

Deuteronomy 13 • Seducing Influences

Introduction

Everyone has difficulties in relationships both on a personal level and within a group dynamic. We have either injured—or been injured by—someone and gone through the process of reconciling or being reconciled. Sin causes a break in relationships that need to be biblically restored. But not everything that is directed at us falls under this category. There are people and groups and forces actively working to willfully and purposely cause us to make permanent breaks with no intention of ever mending them. Like an extra-marital affair that has as its goal to break up a marriage so as to get a commitment to a new marriage, so there are people purposely attempting to seduce us from a right relationship with God to something else.

The repeated biblical teaching is that we are to work through issues that result from sin, but to be completely intolerant when identified as part of spiritual seduction. There is no “reconciliation” possible with those that have chosen to be an enemy of God and desire only for us to join their side. Whereas we’re to live among sinners so that we can influence others according to our visible relationship with Christ, we cannot abide those who actively attempt to influence us to the contrary.

¹“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. ⁵But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: Why are these considered to be “seducing” influences?

A: Because their purpose, as stated in v.5, is to “seduce you from the way in which the LORD commanded you to walk”.

Q: How does seduction take place? With what does it begin?

A: Generally it begins with the eyes, those things on which one fixes the focus of their infatuation or interest. This is why the example begins with a false prophet who effects a sign or wonder. It catches the eye, so to speak, and leads from there.

Q: How do we ultimately determine whether a sign or wonder is from God or not?

A: It is confirmed either way by the accompanying message. It is absolutely and categorically **NOT** from God when the message leads away from Him to other things, even though it **LOOKS** and **FEELS** right.

Q: What is the contrast between v.3 and v.4 in the actions we are supposed to take?

A: We are not to “listen to the words of that prophet”, but instead shall “listen to His voice”. Everything is determined by how one acts on the message, not the sign itself.

Q: How are the false prophet’s actions defined in v.5?

A: “...he has counseled rebellion”. This is the chief result of seduction, to entice one to forsake one relationship for another, one loyalty for another.

Q: What are GOD’S purposes defined in v.3? How do they apply to us?

A: It’s a test “to find out if you love the LORD”. It’s the measure of our faithfulness to God and whether we’ll allow ourselves to be seduced by another.

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Q: List the main verbs that are used to describe the act of seduction by the false prophet and our proper response to them? How do they combine into an overall teaching for this topic?

A: The words used are “listen” (v.3, 4), “follow” (v.4), “fear” (v.4), “keep” (v.4), “serve” (v.4), “cling” (v.4), “way” (v.5), and “walk” (v.5). They’re all references to the message, to whether or not we will obey God’s Word or another’s. It’s a teaching that obedience to God’s Word from the heart takes precedence over the wonders that capture the attention of our eyes.

[Read v.6-11]

⁶“If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), ⁸you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. ⁹But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. ¹⁰So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

Q: What do these relationships have in common with false prophets as previously described?

1. They advocate destroying one’s relationship with the One True God. (v.6)
2. Their actions are an intentional, seducing influence. (v.10)

Q: Whereas the main tool of seducement by false prophets is signs and wonders, what is the main tool used by false relationships?

A: Whereas false prophets provide very public displays, false relationships “entice you secretly”, leveraging the mutual trust of your personal relationship with them. One is extremely overt and open, the other covert and secret.

Q: False prophets try to get you to look at their signs and wonders. What do false relationships try to get you to look at?

A: “...the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end”. They want you to look at all the alternative ways of worship and service of false religions.

Q: According to v.11, how does God define the ultimate result of seducement by false relationships?

A: “A wicked thing”. The biblical definition of wickedness is most often used to describe the exact opposite of righteousness. Whereas righteousness is defined by conscience obedience to God’s Word, wickedness is defined as knowingly and willfully disobeying His will and ways.

Q: Why do you suppose that in both the examples of false prophets and false relationships, that God specifically reminds that it was He who brought them “out of the house of slavery”?

A: This isn’t simply a matter of whose doctrine one will believe, but whom one will serve. The end result of being seduced by false relationships is to wind up in service—and therefore slavery—to another.

¹²“If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that ¹³some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom you have not known), ¹⁴then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, ¹⁵you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. ¹⁶Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. ¹⁷Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, ¹⁸if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

[Read v.12-18]

Q: Literally this applies to cities or groups living amongst Israel. What is the equivalent for us today?

A: These might be termed “false groups”, organizations or gatherings that claim to be Christian or claim to be following God, but in truth are not. They can range all the way from out-and-out cults to factions within a denomination or local church.

Q: Who are the instigators that led these groups astray?

A: They are called “worthless men...gone out from among you”. These are false prophets, false teachers, and/or false relationships that have been previously identified and expunged from the mainstream, possibly people with which we previously fellowshiped. At the least, they’re familiar and known to us. Possessing unresolved issues of rebellion, they export their rebellion to others.

Q: Because these “worthless men” are involved, are we to automatically and summarily take action against the groups they’ve infiltrated?

A: No, we’re first required to make a careful and thorough examination to determine the facts. We must not assume the worst just because these bad influences are present but must determine precisely what they’re up to and the extent of the effectiveness of their actions.

Q: Why do you suppose that destruction of everything connected with false groups is required?

A: A practical reason is to prevent being influenced by the things that led them down the wrong path. But there is also a greater spiritual lesson in that a truly faithful relationship has no room whatsoever for anyone else but the sole object of one’s affection. Just as a husband and wife are to be exclusively committed and devoted to each other, so is the Believer with Christ.

Q: The actions of false prophets is termed “rebellion” (v.5) and those of false relationships as “wicked” (v.11) What is used for false groups?

A: “Abomination”. (v.14) These are not terms used in connection with someone that is temporarily backslidden or simply struggling in their spiritual relationship, but describe the conscience, willful choice to leave God to love and serve another and work **AGAINST** His kingdom.

Overall Application

- *A seducement targets your eyes and attention to be focused on something or someone else, ultimately leading you out of one relationship or commitment to a new one. Is there possibly **ANYTHING** in your life that could be tugging at you like this? What is your best and most appropriate response?*
- *Do you realize that spiritual seduction may be taking place in private, personal relationships as much or more than the public displays of false teachers or false groups? Is there a personal relationship that keeps pulling you away from God’s Word, church, or anything related? Have you considered the prolonged effects of allowing that relationship to continue intact?*
- *The common denominator to defeat the efforts of all 3 influences is being able to apply the standards of God’s Word. Do you see your commitment to Bible study as the best protection against seduction? Do you use God’s Word as the definitive standard by which you measure events, teaching, relationships, and groups?*