

Recognizing False Christianity

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, October 2021

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(Draw a mountain on the board on the left side). There is a mountain and on that mountain is a man who is calling to you with a message. The man is asking you to follow him up the mountain and learn from him and he describes what the journey will be like. Here is what he says you will experience:

1) People will speak well of you.

That sounds good. God wants me to have a good reputation.

2) You can be with the large, popular group that is changing the world.

Sounds exciting!

3) You can get the blessings you need from God.

You have a long list of things you want God to do for you, don't you? This man wants to teach you the secrets of how to pray in such a way that God will give you all those things. That's something you would be interested in, isn't it?

4) You can have prosperity and be rich.

God has the ability to make his children rich and prosperous and this man wants to teach you the secrets of how to get God to make you prosperous. God doesn't want you to be an unhappy failure, does He?

5) You can avoid or be healed from disease and injury.

Jesus healed people all the time in the Bible. This should be a normal experience for Christians, right?

6) You can have supernatural experiences and blessings that others don't get.

This man wants to teach you how to grow your faith large enough that you will have supernatural spiritual experiences that those with weaker faith don't get. You will receive revelations and experiences from God's Holy Spirit just like in the New Testament church.

(Draw another mountain on the right side of the board). But there is another mountain and on that mountain is another man who is calling to you with a message. The man is asking you to follow him up the mountain and learn from him and he describes what the journey will be like. Here is what he says you will experience:

1) Some people will not like you.

2) You will be in the minority.

3) You will have to deny your own desires, exercise self-control, and be his bond-servant.

4) You will experience fiery trials and difficult testing on the journey.

5) You may be rich or poor or somewhere in the middle and it might change over time.

6) You may be healthy or sick or somewhere in the middle and it will change over time.

7) You will have to set aside your own life plans, put on armor for battle every day, and serve other people.

Let's take a vote. Who wants to go up the first mountain? Who wants to go up the second mountain? Who isn't sure? Who forgot to vote? How are we going to figure out what to do here?

Key Point: *Whenever I hear something that sounds good, I always look to see what the Bible says about it. I've learned that I can't trust what seems good to me. I can't trust my brain and I can't trust my heart or my feelings (**Jeremiah 17:9**). But I can trust the Bible to tell me what God says is true.*

So let's see what the Bible has to say about the message of the first mountain.

The First Mountain

People will speak well of you

Luke 6:26

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

People speaking well of someone is not a good way to determine if that person is saying and doing the right things! Better to test what they say and do against what the Bible says is good and right.

You can be with the large, popular group that is changing the world

John 15:19-20

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

The world is the majority. God chose us out of the world. That means we are in the minority. Being in the majority is not a good way to determine if you are with the group that is saying and doing the right things!

You can get the blessings you need from God

Isaiah 46:9-10

“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;

There are people who will try to convince you that they know the secret of how to get God to do things for you that you want done. But the Bible teaches that God will accomplish His purposes and will do things according to what pleases Him. He is willing to consider our requests, but He is not obligated to do what we want.

(Deuteronomy 6:16-17)

“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah. ¹⁷ You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you.

Trying to get God to serve you is testing God. Something we are commanded not to do. Instead of testing God we are told to focus on diligent obedience to His commands.

(James 4:3-4)

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

God answers prayer but only when those prayers are in accordance with His will. Better to know His will and pray for it than try to get God to do your will.

You can have prosperity and be rich

I Timothy 6:8-9

If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Food, clothes, and shelter are legitimate needs that God will help us with, but seeking to be rich is a trap.

Mark 4:19

but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Seeking to be rich is one of three things that choke spiritual growth and fruitfulness.

You can avoid or be healed from disease and injury

Revelation 13:11-12

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. ¹² He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.

satan has the ability to heal physical injuries and this passage is an example of that. Miraculous healing is not necessarily a sign of God working. If a miraculous healing occurs all we can say is that a miraculous healing occurred. It may be from God or it may be from satan – we don't know.

Besides, we are all appointed to die at the end of our lives. If we are always healed then we would never die. But if we don't die we can't spend eternity with God in paradise. So we each have an appointment on God's calendar for when we will die. This will require that we become incurably sick or injured at that time. So, injury, sickness, and healing cannot be used as indicators of God's condemnation or blessing.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

You can have supernatural experiences and blessings that others don't get

Matthew 12:39

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

Seeking supernatural experiences is evil and is the opposite of loving God. Jesus describes people who seek supernatural experiences as spiritual adulterers!

John 4:48

So Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe."

Jesus was disgusted with people who sought miracles. This is particularly true during the age we now live in since we have the complete revelation of God available to us in the written Bible.

Besides, satan can provide supernatural experiences also.

Matthew 24:24-25

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance.

Today, we have a number of false teachers in the Christian community. You can see them in the bookstores and on Christian television. It's at a point where the false prophets, false teachers, and false apostles on Christian television may now even be in the majority. And Jesus is saying that it is going to get even worse in the future. In our future, the false teachers will also start to perform miracles using satanic power! They will be so convincing that everyone will be deceived by them, except for the elect - those whom God has intentionally selected for protection from the deception. Without God's supernatural protection, you would be deceived.

