

**THE FIVE WAYS OF DECEPTION
PART TWO
THE DECEPTION OF OUR IMAGINATION**

Galatians 6:7 (NKJV)

⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

- *“Do not be deceived” - The Bible contains many warnings for believers not to be deceived.*
- *The word ἐξαπατάω (exapataō) means “to deceive thoroughly or completely.”*
- *ἐξαπατάω (exapataō) is used only five times in the New Testament and each usage portrays a different type of deception.*
- *To study these five types of deception it is useful to study them in terms of our five senses and in terms of our triune created nature of spirit, soul, and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23).*
- *Just as we have five physical senses to allow us to perceive the world around us and enable us to be “world conscious,” we have five soul senses to enable us to be “self-conscious” or conscious of the condition of own souls. We also have five spirit senses to enable us to be “God-conscious” or conscious of God and perceive what He is doing and saying to us.*
- *Last time we studied the triplet of our spirit, soul, and body senses of hearing, conscience, and faith respectively, and we studied how sin deceives our conscience.*
- *Today we are going to study the triplet of our spirit, soul, and body senses of sight, imagination, and hope and how our imagination can be deceived.*
- *With our physical sense of sight we can see the world around us.*
- *With our soul sense of imagination, our souls form vivid mental pictures.*
- *With our spirit sense of hope we are able to see God at work in our lives and in the different situations we face.*

Romans 8:24–25 (NKJV)

²⁴For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

- “hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?”
– *Hope enables us to look beyond our natural circumstances to see God’s faithfulness. This fills us with confidence as we wait with eager anticipation and steadfast perseverance until God fulfills His promises.*
- *The natural circumstances of this life may sometimes confront and challenge our faith in God and His promises. Hope lifts our sights beyond the negative situations we face to the heavenly realm to see God in all His glory and power.*
- *Our physical sense of sight allows us to see the natural realm and our spirit sense of hope allows us to see the spiritual realm. Depending on where we choose to focus determines what images we develop in our imagination.*
- *The word ἐξαπατάω (exapataō) is found a second time in 1 Corinthians 3:18.*

1 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

1 Corinthians 3:18 (NET)

¹⁸Guard against self-deception, each of you. If someone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish so that he can become wise.

- *1 Corinthians 3:18 warns, “If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age” or as the New English Translations (NET) phrases it, “If someone among you thinks he is wise in this age.” This warning is against having an incorrect image of oneself and imagining that we are wiser or stronger than we really are.*
- *We can be deceived in our imagination and see things in ways that don’t reflect reality.*
- *Many people imagine themselves stronger, braver, or smarter than they really are—until they are confronted by a dangerous or challenging situation.*

- *Their imagined estimation of themselves does not measure up to the reality of who they really are.*
- *We learned in Romans 7:11 that our conscience is deceived by sin. “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.”*
- *While sin deceives our conscience, we are the ones who deceive ourselves in the area of imagination. “Let no one deceive himself” or as the New English Translation puts it, “Guard against self-deception, each of you.”*
- *“If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” – Self-deception is often fueled by our desire to be more concerned about how we appear to others than how we actually are.*
- *We need to disregard how we appear outwardly and work to change those things in our hearts and lives that defile or harm us.*
- *When a person comes to Christ, the first thing he or she must face and confess openly is that they are broken, hopeless, and helpless sinners.*
- *It doesn’t matter if that person appears successful in the eyes of the world. It is only when he or she is willing to face the reality of their lost condition that they can receive salvation.*
- *When a person is willing to humble him or herself and is no longer concerned about appearing foolish in the eyes of the world, they have taken the first step in becoming wise in the eyes of God. “Let him become a fool that he may become wise.”*
- *The wisest thing we can possibly do is humble ourselves, confess our faults one to another, and seek God to cleanse and change us.*
- *In reality it is the proud who appear foolish. An overly inflated self-image would be like a peacock strutting around to show off its feathers.*
- *A negative self-image can be seen in a person who is anorexic. Weighing less than 100 pounds, they look in the mirror and imagine themselves to be overweight.*

