express their views, but do not swallow everything they say just because they earned a college degree. So-called science textbooks are filled with references to evolution being a proven fact. No, no, no, evolution is not a fact, but rather an unproven and unprovable t-h-e-o-r-y. It contradicts the fact that living things come only from living things. It contradicts the fact that living things can only produce living things of the same nature as themselves (and not some different kind of critter). And, it contradicts the fact that the Lord God created this world in six days (Exodus 20:11; Genesis 1:1).

Don’t believe everything you hear in a gathering of friends. Some friends are as honest and trustworthy as your own grandma, while others will sell you down the river without batting an eye, just like Judas betrayed our Lord (Psalm 41:9). Some friends probably do not mean any harm by it, but they just seem to be very skilled at blowing things all out of proportion and spreading false rumors. All of us need to check things out carefully before we begin spreading to others information that has been passed to us. Better to hear the whole matter before we rush to conclusions and participate in telling things that are not true (Proverbs 18:13). Reputations, reliability, and trustworthiness are at stake, both for us and for others.

Don’t believe everything you hear via e-mail or on the internet. Many kids growing up today never lived in the B.E. days -- Before E-mail days. The use of computers to search out information and send letters is still mind boggling to those of us from the old school. The internet and e-mail are simply tools. In and of themselves, they are neither righteous nor evil. It all depends on how we use them. Deceptive advertisements about various products abound on the internet. As far as e-mail goes, there always seems to be a huge amount of scams that make the rounds. Before hitting the “Forward” button to send messages on to others, we would be advised to first check them out. I can think of a couple of cases where great harm was done by sincere people failing to investigate a matter before broadcasting it far and wide as if it were a fact. Consider “the Golden Rule” (Matthew 7:12) before sending out false and/or potentially harmful information.

Don’t believe everything you hear about sister congregations. Tragically, some of the most ridiculous things that are spoken are told by members of the church about other local churches. “I don’t know if it’s true or not, but I heard that over at congregation X they have kind of gotten out in left field and are having women lead prayers now.” Upon further investigation [“investigation,” that is a key word here!], you might find out that, yes, in their ladies Bible classes a sister leads prayer every time. That certainly does not violate the instruction for males to lead prayers (I Timothy 2:8). At one time a rumor was going around that at the congregation where I have been a member for nearly the past seven years, the elders stand at the door to prevent any females from entering the building if they are wearing pants. It simply is not true. When rumors swirl about sister churches in the Lord, do not believe everything you hear. Accept only that which can be put to the test and proven.

Each of us needs to use common sense when we consider what others have to say. We need to seriously analyze what is said before we accept it as being truthful. In the spiritual realm, let us all strive to be like the Bereans of old who “*received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). Don’t believe everything you hear.