

Beware of con artists

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Last week, I talked about the scripture in Titus 1:15 that reads: "Unto the pure, all things are pure."

I reminded readers to be careful not to allow our desire to be "pure" to influence us to be naive and gullible.

Con artists often seek to prey upon senior citizens for the following reasons: (1) loneliness, (2) trusting too easily, (3) more easily confused by double-talk, (4) vision loss, (5) hearing loss and (6) less stamina to resist persistent individuals.

Let me share with you eight of the common scams that con artists seek to use against senior citizens.

■ **"In the house":** Although caregiver agencies are required by law to do background checks on all potential employees, many don't bother. And not all employees have criminal records. They just can't resist the temptation to snatch unattended cash, other items or personal information.

■ **"I.O.U.":** Some seniors are easily persuaded to loan money to relatives, employees, neighbors and "friends" who will never pay them back.

■ **"For a good cause":** Anyone can start a nonprofit organization. Scammers often choose names for their fake nonprofits that can easily be mistaken for the names of well-known real nonprofits.

■ **"You've already won":** Official-looking documents designed to trick recipients into thinking they've won money are worded carefully in order to stay legal. Crucial information is often hidden in tiny italic and/or all-capital-letters type, because reading italics and all caps is much harder for people with low vision.

■ **"Talk to me":** Seniors are prime targets for sleazy telemarketers. The seniors are home and they are friendly. And they are often too quick to divulge their credit-card and bank-account numbers.

■ **"Doom on the doorstep":** Some scammers ring doorbells and claim to be representatives of the local gas or water company. They say they have been sent to check or to fix something.

- **"Friendly and inexpensive repairmen":** Some scammers offer to do some inexpensive repair work around the house. They often persistently request money in advance. Often, they leave before the job is completed.
- **"Engine trouble":** Some scammers wait in parking lots to disable cars of elderly drivers, typically detaching a sparkplug wire. When the car doesn't start, the scammer poses as a helpful passerby.



Remember to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).