That's how effective the false teachers, prophets, and apostles will soon be. Therefore, we can't use miracles as an indicator of whether someone is saying and doing the right things. We have to look to the Bible to know what the right things are.

(Matthew 7:22-23)

Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

(II Thessalonians 2:9)

that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

(John 10:41)

Many came to Him and were saying, “While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.”

(Matthew 11:11)

Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Second Mountain

Now let’s take a look at what the Bible says about the message of the man on the second mountain.

Some people will not like you

I John 3:13 - Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

You will be in the minority

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

You will have to deny your own desires, exercise self-control, and be his bond-servant

John 12:24-26

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

We give up following our own desires, die to self, and serve and follow Christ. Our reward will come later.

Galatians 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. We exercise self-control and we put effort into not obeying the passions and desires of our flesh when it interferes with obeying God (and it constantly does).

II Timothy 2:24

The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,

We are bond-servants of Christ (**bond-servant**: *one bound to service without wages; slave*). However, we will receive eternal rewards later.

(Galatians 2:20)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

(I Peter 2:11)

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

(I Timothy 4:7-8)

But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

You will experience fiery trials and difficult testing on the journey

James 1:2-4

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

I Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

God uses trials and testing to increase our faith and develop our character. All of us will experience trials and testing. These experiences are not fun at the time, but they lead to valuable rewards in eternity.

You may be rich or poor or somewhere in the middle and it might change over time

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

There were times when Paul was rich and times when he was poor but in all cases he was content.

You may be healthy or sick or somewhere in the middle and it will change over time

II Corinthians 4:7-10

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸ *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

(II Timothy 4:19-21)

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. ²¹ Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

You will have to set aside your own life plans, put on armor for battle everyday, and serve other people

Matthew 16:24-25

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Following Christ means we give up own plans and priorities and adopt those that Christ has for us.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Do you put on armor when going on vacations or holidays? No. When do you put on armor? When you are going to war.

(Romans 13:12)

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Mark 9:35

Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

Following Christ also means that we must also be willing to serve all the different kinds of people God brings into our life.

The End Result of Choosing The First Mountain (aka: The Mountain of the Shining One)

(Lucifer: *literally light-bearer or shining star*)

What you don't see when you look up the path of the first mountain is what is on the other side of the mountain. In other words, what does the path up this mountain ultimately lead to and result in?

Eternal Destruction

II Thessalonians 1:6-9

For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to *give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Eternal Punishment

Revelation 21:8

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Brimstone: a “burning stone” of sulfur which melts to a blood-red liquid and emits a blue flame when burned.

Eternal Sorrow

Matthew 13:41-42

The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The End Result of Choosing The Second Mountain (aka: The Mountain of the Righteous One)

Now let's look at what is on the other side of the second mountain. What does the path up this mountain ultimately lead to and result in?

Eternal Life

John 5:24

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Eternal Reward

Revelation 22:12-13

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

(Luke 6:22-23)

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. ²³ Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

Eternal Glorification

Glorification: *elevate by bestowing honor, praise, and admiration, resulting in great gratification and renown; the height of prosperity and achievement*

Renown: *a state of being widely acclaimed and highly honored; fame*

We don't talk about it often but in addition to giving the Christian eternal life and eternal rewards, God also plans to glorify us. We don't fully understand what this means but it appears to be a completing act of God making us like Christ and a final step in God demonstrating His love for us by honoring us. It also seems to hint at something, like God making us famous. We don't understand it right now but it will be a good thing.

II Corinthians 4:17-18

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

(Romans 8:16-18)

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

(I Peter 1:6-7)

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

(Romans 8:29-30)

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Conclusion

There are many false apostles, prophets, and teachers within the Christian community today. These people are often attractive, winsome pastors with large facilities and congregations in the tens of thousands. But they are calling you to follow the teachings of the first mountain - the mountain of the shining one. And God is calling you to follow Him up the second mountain - the mountain of the Righteous One.

Can you recognize which is which? Which one will you follow? The choice is yours.

Appendix: Two Mountains

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

John 19:17-22

They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." ²⁰ Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Jeremiah 17:9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 6:26, I John 3:13, John 15:19-20, Matthew 7:13-14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Isaiah 46:9-10, Deuteronomy 6:16-17, James 4:3-4*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Timothy 6:8-9, Philippians 4:11-13, Mark 4:19*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 13:11-12, Hebrews 9:27*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 12:39, John 4:48, Matthew 24:24-25*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Mathew 7:22-23, II Thessalonians 2:9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 10:41, Matthew 11:11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 12:24-26, Matthew 16:24-25*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Galatians 5:22-24, Galatians 2:20, I Peter 2:11, I Timothy 4:7-8*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 2:24*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 1:2-4, I Peter 4:12-13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 4:7-10, II Timothy 4:19-21*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 6:11, Romans 13:12*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Mark 9:35*

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Thessalonians 1:6-9, Revelation 21:8, Matthew 13:41-42*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 5:24*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 22:12-13, Luke 6:22-23*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Recognizing False Christianity*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 4:17-18, Romans 8:16-18*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 1:6-7, Romans 8:29-30*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 4:1-11, John 19:17-22*

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