

# LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

## STUDY EIGHT

### Dealing with Deceivers

*1 John 2:18–27*

*You have the capacity to know what it is that will hold you close to Christ, that will keep you strong in the storm, that will help you discern truth from error. Genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they understand the truth.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HETHER we are asleep or awake, whether we know it or ignore it or forget it—an invisible war wages around us every second of every day.

While we don't see this war, we can't miss its effects. Ever since Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, Satan has led a charge against humanity, arming himself and his soldiers with weapons of deception.

To Eve, his trickery first appeared as a seemingly harmless question, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” (Genesis 3:1). Then his assault advanced to a bald-faced lie—“You won't die!” (3:4). The devil and his agents will use any ruse, whether veiled or direct, to attack our faith.

All deception brings with it harm, pain, and humiliation, but nothing comes close to the damage caused by spiritual deception. Spiritual falsehoods promote confusion, incite fear, obstruct wise decisions, and undermine our trust in our heavenly Father. *Tragic!*

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we explore how to win the battle against deception. And it is a battle. No believer stands shielded from Satan's attack. But God has armed us with truth! We need only use it.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Dealing with Deceivers

1 John 2:18–27



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, take a moment to talk with God. Express your devotion to Him. Share your gratitude to Him for giving you His truth to guard you. Acknowledge your dependence on Him for keeping you in the truth. Ask Him to bless your study.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the early church, the apostle John held a reputation for upholding truth and spotting heretics. One such heretic was Cerinthus. Cerinthus denied Jesus' eternal divinity and trumpeted a host of doctrinal errors. In his commentary, Chuck Swindoll described John's no-compromise approach to dealing with this deceiver:

The apostle John knew Cerinthus and his false teachings well and reacted to them boldly and decisively. In fact, Irenaeus of Lyons, a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna, who had himself been a disciple of John, relayed this account from his former teacher: "John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.'"<sup>1</sup>

In 1 John 2:18–27, John gave characteristics most deceivers have in common to help us deal with deception as he did.



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*1 John 2:18–27*



### Observation: Exposing Heresy

Read *1 John 2:18–27*. First, make your own observations using Chuck's method.<sup>2</sup> Note John's imperatives and his logical flow of thought as he connects each topic.

### The Deceiver's Works—1 John 2:18–19

*First John 2:19* shows how the acts of deceivers reveal their true identity. What did these deceivers do? What did their actions reveal about them?

According to *1 John 2:18*, how many deceivers are there?



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*There isn't just one deceiver or two. There are many. They come in all cultures. They come in all languages. They come in all colors. They come in all kinds of garb and in all settings. Some with a pulpit, some without a pulpit. Some on popular television stages, some behind the scenes working with small groups. Some come and they're known halfway around the world. Others are not that well-known. Just know there are many of them.*

—Chuck Swindoll

### The Deceiver's Words—1 John 2:22–23

*First John 2:22–23* states we can know a deceiver by his or her claims. According to this passage, what false claims did the heretics in John's day herald?

John made an eye-opening claim. Deceivers who once walked in church halls and formerly professed biblical truth ended their fellowship because they had never trusted Christ in the first place.

These deceivers proclaimed falsities regarding the person of Jesus. They depicted a non-anointed, non-human Jesus. Their testimony offered a Jesus who is not truly God and not truly man. That kind of Jesus is not the real Jesus. He cannot truly save. That kind of Jesus we can't know or enjoy—because that figment of the imagination is not the real Jesus.



### Interpretation: The Christian's Resources

False preachers like to prey on unsuspecting Christians, those new and those naïve. John did not sit idly by while these corrupters assaulted the church. “I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray” (1 John 2:26).



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### Genuine Believers—1 John 2:21–22, 27

According to 1 John 2:21–22, 27, what resources do Christians possess that keep them from falling into deception?

God gives people His Spirit when they become Christians. John called this gift God’s “anointing.” What did John mean when he said the Spirit teaches Christians all they need to know (1 John 2:27)? How does the Spirit do so? Why is this important for Christians no matter when or where they live?

