

Spiritual Arrogance

Introduction

The entire letter of Paul to his protege Timothy is about this teaching. He has been preparing Timothy to give wise counsel to the church at Ephesus.

He told him to appoint elders and deacons. He has addressed several of the challenges of women and men acting out in church. Now that the protective structure is in place. Jesus as the Shepherd. Elders following...Deacons helping with ministry...and the congregation devoted to their mission....He now turns to the greatest threat to their success in sharing the gospel message. That threat is spiritual arrogance and Paul wants to make sure that Timothy is prepared to recognize it and remove it. But first, lets remember a bit about the City of Ephesus.

It was a large port city. One of the largest cities in the Roman Empire at the time. A center of education. World famous library. The Stanford or Harvard of the first century. Worship of Artemis the pagan goddess of fertility was so prevalent that the entire market sold idols and trinkets to everyone visiting. Vegas, Harvard and Disney all rolled into one. Paul is doing everything that he knows to do to protect the church from false teaching...but false teaching is the symptom not the disease. So now is the time to get more specific.

1 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith

Paul especially marked this as a revelation from the Holy Spirit; either as a spontaneous word given as he wrote or quoting from a previous prophecy. Paul knew certain dangers would mark the latter times. • The danger of apostasy (some will depart). • The danger of deception (deceiving spirits). • The danger of false teaching (doctrines of demons).

It has been more than 1900 years since Paul wrote to Timothy about the latter times, but he did not misunderstand his time or our own. History is not, and has not, been rushing towards a distant brink that would end this current order; even in apostolic times, history had reached that brink—and has run parallel to it since. As it turns out, the latter times describe a broad era, not a couple of years.

Paul warns Timothy that some will depart from their faith. Is that what he says? No, words are very specific. He says that some will depart from THE faith. Not their faith....because they never had it. If they had salvation faith and were reborn in the Spirit, they would not depart. They might stray for a bit, but they would not depart.

The faith: This describes the essential teachings of the Christian faith. When some ... depart from the faith, they are abandoning the essential teachings of Christianity.

Throughout the Bible God speaks to us about THE faith. The core essential unfailing unwavering truth of the message of Jesus.

Acts 6:7 (ESV) 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 14:22 (ESV) 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Colossians 1:23 (ESV) 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Jude 3–4 (ESV) 3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 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.

It is crucial that Timothy and all of us understand what the battle is about. What is being threatened. It is crucial that you and I understand what the faith is. In Scripture, when you see "The faith" they are not talking about your faith. The faith that you placed in Jesus as your Savior. Your Salvation Faith.

That is not really what Paul is concerned about. Those who have salvation faith cannot lose it. They are born again Spirit filled children of God....Paul is referencing here the essence of God's truth. It is not ours....it is God's. His truth has been faithfully entrusted to us to share. We don't own it and we can't change it. It is God's truth.

Think of it this way....Salvation faith is your response to THE Faith. Once you are saved, THE Faith is given to you to share with others. When others see the Faith...the truth...without any changes from us....they respond with their salvation faith. And the cycle continues. The sharing of the truth of the gospel.

It is critical to understand that salvation faith is what saves you...The faith...the truth is what you are given to help save others.

Paul is not concerned here about the true believers at Ephesus who have salvation faith...He is concerned about those who are seeking. Who don't yet have the Holy Spirit and can be deceived. It is Timothy's job and the Elders Job to protect the truth of what is shared so that people can be saved.

In fact, I believe that Paul does not think those who have salvation faith and are born again can be deceived.

Matthew 24:24–25 (ESV) 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

Paul is not sure that it is possible to lead the elect astray. He is not questioning the loss of their salvation...He is questioning his ability to know who is the elect and who is faking it. Remember Judas.

So what is at risk at Ephesus is the very truth of the message of Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds Timothy that he must hold on to the true faith. The truth. If the truth of the gospel was lost...all would be lost.

How and why will people walk away from the truth of the Gospel?

1 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

Note again...this is not Paul's opinion....The Holy Spirit expressly says....clearly says....definitively says...by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. Paul is calling Timothy into the realm of Spiritual Battle. There is a battle between God's Truth and Satan's deceptions. It is held in the Spiritual realm....God has already won this war, but the battle must still play out. When you understand the Spiritual nature of the battle against God's truth, then you more easily understand that those who are deceived are victims....

