

# How to Recognize a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing



**Matthew 7:15-20**

- We started a Series “Getting to Know the Voice of God” (John 10:1-5, 27)
  - Purpose – to make us aware of the Holy Spirit involvement in our daily lives. To help us become sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit leading and direction for our lives.
  - Goal – to strengthen our relationship with the Holy Spirit so that our life and our witness will glorify Jesus Christ.
  - Spiritual Principles – Authority, Organization, Grace, Obedience, Faith, Agreement
- The Lesson Learned:
1. The Head of the body of Christ is Jesus Christ. We must be in proper alignment with Him in order to hear God’s voice.
  2. The most important part of our natural body is head. The most important part of the body of Christ is the Head – Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18-19)
  3. It is He the Holy Spirit who communicates the will of the Father and Son to every true believer (John 16:13).
  4. The Holy Spirit is indispensable. He is the most important person in the earth. His voice is the most important voice in the earth that every believer must know.
  5. This passage of Scripture is a powerful reminder that our True Shepherd is Jesus Christ and we are the sheep of God. (John 10:1-5, 27)
- What must become clear to us is the relationship that the Shepherd has with the sheep and the sheep have with the Shepherd. That cannot be overlooked!
  - Jesus makes a direct distinction between a true shepherd and a false shepherd.
  - (vs. 1) – Christ makes it very clear that any shepherd who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs into the sheep pen “some other way” is a thief and a robber.

1. The True Shepherd comes from God. Jesus Christ was sent by God to save mankind and free them from the bondage sin. (John 3:16, 10:10, Romans 6:23)
2. Jesus Christ (True Shepherd) knows His sheep and He knows each one of them by name. He loves them. He leads them. He cares for them. He protects them. (Isaiah 40:11, 1 Peter 1:6, Hebrews 13:20)
3. The false shepherd comes from Satan. (John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
4. False shepherd is a thief and a robber. (John 10:10)

○ What is the difference between cattle and sheep?

1. A cow is bigger and stronger. They are not easily frightened by noise or sound.

• You can herd cows by getting behind them, and pushing them forward – You herd cows, not sheep.

2. Sheep are different. They are very timid and easily shaken. They are smaller than a cow. They have no way of defending themselves. They are easily frightened.

• The only way to move sheep forward is they must be led. You cannot herd sheep.

• In order for a shepherd to lead the sheep – the sheep must trust the shepherd. (Proverbs 3:5)

• Trust is the single most important factor in any relationship. If you don't have trust, you don't have a relationship.

• Jesus Christ is the True Shepherd. The Father and the Son lives in us through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

• Jesus Christ is not a herdsman – He's our Shepherd. (Psalm 23:1-6)

• Jesus Christ (True Shepherd) calls the sheep – He knows them – and they know His voice and follow Him. (John 10:4-5, 27)

○ What is the number one way God speaks to us as believers?

• Through His Word. The highest authority for every believer is the Word of God. The Spiritual Principle of Authority is God's plan to protect my life.

- The greatest way to expose false teachers and false prophets who teach lies and not the truth of God's Word – is knowing the truth of God's Word and the voice of the one who matters the most – that is voice of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:13)

## How to Recognize a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing Matthew 7:15-23

- In this passage of Scripture Jesus gives a strong warning to His disciples and every true believer of Jesus Christ to beware of false prophets.
  - He also gives us clear instructions on how to recognize or detect the false, fake or counterfeit that present themselves as spokesmen for God. (Matthew 7:15-23)
- Jesus Christ is addressing the issue of deception by false prophets and false professors (false followers) whose claim doesn't line up with Jesus Christ and His Word.
  - Jesus Christ is giving us a lesson on how to identify and expose these false prophets and false professors (false followers) for who they truly are.
  - Jesus Christ warns every believer as well as encourages us to examine, test, inspect, to look at the evidence and not just what they claim.
  - Jesus tells us that false prophets will increase in the last days. (Matthew 24:11)
    1. They will claim to be sent by God or a messenger from God to preach or proclaim the gospel – but they are not.
    2. They will claim to profess Christ or that they know Christ – but they are not true believers or followers of Jesus Christ.
  - Notice in verse 15, "Jesus says, 'Beware of false prophets...'"
    1. The word "beware" means watch out, take heed, be on guard, guard against, or keep yourself from.

2. The word “beware” when given is meant to draw or signal the attention of the hearer of any present or future danger that lies ahead.
  - A. Jesus reveals their true nature and their attempt to camouflage themselves in order to appear harmless and innocent. How do they present themselves? Jesus tells us (vs. 15).
    - (vs. 15) – “who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”
    - A wolf in sheep’s clothing is symbolic for someone who outwardly looks harmless, but inwardly they are full of deceit, corruption, hate and evil intentions.
      1. They appear outwardly as ministers and sheep of God.
      2. But inwardly they are “ravenous or ferocious” wolves who seek only to devour and destroy people’s lives.
  - B. What are some distinguishing marks of a wolf in sheep’s clothing?
    1. They love power, position, fame and recognition.
    2. They always seek to be served, and unwilling to serve.
    3. They will seek to lead people to them and away from Jesus Christ.
    4. They use deception to keep people in bondage and in fear, rather than empowering them with truth of God’s Word which will lead to freedom, growth and maturity.
    5. They want the people of God to remain spiritually immature and ineffective for the Kingdom of God.
    6. They seek out those who are spiritually vulnerable.
    7. They will use fear, guilt, shame, and insecurities of the people to maintain their power and control.
  - C. How does the believer recognize a wolf disguised as a sheep? Jesus gives us the answer, “You will know them by their fruit (vs. 16).”
    1. They lack the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23, Matthew 7:15-16)
    2. A wolf is not connected to Jesus Christ – they are not led by the Holy Spirit and all their works are of the flesh.

- **Jesus gives a clear distinction between a false prophet and a true prophet in His illustration of what a good tree will produce and will not produce. (vs. 17-18)**
  - 1. Jesus teaches us the best way to distinguish the false prophets from those who have been truly sent by God – is by their fruit. Jesus said, “You shall know them by their fruit.” (vs. 20)**
  - 2. You cannot always distinguish a tree by the outward leaves, but you can always distinguish a tree by the fruit it bears. (vs. 20)**
  
- D. What are some other character traits that wolves possess that every believer must be aware of?**
  - 1. They hate spiritual authority. (2 Peter 2:1-10)**
  - 2. They pretend to submit to authority but will usurp authority at any given moment or when given the opportunity. (Matthew 8:5-10)**
  - 3. They refuse to serve faithfully under another man’s vision. (Luke 16:12)**