- *The foolishness of a proud person is demonstrated when they boast about not caring what others think of them. In fact, everything they do is for the sake of appearance to impress others.*

Galatians 6:3–4 (NKJV)

³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

⁴But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

- *Galatians 6:3 provides a similar warning about self-deception in the area of imagination, “thinking himself to be something, when he is nothing.”*
- *Galatians 6:4 goes on to exhort us not to develop a self-inflated evaluation of oneself, nor a self-deprecating one, but a realistic one. “But let each one examine his own works, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone.”*

2 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV)

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

- *“But let each one examine his own work” – One way to accurately evaluate ourselves is not to measure ourselves by our inner perceived image of ourselves. We measure ourselves through the lens of God’s Word and by the reality of our actions and the actual fruit of our lives.*
- *For example someone may think he is a wonderful husband and father, but the real answer is found by asking his wife and children.*

Romans 12:3-8 (NKJV)

³For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

- *Romans 12:3 repeats this warning to honestly evaluate oneself and “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”*
- *We need “to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” We need to recognize the gifts and callings God has given us, so that we can*

fulfill our calling and co-operate with the Holy Spirit to see the gifts He has given us used for His glory.

⁴For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

⁵so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- *We need to recognize that “we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” We are not only equally important to God, but God has created each of us uniquely so that we need one another. Only when we work together can we fulfill the will of God on this earth. We are all unique and very important to God and to one another.*

⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

⁷or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them” – We need to recognize the gifts God has given us to develop them and use them for the glory of God to edify and build up His Body, the Church.*
- *In our imagination we need to have a clear picture of which gifts God has given us and not to imagine He has given us gifts that He has not.*
- *From Romans 12:3-8 we see two ways in which we can deceive our imagination in regards to how we picture ourselves.*
- *We can puff ourselves up with pride and deceive our imagination to see ourselves with a false sense of self-importance. Or we can have a poor self-image and fail to see the true riches God has placed within each one of us in Christ.*
- *Each scenario will lead us to become more self-focused and we will fail to recognize God’s love for us and the true purpose He has for our lives.*

- *People who are proud always think about themselves and people who have a poor self-image always think about themselves. Both extremes produce a self-centered and selfish worldview.*
- *God doesn't want us to be self-centered but Christ centered, because **only** in Jesus Christ will we find our true identity and purpose.*
- *Our imagination plays an extremely important role in the way we evaluate ourselves and the world around us.*
- *The Hebrew word for imagination is יָצַר (yatsar) and it is a noun that means, "something made into a shape; pottery that is formed by a potter; a form of a graven image; of what is framed in the mind; imagination, devise, purpose."*
- *The root word for imagination יָצַר (yatsar) is the verb יָצַר (yatsar) and it means, "to form or fashion earthenware, to devise, plan, to make" and it is used in Genesis 2:7 to describe God creating man when it says, "and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*
- *Often people think of our imagination as something nebulous and without form, but the Bible paints an entirely different picture of our imagination.*
- *The Hebrew idea of imagination is something with substance. It can even refer to a solid object such as an idol or a graven image.*
- *Our soul sense of imagination is neutral, like our other senses, and depending upon how we use them, they can be used to build us up or tear us down.*
- *If our imagination is based on the reality of God's faithfulness and the truth of God's Word it will produce confidence and peace in our hearts.*
- *Just because we picture something in our imagination does not mean that it is imaginary. It may indeed reflect reality.*

Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV)

³You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

- *The Hebrew word that is translated in Isaiah 26:3 as “mind” is actually the Hebrew word יָצַד (yester) meaning imagination.*

Isaiah 26:3 (YLT)

³An imagination supported Thou fortifiest peace—peace! For in Thee it is confident.