The people who are teaching false truths are doing what Satan has deceived them to do. Their is a Spiritual battle for their very souls and they are deceived. They think what they believe is their opinion but they are actually following Satan's deceptions. And Paul warns Timothy....once they are deceived, they devote themselves to it. These are not casual ideas that they are considering....they devote themselves to it. They let the false idea or teaching define them. They share their beliefs based on the demonic to others just like we share God's truth to others.

Every moment of every day on earth...there is a battle between God and Satan being played fought over what is True. It is at the core of every sin and every action of every human. There are two sides and every person is devoted to one or the other.

Paul has positioned Timothy...The elders...the deacons...the congregation...to prepare for this attack and to guard the truth at all costs for all time. Deceitful spirits and demons are within the camp.

Interesting that Demonic teaching is based on a single lie. It is not some broad based group of ideas...Demonic teaching is about one verse.... Satan's ultimate lie...

We find the first demonic doctrine in Genesis 3. There Satan, speaking through a serpent, taught Eve:

Genesis 3:3–6 (ESV) 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Since then, every demonic doctrine has found its way back to this root: the idea that we can be gods, and operate independently from God. The odd thing is that Eve and all of us already are LIKE GOD...we are created in His image. Satan is not. Satan is constantly trying to get you to believe that you are not who God has already said you are. Every sin...every war...every injustice...every lie...every murder...every conflict...every stress...every worry....every anxiety...every theft...every divorce...every thing wrong is our world is based on one lie....6 words...not surprising...You can be your own god.

That lie, come from your pride. Every sin can be traced back to pride. I am going to do what I decide to do, not what God has commanded me to do. It is pride....the disease that Satan used to attack the world, to attack the church at Ephesus, and is using to attack every church of all times.....Is Spiritual arrogance. I know more that God because I am my own God.

Spiritual arrogance has been around since man first walked the Garden of Eden. But we should expect that more and more people in the church would depart from the faith in the latter times and accept these false teachings. It is hard to say if there is more false teaching today, or if it is merely a case of modern technology being able to spread the lie better. But the old saying is certainly true today: a lie travels express, the truth goes on foot—and more people within the church are following these doctrines of demons

How does it spread? Through the insincerity of liars.... This describes those who have rejected the faith. This certainly means those who willingly embrace falsehood to justify their sin or pride; but it also refers to those who claim to be teaching the Bible, while just using it as a prop for their own ideas

Initially they know they are lying...but over time...Their conscience, which at one time would have convicted them of their departure from the truth, now doesn't reply at all. It is as if the nerve endings of their conscience have been burnt over and are dead to feeling..

Paul here refers to the ancient practice of branding a criminal on the forehead with a distinguishing mark. For these, it was not their forehead that was branded with a hot iron, but their conscience instead.

Paul is very familiar with this concept. Believing demons and accepting their lies as truth.

Before he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he felt completely justified in his persecution of Christians and hatred of Jesus. He could feel justified because his conscience was seared and needed a wake-up call—which the Lord graciously provided.

Paul knows as well as anyone...that those who are deceived...no matter how badly...can be saved because it happened to him. He had believed Satan's lie of his superiority...

So what are these false teachers telling the seekers and believers at Ephesus? Which lie did they choose to try? Same lie that has always worked....you can be your own god. Add your ideas to God's truth and claim your superiority.

1 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

This describes the legalistic teaching of those who have departed from the faith. They taught that it was by following this list of man-made rules that one was justified in God's sight—that you would be more holy to God if you didn't marry, and if you did not eat certain foods.

These false teachers often present themselves as super Holy....Above everyone else...the elders, the deacons, the congregation and without really saying it....Jesus Himself.

There have always been those in the church who regard themselves as more spiritual than God Himself, and have a stricter set of rules for living than God does. They then try to impose that stricter rule on others so that they too can prove their superiority.

In the early centuries of the church, there were monks who went out to desolate desert places to show how spiritual they were by torturing themselves. One never ate cooked food. Another stood all night leaning on a sharp rock so that it was impossible for him to sleep. Another neglected his own body and allowed it to become so dirty that bugs dropped dead from his body. They did this because they thought it would win favor with God and show everyone how spiritual they were.

