

## Two Dozen Clues

Have you ever watched a wolf attack a sheep? PHOTO 1. The sheep is absolutely helpless. The attack is swift, the damage is immediate, and the result is almost a certainty.

Jesus used this image to describe what happens

Matthew 7:15 (ESV) 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

### PHOTO 2

His brother Jude would write later...

Jude 4 (ESV) 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

### PHOTO 3

Many pastors have had the experience of trying to stop a false teacher who was sent by Satan to destroy a church. PHOTO 4 They all describe the event as a whirlwind blitzkrieg assault. Their leaders were not totally prepared for what was happening because it was so swift. Many in just two weeks were thinking, "How did we get here? What just happened to our church?"

Pastors and leaders struggle to put brakes on what was happening because the congregation loved what was being said to them. In these moments they describe that it was like the church was going on a roller coaster and all that they could do was hold on.

The description is the same, the deception was incredible. Friends in ministry for years are often torn apart from each other in a matter of weeks. Church leadership is usually divided almost immediately. Finances are secretly and quietly reallocated. They describe that their church went from unity and purpose to distrust and life support in what seems like days.

The calculated spiritual assault on their church gained traction almost immediately. Those who identified the false teacher were chastised and dismissed while that person was given more and more influence and was allocated more and more money. Pastors are often split and the damage is deep.

Most report that they are honestly stunned that the church even survived. PHOTO 5

In hindsight these churches often report that the same false teacher has impacted church after church...moving from place to place..leaving a wake of broken relationships and broken churches in their past. The churches that survive are often shells of what they had been previously.

These attacks by Satan on Jesus' church are commonplace. And Peter knew the damage that could result. This is his final warning to the church. The church that he led, the churches that read his letter, and even our church today.

As we enter the second chapter of 2nd Peter, Peter now finally turns to the nature of these false teachers. He has said they are coming...but in today's passage, Peter is going to show us how to recognize them.

False teaching can come in many different expressions and by numerous approaches, and false teachers can be gifted and attractive people. How can we recognize them? In this one chapter, just 22 verses, Peter gives us 24 characteristics.

2 Peter 2:1–3 (ESV) 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Peter has been talking about the prophets of the past. He spoke of how they were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote God's Truth. Now Peter is warning that there are going to be false teachers who are carried along by their own spirit and their own desires as they write and teach lies.

Now looking back historically, Peter tells them...it has become obvious that some who professed to be prophets of God were not. They spoke their own words and pretended as if God had spoken through them. They deceived people in God's name.

Peter says, just like those fake prophets there will be fake teachers. Notice carefully what he says...Our first characteristic (1) they will secretly bring in heresies. Heresy means anything that is contrary to the truth of God's Word. But these people are on a secret mission.

The focus here is not so much that these people claim to be sent by God when in fact they are not, or that they lay claim to the office of teacher to which they have no right, but that they have been teaching ideas and doctrines that are wrong. Their teachings are based not on any revelation from God but on their own ingenious inventions.

Peter stated this as a fact and not as a possibility; and he said they were among you.

Peter tells us that they are not going to show up and announce that what they are professing as truth is actually a well crafted lie designed to deceive those who don't know the truth or don't know it very well.

It isn't that their teaching is secret, but the deceptive nature of their teaching is hidden. No false teacher ever announces himself as a false teacher.

The second characteristic Peter teaches is that (2) They will even deny the Master who bought them. Jesus paid the price for everyone. He technically bought every human that ever lived, but most will reject His offer... Clue number 2 they will deny the Lord.

Remember who is speaking. This is Peter. He knows about denying the Lord. No one knew any more about denying the Lord than Peter.

Even a person who has what appears to be a godly walk and relationship with Jesus Christ can still bring in destructive heresies. Often times good men who teach lies do the worst damage. Their lies are accepted far more easily because of the good character of these men. Just remember Judas. No one suspect him.

2 Peter 2:2 (ESV) 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

This reminds us that false teachers may be popular. Just because something succeeds in attracting a crowd of followers, it doesn't mean that it is of God. We know that God's work will always bear fruit, but the devil's work can also increase.

The most distressing aspect of the work of false teachers is not that they are among you (2 Peter 2:1). False teachers always have been and always will be among Christians. The most distressing fact is that so many Christians will follow their destructive ways.

Sensuality....

They will literally seduce you by trying to tell you what they know you want to hear. It will be easy to become seduced by their silvery tongues, charming personality and engaging charm. They will share with you new knowledge that often allows you to do what you always wanted to do, but that you thought God called a sin.

They will twist what you know to get you what you want. You are being seduced spiritually.

Blasphemed

When false teachers are at work and when crowds are following them, the way of truth is blasphemed. God’s holy name and honor are disgraced.