- *When our imagination is focused on God, He builds a stronghold of protection that surrounds us made up of the double portion of peace peace.*
- *The reason we can be filled with perfect peace is because “for in Thee it (our imagination) is confident.” When our imagination is focused on God it produces strong confidence in Him, so He can impart perfect peace into our soul.*
- *When our imagination is filled with hope in God then it reflects reality and produces stability and peace in our souls, even when we face the storms of life.*
- *God created our imagination to be a powerful tool to live a victorious and joyful life. However, the enemy can use an undisciplined imagination to bring us much grief and confusion.*
- *While a disciplined imagination focused on our hope in God brings peace, an undisciplined imagination brings turmoil and fictitious perceptions.*
- *An undisciplined imagination can produce fantasies contrary to God’s purpose for our lives or an unrealistic view of life, causing us to live in a fantasy world.*
- *We can delude ourselves into thinking we are going to be a great and famous person and become deceived by pride.*
- *Fantasies can lead people into sexual immorality or to commit adultery. They think the grass is greener on the other side. Instead they discover there is no grass on the other side, only death, barrenness, and pain.*

Proverbs 6:26 (NKJV)

²⁶For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

- *Pornography is an example of a fantasy, where through images the imagination becomes enflamed and the person is seduced into living in an imaginary world of sexual immorality. That is why Jesus warns, “I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28).*
- *Since the things one imagines are as real to the person as if the actions were taking place, Jesus counts fantasies of immorality as sin. The fantasy affects the person and even their relationships with others just as if it were real.*
- *An undisciplined imagination can produce suspicion. Although those suspicions may be totally unfounded they will cause the person to react to people as if they were true. Such suspicions can have devastating results on relationships and can even damage entire communities.*
- *Suspicion is one of the roots of prejudice that in the extreme can lead to genocide and “racial cleansing,” as people perceive people of different races as their enemies.*
- *An undisciplined imagination can produce paranoia where irrational fears grip the person’s heart. Although the fear is not rational, imaginations of paranoia are as real to the person as if an armed gunman stood before them.*

Genesis 2:7 (NKJV)

⁷And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

- *As we looked at earlier, the Hebrew word “formed” is the root word for imagination as God shaped the dust of the earth to create man.*
- *The act of creativity begins with imagining something, taking that abstract thought, and making it a reality.*
- *Creativity always begins with a mental picture. Then they take that image and make it into a physical reality.*
- *Our imagination provides us with an internal framework with which we perceive and react to the world around us. So, it is extremely important that our imagination lines up with the truth of God’s Word.*

- *While sin deceives our conscience, we are the ones who deceive our own imagination.*
- *How do we deceive our own imagination? Whatever we listen to, look at, think about, and meditate shape our imaginations. The more we think about something the more those images and beliefs become entrenched in our minds.*
- *Our imagination is at work much more than many people realize.*
- *When someone describes an event or tells us a story, we build what we are hearing into a mental image.*
- *If someone tells us how another person mistreated them, unless we are careful, we will begin to produce a mental image of that other person and the events, even before we have heard the other side of the story.*
- *This is why second hand offences produce such great harm. Often the person hearing the second hand version becomes more offended than the actual victim, unaware of all the circumstances.*
- *The words we speak and the words we hear have a profound effect on our imagination.*
- *Maybe the old adage of “a picture is worth a thousand words” could be turned around, “a thousand words is what produces the picture in the first place” as the words we hear and speak shape the images we form in our minds.*
- *This provides an additional insight why the words we speak and hear impact us so powerfully.*
- *Christians can be so careless with their words. The words we hear have the power to tear us down, and the words we speak have the power to tear down those around us.*
- *If we imagine we are down trodden and defeated then we will act that way.*
- *If we imagine how much God loves us and that “all things work together for good for those that love God and called according to His purpose,” we will be filled with hope and confidence that God will bring victory in our lives.*

Proverbs 18:8 (NKJV)

⁸The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body.

- *“The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles” because they are so hard to resist. The carnal person wants to tell them and carnal listeners want to hear them.*
- *“And they go down into the inmost body” When we hear or repeat gossip it has a very destructive and negative effect upon the person’s soul and causes all sorts of negative thoughts and emotions to be produced.*
- *If we speak badly of others, we reinforce a negative image of that person in our own hearts, and we reinforce negative images in the hearts of those who listen to our words.*