We often think that if we sacrifice something for God (such as the right to marry or to eat certain foods), then He owes us something. This is legalism at its worst; trying to manipulate God into giving us something. The idea is that we can make God indebted to us, make Him our servant and make ourselves His master. In this we fulfill the original doctrine of demons—that we should be gods

Countless millions through the centuries have sought to sacrifice something, and make God owe them blessing, or forgiveness, or mercy, or whatever. That is the religion of self-flagellation; it is not the relationship with Jesus Christ described in the New Testament:

Romans 3:23–24 (ESV) 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Justified by His grace as a gift...not because we did something to make Him do it. God is not on our leash...

Now Paul addresses here two of the teachings that were potentially dividing the church and casting doubt on THE faith. These were not the only two, but Paul chooses them for discussion. The actual teachings are symptoms. The disease is Spiritual arrogance.

The particular lie that Paul has heard about and chooses to address are mentioned here. First, to forbid the very covenant that God ordained. They were teaching those at Ephesus to forbid marriage....not stay single..to forbid marriage...to impose their views not only on themselves but on others. Look at the arrogance in this command. It is not that they are choosing to not get married...they are forbidding it for everyone.

God said that it is not good for man to be alone and thus He created a helper for Him. Satan has a harder time destroying two people who are made one by God. God clearly ordained marriage and even identified Jesus as our groom and the church as His bride...so of course Satan wants to attack the very foundation of our faith and of his ultimate defeat.

In addition, they required abstinence from certain foods. Odd choice until you think about it. Remember that was God's original command. Abstain from eating fruit from this one tree. Jesus came to set us free to fulfill the law and allow us to enjoy all that God has for us. Now Satan is mimicking God by commanding that certain foods are to be avoided by everyone....I guess this would be ok if the food was mushrooms, but that would just be my opinion....

1 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

Regarding what we eat, we can eat all things. We receive things rightly when we receive them with thanksgiving, with an abiding sense of gratitude towards God. We receive the blessings of food, shelter, and comfort as gifts, and not as rights.

1 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Everything is made Holy by the word of God and prayer.....Everything is made holy by God's truth and our surrender to it. Surrendering to God's truth always brings thankfulness. Remember that everything in creation was good....

Genesis 1:29 (ESV) 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

Then after the flood God told Noah and his sons...

Genesis 9:3 (ESV) 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

But our sins subjected not only us but all of creation....

Romans 8:20–22 (ESV) 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

The law that God gave the Israelites goes into great detail regarding what foods they were and were not allowed to eat. Leviticus 11 bans eating the following animals: - Those that chew cud or have a split hoof but not both (like camels, rabbits, pigs) - Sea creatures that do not have fins and scales (like crustaceans) - Birds that eat flesh or carrion (like crows, raptors, sea gulls) - Most winged insects except those that swarm and jump In addition, God told Noah not to drink the blood of any animal (Genesis 9:4), and Exodus 34:26 bans boiling a kid goat in its mother's milk. Yeast was banned during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Scholars have argued over the reasons for the bans for millennia, but God gives very few explanations. It appears to be part of the ceremonial law which God enacted as a sign that the Jews were different from the surrounding people. Over the years, in an attempt to maintain the dietary restrictions explicitly, Jewish culture has developed very specific kosher standards.

The Jewish law had a lot of restrictions on food...and they were given by God as commands....But Jesus came to fulfill the Law. The restrictions on food were relieved when Jesus paid the price of all sins...He removed the curse and the law could not fix.

Christians get their guidance from the New Testament, which highlights which Jewish ceremonial laws we are to keep. The first clue comes in Acts 10:9-16. Peter went to a rooftop to pray and became hungry. He fell into a trance. The sky opened, and a sheet, filled with all kinds of animals, was lowered in front of him.

Acts 10:13–16 (ESV) 13 And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” 14 But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Jews, Romans and almost all pagan faiths set limits of food. Certain meats were prohibited; some always, others at particular times. Paul tells us that these types of restrictions are directly contrary to the original design of God; and says that those who know the truth, know this. They receive it all with thanksgiving because they know these truths.

