



Pastor's Message

Recently, our Sunday School class started studying the Book of Revelation. Some questions came up concerning how to tell the difference from true and false prophets. This is a good start at knowing what to look for.

5 Warning Signs of False Teachers

By Sam Rainer, Op-ed Contributor | Saturday, September 17, 2022

Several years ago, I received an email with a link to a sermon given by a pastor in my community. The person sending the email was genuinely concerned.

“Is he preaching heresy?”

The sermon included a terrible conclusion about how Jesus emptied Himself in Philippians 2. The pastor taught Jesus lost His divinity during the incarnation and then returned to being God through the ascension. He emphasized how we have the same power as Jesus on earth since He was merely human like us.

I responded with an explanation about the heresy of Kenoticism. Whether or not this pastor intended to preach heresy, I did not know. But it was indeed heresy.

Heresy is a destructive false teaching with the potential to divide the church. We throw this term around all the time, so much that we've lost a sense of the gravity of heresy. Heretics are not people who disagree with you. Heretics are people who divide the church through false teaching.

Most believers do not have the opportunity to take seminary classes on the heresies of Gnosticism, Docetism, Kenoticism, Arianism, Modalism, and others. Theological training is helpful but not necessary to identify heresy.

What are some warning signs of false teachers?

1. **Contradicting Scripture.** Often, these contradictions affect the meaning of the Gospel. This is how Satan works. Distort the Gospel just enough so it's not really the Gospel. People will notice if the message is way off, but they won't notice as much if the message contains just enough truth to appear as truth while being false.
2. **Adding or removing from Scripture.** False teachers add to Scripture to control the behavior of others.

The motive is often power. Other false teachers will remove from Scripture to live as they want and participate in otherwise prohibited behavior. The motive is often selfishness.

3. Claiming special knowledge on your behalf. I cringe when I hear, “God told me to tell you this.” Or even worse, “Only I get this information from God.” Is it possible God speaks through others to you? Yes. But someone claiming unsolicited special knowledge on your behalf is always a red flag.

4. Claiming a different source other than Scripture for God’s messages. Your emotions are a terrible source of God’s truth. Other religious texts are not equal to the Bible. Cults attract people with both tactics: emotional appeals and another so-called sacred text.

5. Making money the message more than Jesus. Please, preach and teach generosity, sacrificial giving, and tithing in your church. But do not forget that a love of money disqualifies one from ministry.

False teachers pull people away from Scripture in two main ways. The first is offering an alternative worldview of the Bible. Essentially, they say, “That’s not right; here is something else.”

The second way false teachers lure people is through reinterpreting Scripture. Essentially, “That’s not what the Bible means to me.”

Recognize the warning signs. Why should you pay attention?

Jesus answers this question in the Sermon on the Mount. He teaches how few take the narrow and difficult road to discern truth. Jesus then warns about why you should care about discerning truth.

“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.” (Matthew 7:15-16 NLT)

The term “fruit” occurs over one hundred times in the Bible. Fruit usually refers to results. What qualities are manifested in your life? Where do your hours go?

If you are not dedicating hours, mind energy, and eyeballs to God’s Word, then you are going to struggle to know what is true in this world.

Know God’s truth, and the results will follow.

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