Galatians 5:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

- *“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” – The word that must be on our lips is love to build each another up and not tear each other down. We can all find faults and weaknesses in ourselves that need to be worked on, cleansed or healed.*
- *It doesn’t take a great mind to spot people’s weaknesses, but it takes a great heart to love them no matter what their weaknesses are because “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8).*
- *“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” – If we begin to focus on each person’s weaknesses and develop a deceived imagination where we see everyone as “bad” and ourselves as “good” our emotional atmosphere will soon become caustic, bitter, and destructive.*
- *We must see everyone through God’s eyes of love. Everyone is precious in His sight.*

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

- *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” If we don’t see everyone single person as precious, no matter who they are or what they have done, we have deceived our own imagination to think too self-righteously about ourselves and too little of others.*
- *“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” - If we don’t see that God can save, change, and transform everyone who puts their faith in Christ no matter how wickedly they have acted, then we have deceived our own imagination and our image of God. We have falsely diminished His love and His power as too small.*

Genesis 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

- *What drew Eve into being enticed to sin? She listened to the words of the serpent and allowed his words to sink deep in her heart and deceive her imagination.*
- *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes” she deceived herself by imagining how good the fruit would taste and how it would make her wise as God Himself is wise.*
- *As she listened to the words of the serpent she deceived herself and imagined what it would be like to be as wise as God.*
- *However, if she had remembered the words God had spoken, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17), then she would have imagined the terrible pain, death, and destruction that would come upon every one of her offspring and she would have rejected the temptation.*
- *Christians who fall into destructive sins are deceived by listening to the lie of the lure of the temptation. They fantasize about what it would be like to do a certain thing instead of remembering God’s word. They fail to imagine the*

destructive consequences those things will bring to themselves and their families.

- *Fantasy in the imagination is like an optical illusion in the realm of sight.*
- *When we see an optical illusion we may be unaware that what we perceive is not the way things really look. We deceive ourselves when we imagine things contrary to God's Word as if they would bring us happiness or contentment when in reality the outcome will be utter destruction.*
- *When we discipline our imagination and do not deceive ourselves, our imagination becomes a source of joy, comfort, wonder, hope, and protection.*

Matthew 28:7–10 (NKJV)

⁷And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

⁹And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.

¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

- *There is one word to describe the disciples' response to the revelation that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and He has overcome death and sin, so we can have eternal life. That word is joy.*
- *As we read God's Word and share with others what Jesus has done, and as we fellowship and worship Him Who is raised from the dead, in our imaginations we can be flooded with images of what it was like for the disciples to encounter the resurrected Saviour.*
- *Our imagination can be used to bring us joy.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 (NKJV)

¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- *During times of loss or sorrow we can choose to contemplate and imagine the time when this mortal life will end. Then we will experience the resurrection and be reunited with our loved ones, leaving behind all the sorrow and sufferings of this life.*
- *Our imagination can be used to bring us comfort.*

Galatians 4:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- *All those who put their faith in Christ are not just saved from Hell, but have become the sons and daughters of God and as we imagine this truth we will be filled with wonder.*
- *The New Testament focuses much of its attention on helping us to understand that as children of God we have a new identity in Christ. We are beloved and righteous in our re-born spirit in the sight of our Heavenly Father.*
- *Our imagination can be used to fill us with wonder.*

1 Peter 1:3 (NKJV)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

- *We have a living hope through Christ’s resurrection. Those who do not know Christ will live lives that end in old age, frailty, and helplessness, while believers can imagine what awaits us in Heaven.*
- *Our imagination can be used to fill us with hope.*

Hebrews 12:6 (NKJV)

⁶For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

- *Our sanctified imagination will help us to clearly keep in the forefront of our minds that if we walk in sin, God our Father will chasten us. This understanding will protect us from giving into temptations.*
- *Our imagination can be used to protect us from giving into temptation.*

Luke 2:17–19 (NKJV)

¹⁷Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

¹⁸And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

- *“Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” – She treasured all the revelations that God had given her and her imagination would have been filled with thoughts of what marvellous things God was going to do through Jesus – the Son of God.*

1 Corinthians 2:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

- *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” – No man can even imagine what God has prepared for those who love Him.*
- *“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit” - The Holy Spirit reveals deep secrets to us through His Word and through the revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit to activate our imagination and give us glimpses of the glory we are going to experience.*