The vision was two-sided. In the literal sense, Peter was released from the Jewish dietary law. Christ-followers did not have to keep Jewish ceremonial law because Jesus fulfilled it. In the metaphorical sense, it was one more lesson on how Jesus was for everyone, and the Jewish Christians needed to witness to the Gentiles, as well. So it is that Christians are not bound by the dietary restrictions in Leviticus 11.

This isn't to say that there are no restrictions in the New Testament. As more and more Gentiles joined the church, church leaders (including the Apostles and Jesus' brother James) needed to figure out which ceremonial laws Gentiles should be bound to and which they were freed from.

Acts 21:25 (ESV) 25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

Paul, adding grace and a touch of reality to the ban, explained in 1 Corinthians 10:27-28 that dedicated meat...meat that had first been offered to idols should only be banned if the believer knew it was dedicated. The purpose of the ban was to show publicly that they did not worship idols, not that dedicated meat was supernaturally harmful.

Many foods have blood in them, including black pudding and blood sausage, and some tribes drink blood directly from their cattle. Does this restriction continue for Christians?

Some Christians believe that Peter's vision releases blood from being restricted. Others say that since the ban on eating blood both pre-dates the Mosaic Law and is repeated in the church age, the ban remains. The mature Christian will, again, pray and see where God leads. Either way, this does not include steaks cooked rare, if the cow was properly butchered beforehand.

In general, Christians are not bound by Jewish dietary restrictions. The New Testament says we should be known for our love (John 13:35), not our meals. Regarding food dedicated to idols, we need to understand the purpose of the ban—to clearly show those around us that we do not worship any god but the True God. As for drinking the blood of animals, since there is no clear guidance, it is a matter of personal conviction and prayer.

And in the process of dealing with these kinds of things....we search the heart... The issue is really not about the specific food, the issue is about the heart of the person eating it. Are they filled with Spiritual arrogance or are they truly humbly seeking God with their heart. Thus the next command.....prayer.

Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with Thanksgiving...it is made holy by the word and by Prayer.

Paul likely also here has in mind prayer before a meal. Notice that the emphasis is not on asking God to bless the food; the food given to us is not cursed....it doesn't need to be prayed over to make it safe for us.....Our prayer before the meal is our thanking God for the blessing of providing food to eat.

It is good and proper for us to pray before eating a meal but it should not be done in a ritualistic, superstitious way. Nor should it be done to show others how spiritual we are—which is imitating the prayer practices of the Pharisees

Matthew 6:5–6 (ESV) 5 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Spiritual Arrogance.

Arrogance destroys each of us individually and Spiritual arrogance destroys the church. It is the origin of the attack on the truth of God. In Paul's day people were arguing over marriage and food among other things. From Satan's perspective, it doesn't really matter what the topic is as long as he can convince people that they are superior for knowing it and using that belief to divide the church.

I have been in ministry for over 25 years and have seen dozens of symptoms of Spiritual Arrogance. It is easy to recognize it if you know what you are looking for.

You and I have been placed on this planet to share the good news. To share THE faith. To know the truth and to teach it to others exactly as it was entrusted to us. For the last 2000 years people have been reborn of the Holy Spirit...and He teaches all things and reveals to us the truth of God.

The Gospel message given to us has been carefully protected...the truth has been studied, revealed, demonstrated and validated. As we get to the end of times, we may understand the truth a bit better....we see things those in the past could not see or know...but the truth hasn't changed.

This is critical to understand...the truth never changes, but we have a deeper understanding of that truth. Let me share with you that there are no new truths to be revealed with it comes to our faith. God has revealed to us what we need to know to surrender to and follow Jesus. We will gain insight as we mature in the faith, but we will not find a new truth that everyone else has missed.

There are key core doctrines of our faith that are not to be touched or changed in any way....these truths must be defended at all costs...wars have been fought over these truths. We are commanded to defend the truth with our lives.

The key doctrines of our faith include that God created everything, that God is in control of everything, that God created Adam and Eve and did so in His image. That Jesus is God and was fully human and fully man. That Jesus is the Word...the truth manifested in Human form. That He is God and totally sovereign. That God is without fault error or lie. That He is holy, righteous, and sovereign. That we are saved through faith in Jesus and not works. That His truth is the only truth and His way is the only way. That Jesus lived a perfect life that was sinless and stood in our place under the wrath of Holy God. That Jesus died a very real death and was resurrected. That Jesus returned to heaven and will return in the future to bring judgment and then dispense the full weight of God's wrath to those who reject Him.