They are destructive because those who follow them become immoral and are therefore subject to judgment. Notice irony here: the false teachers taught that there would be no final judgment; but in reality their teaching had the effect of leading people to experience the judgment that these teachers themselves had denied.

2 Peter 2:3 (ESV) 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

The third characteristic to recognize a false teacher is (3) They will exploit you with false words. They will use you to fund themselves “exploit” is translated as “make merchandise of you.” The Greek word is the root of our word emporium. Which denotes the business of buying and selling. False teachers exploit people. They use them as merchandise or objects.

One way they will do this is with false words. False words therefore are stories or accounts or teachings that have no factual basis but are simply the result of the clever imaginations of the false teachers. What is being asserted here is that it is not the apostles and Christian teachers, but the false teachers, who are depending on concocted fairy tales.

Now skipping down to verse 9 we pick up our fourth clue

2 Peter 2:9–10 (ESV) 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

The fourth characteristic is that they have (4) A lust of the flesh. Flesh here means that they do what they want to do. The lust of the flesh and the things of the Spirit are contrary to one another. False teachers do not walk in the Spirit; they live in the lusts of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16–17 (ESV) 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Remember that the Gnostics don't think that what they do in the flesh impacts their spiritual life, their truth or their salvation. They believe they are saved by special knowledge and can do whatever they want with whomever they want. Flesh is not just sexual things it is everything you do with your body. If you desire it...you do it. They live life unrestrained.

The fifth characteristic is also in this verse: (5) They despise authority.

A basic problem of sin is the resistance to submit to God or anyone else. These false teachers despise the authority of God and refuse to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Instead, they prefer to establish themselves as the final authority.

They become popular quickly and once they have an influential base of followers, they use that power to attack church leadership.

2 Peter 2:10 (ESV) Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,

Our sixth trait is that they are **(6) Bold**

They do not back down. They infiltrate a church body. They move quickly into leadership. Almost demanding their position. They step on those around them and use them for their purposes. They know what they want, influence and power, and they essentially try to take it. They are bold, presumptuous and self imposing.

Our seventh Trait is that they are **(7) Willful.**

Self-willed means to be self-pleasing or strong in one’s will. In other words, they always want their own way. They are concerned about doing their own thing as opposed to doing God’s will. They have many reasons why things must be done their way.

Our eighth trait **(8) They speak evil of others who truly follow Christ.**

They are so arrogant that they are not afraid to speak evil of church leaders, pastors,,,but Peter says they often even blaspheme glorious ones...apostles, angels, prophets, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God Himself. They feel that they are better than others.

Look at how Paul contrasts the way these false teachers think about themselves and the way true believers should think.

**Romans 12:3 (ESV) 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

2 Peter 2:12 (ESV) 12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,

Our ninth clue **(9)They “speak evil of the things they do not understand”** (v. 12). False teachers are like brute beasts or irrational animals who abuse, sneer, and scoff at things they don’t understand. Peter is obviously referring to the fact that since they are living in the flesh, they cannot understand the things of the spirit. Yet they mock and speak evil against those things.

2 Peter 2:13 (ESV) 13 They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

Our tenth clue **(10) They revel in the daytime and count it pleasure.**

If you want to put this in terms we could all understand. Watch what they do during the week. Impressive on Sundays...totally different in life.

Our Eleventh clue **(11) They are spots and blemishes.** They stand out from those who are truly teaching truth. They are “spots”, unwanted ugly stains. And they are blemishes (mōmos), Compare this to...

**Ephesians 5:25–27 (ESV) 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

Twelfth clue (12) They take pleasure..reveling.. in their deceptions.

They are proud of the ease at which they have deceived people. They love to count the number of their followers. Overstate their influence. They love their truth.

Thirteenth clue (13) They do all of this while eating with you.

To eat with someone in the first century meant that you have accepted them. Your relationship is solid and you are together in shalom...peace.

These people try to fit in. They are deceptive and engaging. They are magnanimous. High minded of themselves

1 Corinthians 5:11 (ESV) 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

2 Peter 2:13–14 (ESV) 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

Fourteenth Clue (14) They have eyes full of adultery.

Their heart is set on the flesh, and their eyes on adultery, both spiritual and sexual. They prey on the unstable to join them in their ways (enticing unstable souls).

He or she uses people for his own gratification.

Yes there are often sexual sins, but the main point here is spiritual adultery. To take gratification in stealing others from Christ. In a sense to violate the Bride of Christ. To lure her away from Jesus.

Fifteenth Clue (15) They never stop sinning. They are insatiable for sin

John warns us...

1 John 2:16 (ESV) 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Sixteenth Clue (16) They entice "unstable souls" (v. 14). They will delude and lead away those who don't know the truth for themselves. Those who are unstable souls. They will deceive those who are new to the faith or those who have not yet matured in their knowledge of the Word.

