

## Recognizing False Teachers

Matthew 7:15-20 (NLT) – Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup>You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup>So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.”

### Three Tests To Identify False Teachers

#### Test #1: Look at their character.

##### **A godly teacher will be like Jesus in their attitudes and actions.**

1 Peter 1:5-8 - For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup>and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup>and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. <sup>8</sup>For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:19-23 - The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control.

#### Test #2: Look closely at what they believe.

All false teachers will have an incomplete, distorted view of Jesus. Their teachings cannot hold up when compared to Scripture.

2 Peter 2:1-3 - There were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. <sup>3</sup>In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

John 7:18 - Jesus told them, “Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies.”

#### Test #3: Look closely at their followers. Their followers are self-centered and group-centered.

##### **They are not God-centered or Scripture-centered.**

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

“False prophets talk much about the love of God but nothing of His holiness, much about people who are deprived but nothing about those who are depraved, much about God’s universal fatherhood of every human being but nothing about His unique fatherhood only of those who are His children through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, much about what God will give to us but nothing about obedience to Him, much about health and happiness but nothing about holiness and sacrifice.”

– John MacArthur