These truths are not something that we keep secret...we share them with everyone. We want everyone to learn what we have learned to experience what we have experienced. We want to teach these truths to every person who will listen. The Holy Spirit has revealed these truths to us and empowers us to share them. This is the faith that unites us...that defines us and that saves us.

If Christians are going to divide...we divide on these things....because to waver on them places us above God.

But Satan often doesn't attack these truths...it is too easy to divide us on other things. All of us come from a place of Spiritual arrogance. We were all born with the disease...I think I know better that God....We all have in our past Spiritual arrogance.

It is something that God must destroy in us. But it is so engrained in us that He must destroy us instead. When we surrender to Jesus we are born again....what people don't talk much about...or in my opinion, enough about is that to be born again we must first die. Our old self...our sinful self....our Spiritually arrogance self must die....The only way this gets accomplished is for us to surrender to Jesus and be born again.

Spiritual maturity is the process of allowing the Holy Spirit in you to gradually....daily....systematically....kill whatever remains of the old you. You and I die to ourselves daily. We experience new life in the Spirit. The Old has gone and the new has come.

We know that we don't deserve it and we didn't earn it...we have experienced God's grace (Favor we don't deserve) and God's Mercy (punishment we deserve but God didn't give us) and we humbly receive the truth that has been given to us. Every one born of and surrendered to the Holy Spirit reaches a place of supernatural humility. I don't deserve this...can't control this...but I am experiencing it....and I know it is from God.

But, as we discussed earlier....Not everyone who appears to be Spirit led is actually led by the Holy Spirit. They are led by a Spirit but it is Satan not God. And the one thing that Satan can never hide for long....is his arrogance. Those who deceive the church will fake humility but very soon they will begin to divide...to separate...to place themselves and a select few who are "enlightened" above others. That Spiritual Arrogance is like wack a mole. They try to hide it but it pops up in everything that they do.

Matthew 7:15–16 (ESV) 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits.

Those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit want to make themselves God and convince others to follow them. If they are successful in their own eyes....they develop cults...false religions...or at least a group of followers.

Joseph Smith did it and created the Mormon Faith. Charles Taze Russell did it and created the Jehovah's Witnesses....Mohammed did it and created the Muslim Faith...L Ron Hubbard did it and created the Scientologists...Come follow me...I have a new revelation...a new truth...that coincidentally revolves around me.

Those are obvious...but the more subtle form is the one Timothy is warned against. Not a completely new faith...but rather a new enlightenment within the faith. Forbid marriage...forbid certain foods...Perhaps it would be easier if we could see it in the church today...

Those who promote and demand that everyone else use the King James Version of the Bible and that those who do not are not truly saved.

Those who promote and demand that everyone speak in tongues and those who do not are not truly saved. Those who demand that you measure your God by your happiness and if you are not happy and living a wrinkle free life, then your faith must not be real.

Those who demand that all worship songs should be hymns and anything else is dishonoring to or disrespecting God and comes from people who are not Spiritual.

Those who demand that everyone agree that God chose us and those who do not are not enlightened and may not be saved.

Those who demand that the Spiritual gifts can be taught to one another and those who don't believe their ideas about those gifts are not truly saved.

Those who demand that if you get sick you lacked faith and may not be saved.

Those who demand that no one should dance and those that do are not saved but are following the devil.

Those who claim to have a prophetic word for you that you must obey because they are more enlightened about your future.

Those who demand that no one who follows Jesus should drink alcohol and those who do are not truly saved.

Those who demand that you can have multiple wives and if you do not you are not truly following God's truth.

Those who forbid the use of instruments or those who separate on the day of the Sabbath.

Those who demand infant baptism for salvation....those who demand confession of sins to a holy man....

Those who demand that communion must be done in a very specific way...those who forbid the marriage of Pastors or Priests....Those who teach separation and withdrawal from society..and at the other end...those who teach that we should embrace and mimic society.

Those who only use the New Testament... and demand the same of others.

