

False Teachers in Modern Day Christian Churches

WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

Have you heard false teaching before – in the church, on TV, or social media? If you can, give a short description of what was the teaching about.

What do you do if you hear a false teacher or false prophet teaching your church, your family, friends, or your kids?

In Luke 21:6, when the disciples asked Jesus what is the sign of the last days, Jesus replied warning them to watch out for fall prophets / false teachers and not to be led astray. Similarly, we can ascertain that this is the key reason why many enter the “broad gate and the easy road that leads to destruction” as mentioned in Matthew 7.

6 These things which you see — the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.

— Luke 21:6

13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and few find it.

— Luke 21:6

Furthermore, Matthew 7:15-16, captured a much clearer admonition from the Lord Jesus Christ, saying:

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”

— Matthew 7:15-16

This means that there will be many false prophets and that they cannot be identified by appearances or by their behavior, for they will be disguised and blend with the flock. The only distinguishing mark given by the Lord is their fruits. And what are these fruits that will give away these voracious wolves? Their doctrine, their pride, and their motives.

Half-truths and error-tainted doctrines, subtle pride, and hidden motives mark the False Prophets and Teachers amongst us, and they are having a heyday of preying and profiting from the hapless flock in the sheepfold. Who will stand against them and save the sheep from these wolves? True shepherds, will! The true shepherds watch over the sheep with their lives and reputation on the line as their spirit abides in the words and guidance of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Modern-day False Teachers water down the Gospel to discredit the character of God, or they water down the character of God to discredit the Gospel. Subscribing to either of these will lead to the broad gate and the broad road, that leads to (eternal) destruction.

Membership growth in modern Christian churches is largely driven by charismatic pastors or superstar-status Bible teachers. However, let us not forget that possessing the gift of the gab is not tantamount to having the Holy Spirit's gift to teach. For it will be impossible to teach spiritual truths in the Bible without the divine gift, and the Holy Spirit will not render the gift to someone with intentions to hurt His flock. Therefore, these false teachers use their oratorical talents to deceive the church to achieve the power, pre-eminence, and profit they secretly desire. Our Lord Jesus Christ warned us about them.

Below are some of the most common types found in the Christian Churches today;

1. THE EISEGETE

Noun: A person who places meaning on a text which is not originally or inherently present in the text itself.

An Eisegete manipulates the preaching of the scriptures to suit a particular or majority segment wants to hear while aligning with his/her agenda or biases, motivated by the desire to achieve a certain result – oftentimes to cement their influence, position, or control in the church or to profit financially from the church. The excessive and inappropriate application of symbolism and analogies twists the scriptures far from their literal intent and original, historical context. Even with sufficient bible translation on hand, many even resort to the odd use of Hebrew or Greek terms to achieve a more scholarly approach in twisting the original context to one that suits their objectives. Soon enough, the Eisegete's convincing eloquence gets congregational buy-in and overrides all necessity for scriptural accuracy and faithfulness to the pure teachings of Jesus Christ.

There are many Eisegete preachers and teachers in churches, bible colleges, and small-group bible settings today - propagating their twisted narrative and understanding of God and the bible. They are the ones at the forefront of calls to redefine traditional and historical doctrines of the Christian faith under the guise of "new revelations" given to them in "prophetic" visions, dreams, or during one of the many private conversations they have with their god. Beware of the Eisegete. Pray for discernment and test everything they teach.

2. THE NARCIGETE

Noun: A person who allegorises the scripture to make it about himself or his/her listeners

Have you heard Pastors and Bible teachers who preach and apply the character of the bible to themselves, their family members, or perhaps about one or several members of the church? This type of preaching is called "Narcigesis" and the one who practices it is called a Narcigete. Like the Eisegete, a Narcigete mastered the art of flattery to the spiritual level and uses it to achieve prominence and cement his/her control and influence in the church. This is done at the expense of sound biblical teaching, leading believers to false hope, a hero complex, and causes them to look at life in the "here and now". It leads to a false understanding of what it means to be saved and the call of Christ to carry our cross, to die to self, to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, to persevere in the faith which ultimately leads to eternal life.

A Narcegete teaches that the bible is about "YOU", the Believer. And just like the Hero in the bible story facing insurmountable challenges in life, the answer is found in the bible, that it is the

roadmap to help you achieve your God-given destiny to succeed and reign in this life. And He/She will tell you how cos he/she has “been there and done that”. He/She is the living example that the principle works.

Sadly, many subscribe to such teachings and follow these teachers. I pray you do not be counted as one of them. Runaway as soon as you hear a Narcigete. Christ should always take pre-eminence in the teaching of the scriptures, not us, not the preacher, not anyone.

3. THE PLAGIARIST

Unlike the Eisegete and the Narcigete, a Plagiarist holds no views that he/she can comprehensively teach by himself. Unable to hear from God due to the lack of personal devotion and study of scriptures, a Plagiarist Pastor or Bible teacher lazily resort to the modern-day method of “cut-and-paste” or the “wholesale adoption” of Christian articles to construct his/her preaching content.