*John said genuine believers have the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth. John emphasized how Christians have the capacity to know the truth. That truth is what holds you to Christ. As a genuine Christian, God enables you to discern lies.*

—Chuck Swindoll



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### Chuck's Commentary Insight

#### First John Theme: *Meno*—Abide, Remain, Stay, Live

In its normal, everyday use, this verb means to “remain” in one place for a period of time—settling down in the same city, residing in the same home, or staying married to the same person. John uses the term frequently in his Gospel to refer to the permanent, life-giving relationship disciples are to have with their Lord (John 15:4, 7, 10). In 1 John the same meaning is employed. As believers abide in God’s word, they will “abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 Jn. 2:24). And they will live by the power of the Holy Spirit, who abides in them (2:27).<sup>3</sup>

### Spiritual Safeguards—1 John 2:24–25, 27

Study [1 John 2:24–25, 27](#). Don’t forget to use your Bible study resources. Notice what John emphasizes. Develop a few theological truths about God and our world based on these verses.

We can’t win the battle with deception with our own cunning or fortitude. Just as a soldier shouldn’t take on a powerful army singlehandedly, we shouldn’t attempt to battle Satan without help. Jesus has given Himself to us that we may enjoy continual fellowship with Him and rely on Him for strength in the spiritual battle.



### Correlation: The Chief Spiritual Con Artist

Like the letters of John, Paul’s letters consistently warn of the dangers of deception. Greek culture highly revered spectacular rhetoricians. Greeks did so even to the point of disregarding the content of what was spoken. Satan used this cultural tendency to bait the church at Corinth to believe false teaching.

The Corinthian church “Amen-ed” flashy orators while neglecting the spiritual authenticity of their speech. Paul alerted them time after time to the very real presence of deceptive teachers.



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Read one of Paul's rebukes in *2 Corinthians 11:1–4*. What do we learn about deception from this passage, and how does Paul's teaching correlate with John's teaching in *1 John 2:18–27*?

In the latter part of 2 Corinthians 11, Paul wrote that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and camouflages himself with empty righteousness. Satan not only pioneered the deception industry, he still leads it. He aims to capture our minds and emotions as well as our bodies and will. We do well to stay vigilant. Jesus promises the victory



### Application: Walking in Triumph

Application is the final step in our study of God's Word. God's truth makes God's servant whole—enlightening the mind, satisfying the soul, directing the hands, and governing the tongue. To help you apply this passage of Scripture, Chuck crafted three excellent principles:

- 1) *Renew your commitment to God's Word.* Deceivers want you to feel like you no longer need God's Word, that you've advanced beyond needing its teachings. Staying faithful to God's Word keeps our minds sharp to spot deception.
- 2) *Stand firm in your convictions.* Deceivers want you to question the undeniable facts about Jesus, to doubt the reliability of His promises, and to belittle His lordship.
- 3) *Stay focused on Christ.* Worst of all, deceivers want you look elsewhere for truth. A primary strategy of Satan is to divert your attention away from Jesus.



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Which principle above do you need the most in your season of life? Do you need to simply sit and pray and focus on God's promises in His Word. Think over the biblical truth you've learned and how the Spirit is leading you to apply it. Specify what He would have you do and how He would have you act.

Many live unconcerned about Satan's invisible war and, in ignorance, are trapped in darkness. But God has shined in your heart the light of truth so that you see in Jesus Christ the glory of God. Christ is the conqueror. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him (Psalm 2).



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father of lights, thank You for opening my eyes to see the truth and guarding me from Satan's deception. I find comfort in the rod and staff of Jesus, who is my Great Shepherd. Help me to walk in the light and help me to point others to the light so they might enjoy Your goodness as I enjoy it. In Jesus' strong name, I pray, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 64. See also Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.4.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org). If you do not have Chuck's *Living Insights* commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at the Insight for Living Ministries web store.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, 60.

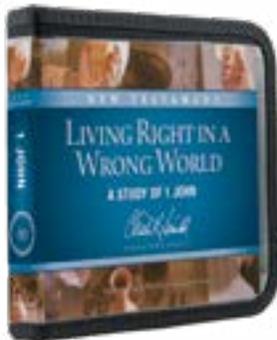


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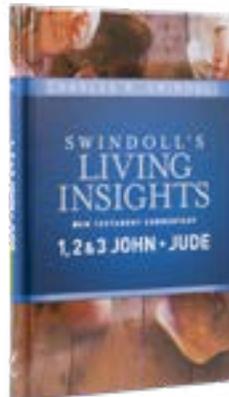
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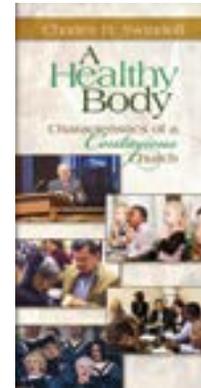
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