Those who demand that we must live a life of poverty, asceticism and separation from society or we are not saved.

Satan divides churches....I think about it every time I see First Baptist...you never name your church First Baptist until there has been a split and someone started a second one. 90% of the time, what divides us started new denominations....the way we choose to baptize, the way we choose to worship....the way we choose to do communion...the day that we choose worship....the way we choose to express or not express the spiritual gifts....the Bible translation that we choose to use...The clothes that we choose to wear or not wear... The way that we choose to follow or not follow church traditions...Whether we chose pews or seats...

When it comes to the Church that Jesus builds....there is one church based on the core foundations of the church. Did you notice in the list I just read...that each one says The way we choose...that is what forms denominations. In the USA we have over 200 denominations and worldwide over 45,000.

Think about that for a moment...In theory, we all agree on the core essentials of the Gospel of Jesus....THE Faith....but we have found 45K ways to divide on the details...

I could go on for days. Spiritual arrogance takes on so many forms in today's church. So rather than going through more, let's talk about how to recognize it.

Recognize it.

When I hear someone teach something...or share a new idea...or attempt to correct something in the church...my first question to the Holy Spirit is this one...God is this you? And 100% of the time, first impressions from the Spirit are accurate.

I have learned through a great deal of pain and trauma to cut these off at the start. To not let that demonic seed get watered, encouraged or fertilized in any manner. If God reveals that it is not Him...we kill it. Not the messenger but the message. I ask God for spiritual discernment and have learned to trust His guidance in all of these issues.

Occasionally someone comes to me after or before a service and tells me that they were sent by God to deliver a message to our congregation. They have a Word of a truth to share. They can't share it with me...they must be in front of the congregation....Do you remember seeing those folks on stage? Of course not.

Those are easy. Others are more subtle...Satan is crafty and clever...He knows the full front on assault will not often work...so he sows a divisive word. And you don't have to really study the false teaching...you just have to study the heart behind it.

Truths of God are inclusive for everyone. Lies of Satan are exclusive of others. Truths of God align with the truths of THE faith and affirm what God has already revealed... Lies of Satan are often presented as a new revelation...a new understanding... or a new gospel. God's truth and Spirit bring love and unity to the community of believers...Satans' lies cause division and separation.

Satan takes a bit of truth and twists it...Did God say you could not eat from any tree in the garden... He uses the same lies in the church... He takes a truth that is well established and a core belief and then tries to add to it. Jesus demands that his followers take communion and are baptized...but the only right way to baptize is by immersion or communion through a priest.

Subtopic

let me give you four biblical ways to assess whether someone is a false teacher. I do this just because the Bible agrees with you that we should be alert to the reality of false teachers, and it gives us tests.

1. Fruit Test

Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV) 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

In contrast you will know the fruit that comes from the Spirit in the lives of those who live it.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV) 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

2. Doctrine Test There's the test of sound, central doctrines

1 John 4:1–3 (ESV) 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Paul will say to Timothy in just a few chapters....

1 Timothy 6:2–5 (ESV) 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

3. Scripture Test There is the test of submission to Scripture

1 Corinthians 14:37–38 (ESV) 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

That's amazing. The authority of the apostles must be submitted to, or you're a false teacher; you're not recognized.

1 John 4:6 (ESV) 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In other words, the apostles elevated their teaching to the level of a test of truth. If a person does not submit his thinking and his teaching to the authority of the apostles — to the authorized teachers of Christ who wrote the New Testament — then they're not going to be reliable teachers. It doesn't mean they won't say true things. Everybody says true things from time to time — even the devil. But that doesn't make them reliable teachers.

4. Gospel Test Finally, there is the test of the gospel itself. Paul is just red-hot about this one.

Galatians 1:8–9 (ESV) 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

So, there are at least four biblical tests for false teaching: the test of the fruit of behavior the test of sound doctrine the test of submission to Scripture the test of teaching the pure gospel of justification by faith

If any one of these fail, they all fail. You must learn to trust the Holy Spirit in you and to reject that which is not of Him. Spiritual arrogance is the disease the symptoms are everywhere. The best protection is to surround yourself from those who hold tight to the truth by being part of a healthy, Bible-preaching church, and to be prayerfully saturated with the Bible every day.

Let's pray