Most often plagiarist teachers can passionately communicate “sound” doctrines at the high level but are unable to expound on the doctrinal underpinnings of why they believe what they believe.

This inability to express the in-depths of their own doctrinal beliefs to the congregation is a sign of being a “non-teacher”. The “mix & match” statements from various denominations and Christian teachers may sound scholarly and transcendent to the novice listener, but the overall picture is a mess. A seasoned Plagiarist can capture the doctrinal “form” but often lacking in spiritual “substance” - their lofty-sounding teaching is devoid of the Holy Spirit’s truth and power to transform lives. They create a congregation that swings from one doctrine to another, like a ship blown from various directions unable to steer towards the right destination.

A plagiarist will remain a plagiarist unless he/she repents of his/her lackadaisical attitude towards self-study of the Word and seeks the help of the Holy Spirit for the gift to understand and to teach the Holy Scriptures. A False Teacher, like the Plagiarist, feeds the flock with stolen food - message(s) crafted by other shepherds for the sheep of their flock. The True Shepherd feeds his assigned flock with the spiritual food he crafted personally through days of prayer, deep study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

4. THE PALAVER

Unlike a Plagiarist, a Palaver is someone whose doctrinal discourse is muddled with long-winding ambiguity oftentimes meandering over multiple topics and personal musings about unimportant matters – ultimately losing sight of the congregation’s need for scriptural truths and growth in the matters of faith.

This is simply a case of “missing the mark” in biblical preaching and continuing such practice is grievous to the church as a whole. Lack of serious preparation or simply the absence of the Gift of Teaching may have been the root cause(s) but any pastor or Bible teacher improperly equipped to handle the Sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God, Ephesians 6:17), lead the church into subtle ambiguities which pose a danger to those who apply the teaching in their daily lives. Ambiguity leads to confusion and confusion is not from God for His Word is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path (Psalm 119:105).

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

— Ephesians 6:17

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

— Psalm 119:105

Passionately sincere and perhaps, with a little bit of personal pride, a Palaver often refuses to admit his/her spiritual lack or at the very least, desire to seek appropriate training or feedback to address the visible gap in the Gift of Teaching. However, let us never pander to the wrong, sincerity is never a qualification to teach or to pastor. Simply put, it is God who equips whom He calls - which brings forth clarity (Light). The Palaver, a False Teacher, bring ambiguity and confusion (Darkness).

SUMMARY

It says in John 21:15-17:

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

— John 21:15-17

If you are a Pastor or a Bible Teacher reading this, know that this verse expresses the very heart of Jesus towards His flock and therefore, the commissioning He gave Peter is of utmost importance – and so it is to us, co-shepherds of the Lord's flock. One of the ways to show our love for our Lord, Jesus Christ is to feed and tend to His sheep (the members of the church).

How can we feed the flock of the Lord?

Adhere to the principles of Sola-Scriptura

Teach only the Truth of God through your regular and diligent study of the Word

Supplement your study from the writings and teachings of sound bible preachers/scholars (but should not replace your study of the Word)

If necessary, go for training in Biblical studies, theology, and preaching to further build up your perspectives, toolsets, and skills in teaching the Word of God.

Review your teaching, solicit feedback and be diligent in seeking ways to improve as the flock grows in spiritual maturity and desire "meat" over "milk" from the scriptures. (1 Peter 2:2 / Hebrews 5:12)

2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

— 1 Peter 2:2

12, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

— Hebrews 5:12

How can we tend to the flock of the Lord?

Teach, rebuke, correct and train them in righteousness (through the Word) to equip them for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Pray (without ceasing) for the Flock – their overall well-being, protection, spiritual growth in the knowledge of the truth and faith.

Counsel them (not imposing) on important matters about Life, Marriage, and Family and as a disciple of Jesus Christ – with the Bible as the final authority.

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

— 2 Timothy 3:16-17

If you are a member of a church or a small discipleship group, you must get into the Word regularly. The desire to feed on the Word of God is part of the new nature given only to the true believers of Christ. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). This is so that you may distinguish the voice of Christ among all voices that claim to be the truth, as in John 10:27 it says:

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

— John 10:27

Moreover, you are to exercise good judgment as to diligently test what is taught in the pulpit or the small group setting, as in 1 John 4:1

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

— 1 John 4:1

Please note that the "spirit" referred to in this verse doesn't refer to a spiritual entity (as some Eisegete would teach it). The term "spirit" should be understood in context as "the substance" of the lesson or the word being taught.

PRAYER

Dear God,

You are truth and Your Word is truth. Protect us and save us from the ravenous wolves - the false

teachers and false prophets who prey on the sheep and profit from the church. Give us godly pastors and teachers, who truly love you and are faithful to your Word. Give us also the desire to study and discern the scriptures that we may know the way of truth and abide by them.

Amen