Seventeenth Clue (17) They have hearts trained in greed.

This literally means they have trained their hearts through continuous use to be greedy or to covet that which belongs to someone else.

The Greek word for hearts trained is one of athletics. These people have been training for years. They have finely tuned their deception like an Olympic runner has perfected their form. They are perfectly expert in the arts of seduction, fraud and deception.

They are equipped, but not for ministry, only for selfish gain. We all train our hearts in something, either training them in the things of God or the things of Satan.

Eighteenth Clue (18) They "are accursed children" (v. 14). These false teachers, who would lead others astray, are living under a curse from God. Because of the deception of sin, they are living under a curse and don't even know it. Literally, they are "children of curse."

2 Peter 2:15–16 (ESV) 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

Nineteenth Clue **(19) They have turned from God.** That is the problem of sin. We leave the narrow way of righteousness for the broad way which leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13). To illustrate the sin of going astray, Peter recites the story of Balaam,

They are like Balaam, who was guilty of the greatest of sins—leading others into sin, and that for the sake of his own gain. Balaam had to be restrained by a dumb donkey because he would not listen to God.

**2 Peter 2:17 (ESV) 17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.**

Twentieth **(20) They are a well without water.** A well without water or a spring that has gone dry can cause great frustration. They are of no purpose or use. They have lost their intended purpose or function. So it is of false teachers. They do not quench the spiritual thirst of their hearers.

Twenty First **(21) They are only a sprinkle of the true promise.** False teachers are like empty clouds which are being driven by a storm. They have nothing to offer, and they have no control of where they are going.

Twenty Second **(22) “They speak great swelling words of emptiness” (v. 18).** False teachers cannot bring us to truth. They can impress us only with their earthly wisdom and their knowledge, beautiful vocabulary, and their fluency. To use a contemporary expression, they are but bags of wind.

The message of the ungodly false teachers is empty of real spiritual content, though it is swollen big with words. Like the crowds that wanted Bread from Jesus but not Jesus Himself

**2 Peter 2:18 (ESV) 18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.**

Twenty **Third (23) They Say what People want to hear**

Now we come to Peter’s greatest concern. He has warned us loudly and clearly about being barren and unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8). He has encouraged us to remain faithful to Christ and to the basics of the faith (2 Pet. 1:5–11). False teachers would attempt to allure (deleázō) with the lusts of the flesh rather than teaching us the truth of the Spirit.

**2 Peter 2:19 (ESV) 19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.**

Twenty Fourth **(24) They claim to be free and have the way to freedom** but they are imprisoned by their own deceit.

Freedom isn’t found in what Jesus can give us, but only in Jesus Himself.

Sin always promises what it cannot deliver. It promises us liberty or freedom, but it gives us slavery. Peter goes on to contend that a person is a slave of whomever or whatever overcomes or controls him. We are either slaves to sin, or we are willing slaves of Jesus Christ.

So there we have it. Peter's list of the two dozen characteristics of false teachers. It is unfortunately not an exhaustive list but it should get us started.

So what are we to do with this? We are to be on guard. I believe that Remnant is a prime target for a false teacher.

God has blessed this little church in ways that I still have a hard time believing. We committed to doing the right thing and God rewarded us with an incredible gift to pay off taxes from years past.

God gave us this amazing building and brought these churches together for a new mission.

We reach those others have overlooked and we are focused on welcoming everyone into a relationship with Jesus.

Most importantly...we teach the truth...straight up...no apologies...no alterations. Satan hates that.

So we must protect God's House. How do we do this? PHOTO 6

Well here are some steps the Elders have taken to protect us.

You can't have a leadership role at Remnant until you have been a partner for at least one year and are well known by many people.

People who hold teaching roles at Remnant do not do so alone. We make sure that there are mature believers in the room every time something is taught under the umbrella of Remnant.

The Pulpit is protected and guarded by the elders. Ed and I don't just hand over the responsibility of teaching the word to those who we are not sure will teach the truth.

Throughout the church, we are constantly watching what is being taught, who is teaching it and are open for anyone to bring us any concerns.

Several times a month we screen books and teaching materials sent to us by those in our church who want to stay under the protective umbrella of truth.

We try to provide ample opportunities for our folks to be taught by our pastors. Ed's class on Sunday Morning. I am soon going to be launching an online presence on Facebook, our website, Youtube, and social media. It will be called FrankBibleTruth and details will be out very soon.

Another way that we all protect this church is to guard ourselves against ignorance. We do our very best to encourage you to know the Word of God for yourself and to challenge everything we teach with Scripture. If you know the word of God for yourself, it is very hard to deceive you with puffed up stories and new wisdom from fools. When we all know the word better...we all benefit.

