

Evaluating Teachers: Discerning the False from the Biblical

The following contrasts capture many of the Biblical teachings that warn us of false teachers. The corresponding positive about Biblical teachers is also presented. The footnotes give some representative texts that support these statements. For many of them there are multiple Biblical texts, therefore the notes are certainly not comprehensive. You can evaluate a teacher by giving them a rating from a double minus (- -) to a double plus (++). Most false teachers will NOT manifest all the tendencies, though the greater the number, the clearer the evidence that we should avoid them.

| FALSE TEACHERS | -- | - | ? | + | ++ | BIBLICAL TEACHERS |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|--|
| Focused on dreams and visions. ¹ | | | | | | Anchored to the Word, the Bible. ² |
| Often spends lots of time dealing with speculations, and intricate arguments that confuse. ³ | | | | | | Keyed to what the Bible clearly teaches; understandable to most people. ⁴ |
| Only focused on hope and love; tending to forsake repentance and truth. ⁵ | | | | | | Balanced, speaking the truth in love; correcting with gentleness. ⁶ |
| Known to leave no one offended; their solutions are "easy." ⁷ | | | | | | On occasion the hard teachings they deal with will cause some people to leave. ⁸ |
| They consider how to get gain for themselves; they tend to "peddle" their teaching. ⁹ | | | | | | Worthy of double honor and yet not demanding or protecting this right. ¹⁰ |
| Lazy, claiming to be sacrificial but often trying to get by with as little work as possible. ¹¹ | | | | | | Manifests a strong work ethic; doing everything as unto the Lord. ¹² |
| Assumes that they would never have a conflict of interest and that any "benefits" they receive are deserved. ¹³ | | | | | | Has strong financial accountability that even avoids the appearance of wrong-doing. ¹⁴ |
| Shows preferential treatment to the wealthy donors & benefactors. ¹⁵ | | | | | | Does not show partiality; reflects an understanding that the widow's mite may be a greater sacrifice. ¹⁶ |
| Appearances are very important; they tend to be a master of "spin." They make sure they come across as godly and/or successful. They sell "the dream." ¹⁷ | | | | | | While understanding that their public image has influence, they are more concerned about being respected most by those who know them best. ¹⁸ |
| Present arguments that sound "plausible" but are based on earthly wisdom, not the whole counsel of the Scriptures. ¹⁹ | | | | | | Makes sure the focus is on Christ and our position "in Him." There is a "simplicity" of focus on the Savior. ²⁰ |
| Rebellious in attitude and actions; unwilling to submit to appropriate authority because they always "know best." ²¹ | | | | | | Understands their role and position; not afraid to lead and make sure others do not disregard them and yet they model submission by being "under authority." ²² |

1 Jer. 23:25-28; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 22:28

2 2 Tim. 2:15-16

3 1 Tim. 1:3-7, 2 Tim. 2:14-18

4 See 1 Cor. 1:17

5 Jer 6:13-15, 8:8-11

6 Eph. 4:15-16

7 Isa. 30:9-11

8 Compare John 6:60-61

9 Jer. 6:13-15; Micah 3:11; 1 Tim. 6:5-10; 2 Cor. 2:17

10 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor. 9

11 2 Cor. 11:12-15

12 Col. 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:10

13 Titus 1:10-16 (see related issues dealing with finances under other points)

14 2 Cor 8:20-21 (and context)

15 James 2:1-7

16 James 2:3-4; Gal. 2:6

17 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Col. 2:23

18 1 Cor. 4:1-5

19 Col. 2:1-23

20 2 Cor. 4:1-2

21 Titus 1:10-16; 1 John 4:6; 3 John 1:9-10; See Numbers 12, 14, 16



| FALSE TEACHERS | -- | - | ? | + | ++ | BIBLICAL TEACHERS |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|--|
| Likes controversy; wants to debate almost everything. ²³ | | | | | | Not afraid of controversy but is not strident. ²⁴ |
| Teaches & practices licentiousness; turning the grace of God into an excuse to be “tolerant” of the world’s ways. ²⁵ | | | | | | Their lifestyle reflects holiness of heart and action; they will not encourage others to violate their consciences. ²⁶ |
| Teaches legalism; communicating that following the rules (usually their rules) leads to holiness. ²⁷ | | | | | | They live in the freedom of Christ but understand that is a freedom NOT to sin rather than TO sin; they do not make absolute what the Bible does not. ²⁸ |
| “Tolerates” un-truths but is harsh with people. ²⁹ | | | | | | Gentle with people but firm against un-truth. ³⁰ |
| Often has novel concepts at the core of their teaching; many times their defense of one biblical concept leads to a denial of another one. ³¹ | | | | | | Holds firmly to the tenets of historical, biblical orthodoxy (even where there are paradoxical tensions); seeks fresh applications of these timeless truths. ³² |
| Appears to be one of the sheep but the long term fruit of their lives shows otherwise. ³³ | | | | | | The fruit of their lives matches with the words of their mouths. Though not perfect people, they have integrity. ³⁴ |
| Likes to use “sound bytes” to twist the truth. ³⁵ | | | | | | Does not over-simplify difficult concepts; avoids “proof-texting” by not taking pulling passages out of their context. ³⁶ |
| Can imitate true teachers and prophets very well, even performing signs and wonders. ³⁷ | | | | | | Any signs and miracles are always directing glory to God and supporting the teaching of the apostles. ³⁸ |
| Twists the teaching of Who Jesus is, denying that He is true God or that He is true man. ³⁹ | | | | | | Affirms that Jesus is the Christ, THE Son of God come in the flesh. ⁴⁰ |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

© 2010 Gerhard T. deBock

22 1 Tim. 4:11-14
23 1 Tim. 6:5-10
24 See 1 Cor. 4:21
25 Jude 4; Rev. 2:14-15, 20-23; Rom. 3:5-8, 6:1-2, 6:15-16
26 1 Cor. 10
27 Gal. 1:6-9, 2:3-5, 3:1-3, 4:8-11, 5:7-12, 6:12; Heb. 13:9; 1 Tim. 4:1-5
28 See 2 Cor. 6:9-14
29 2 Cor 11:20-21 (see context of chapters 10-12)
30 2 Tim. 2:24-26
31 1 Tim. 1:18-20
32 Titus 1:9
33 Matt. 7:15-20
34 2 Tim. 3:10-11
35 See 1 Cor. 6:9-12, 10:23
36 2 Peter 3:15-17
37 Mark 13:22-23; 2 Cor. 11:12-15
38 Hebrews 2:3-4
39 2 John 1:7-11
40 1 John 4:14-15, 5:1-5