But most importantly our church leaders stay alert, aware and prayed up. It is ultimately God who will protect us from the attacks of Satan.

As individuals we must play our part as well.

First we all need to be praying for discernment. We need to pray for our leaders and we need to trust that God is working through them.

We need to be on guard for gossip and confront and stop it every time. False teachers stir up gossip within the church in order to gain influence. They tell you what you want to hear.

Second, we need to know the Word for ourselves. It is very hard to deceive a mature believer who is in the Word every day.

If you are used to spending time with God each day and listening to the Holy Spirit, you will hear and feel Him rising up within you when a false teacher arrives.

We need to understand that there are no "new revelations" that have not been seen in over 2000 years. If someone is showing you a new truth...be very careful.

When you hear a teacher of the Word of God you need to know how to evaluate them.

First, what does the teacher say about Jesus?

Listen specifically for Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Not just God in general. Do they say Jesus is equal with God? Do they validate the power, role, truth and Godhead of the Holy Spirit. Do they downplay Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection? Do they downplay his humanity or his deity?

Ask them about their conversion? Listen for brokenness, humility, confession, conviction, repentance and gratitude. All must be present. Then ask them how their life has changed since surrendering to Christ.

Run through the fruit in your mind. Only mature believers should hold teaching roles. All mature believers should demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

Do you see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and specifically self control, False teachers really struggle with self control.

How is Scripture being used?

Do they teach exegetically? Do they cover all of Scripture? Is Scripture the primary focus of the sermon or does it play a back up role used periodically to support their opinions?

If you listened to the sermon and then had only the Scriptures presented...do the Scriptures tell the story?

Are they willing to share with you their material for you to study it and critique it?

How long do they teach before the Scripture is presented or Jesus is mentioned?

Are they doing mental gymnastics with the Scripture to make it say something or do they just present the Scripture and submit to what it says?

When they are done...was the sermon about them or about Jesus?

Did they acknowledge that they too have a great deal to learn and are struggling too?

Does the teacher teach the full Gospel?

As nice as they sound, the statements "God loves you," "God wants us to feed the hungry," and "God wants you to be wealthy" are not the complete message of the gospel. As Paul warns in Galatians 1:7, "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ."

No one....no one....has the right to change the message that God gave us. "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:9).

Do they teach the truth in season and out of season? Are they willing to let the Holy Spirit step on some toes or do they water down the message to keep people happy?

If you listen to a teacher and never feel convicted...they haven't preached the word of God.

Are they trying to sell you something or get you to give them money?

False teachers are always driven by greed. They want you to buy their books, fund their ministry, or reallocate church funds for their personal benefit. They look to the church for their funding. They go around behind the scenes without church leadership knowing about it and ask for resources.

They don't submit to church financial authority, budgeting, or spending restrictions. They work around accountability with their charm.

Do they have a Seminary or Bible College Degree?

This gets passed off in today's church as unimportant. Just let the Holy Spirit tell them what to say. This is a dangerous precedent.

Their job is to teach truth. To understand Scripture. To understand cultural issues, historical issues, and interpretive issues that influence the understanding of the text.

A degree tells you that this person takes learning seriously. They devoted a lot of time and energy to get it right. To understand Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic nuances. It also means that they were under the learning structure of better teachers. Seminaries only graduate those who qualify to be ordained in ministry. Their school validates their character and their learning.

The responsibility and warning given in Scripture to those who teach the word is daunting. I can't imagine taking that mantle and not being specifically trained for it.

Are they submitting to the leadership of the Lead Pastor?

False teachers always try to undermine the Lead Pastor. They are subtle and do so through innuendos and gossip.

They cast doubt on the intentions or qualifications of the people God has ordained for ministry and called to lead that flock.

False teachers find ways to avoid spiritual accountability.

How long has that teacher been in one place, under the authority of the same people, and under the watchful eye of other believers?

False teachers are like Satan's commandos. They attack and leave. They don't stay long if they can't influence and if they can influence they destroy quickly.

They have reasons why you can't call for their references.

Does the teacher exhibit the qualities of a follower of Jesus.

Look at their life...their marriage...their parenting...their friends...their integrity in the community.

Look at how they interact with others. Do they...by the way they live their lives...inspire you to change yours?

Not by what they say but by who they are.

Finally, as you sit under their teaching on multiple occasions, do they inspire you to make changes in your life? If so...ask yourself why?

Did they wow you with what you wanted to hear or did they challenge you with a truth you didn't want to hear? Remember your flesh tendency is against the truth of God's word. So God's truth is almost always going to convict you first...and then force you to change.

So 24 Characteristics from Peter and a few more things to think about.

False teachers are coming...they will come to Remnant...Peter tells us we must be ready. Let's Pray