

Session 5: How False Doctrine and Their Extremes Infiltrate and Undermine the Gospel and the Church

Warning! Warning! Beware! If you aren't careful, if you aren't watchful, danger lurks and is ready to take down your church and more importantly the very gospel message of Jesus Christ.



The boiling frog is a fable describing a frog being slowly boiled alive. The premise is that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out. But if the frog is put in tepid water, which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death. The story is often used as a metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of people to react to or be aware of sinister threats that arise

gradually rather than suddenly. It also cautions people to be aware of even gradual change lest they suffer eventual undesirable consequences. (Wikipedia)

Beware! Don't be like the frog.

Large Group Discussion - Jesus, Paul, and other biblical authors warn us by sometimes using the words “beware” or “be on the alert.” Look up the following verses and **together** discuss the warnings you find there. After establishing each passage’s context, identify how these warnings relate to actions that can undermine the church and the gospel? List your responses on flip chart.

Luke 20:46 - “**Beware** of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.”

Matthew 24:24 - “For **false** messiahs and **false** prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

1 Peter 5:8 - “Be **alert** and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Matthew 7:15 - “Watch out for **false** prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

2 Corinthians 11:13 – “For such people are **false** apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.”

Galatians 2:4 – “This matter arose because some **false** believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.”

2 Peter 2:1-3 – “But there were also **false** prophets among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.”

Jeremiah 14:14 – “Then the Lord said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you **false** visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.”

1 Timothy 1:3 – “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach **false** doctrines any longer.”

1 Timothy 6:20 – “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is **false**ly called knowledge,”

2 Timothy 2:14 – “Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.”

Keeping Your Eyes Open as a Leader

Introduction: Where can you find false teachers and false teaching? We can find false doctrine basically everywhere. We may even find it in places where we may not think we it should be; like in the preaching and teaching in churches, in Bible Colleges and Seminaries, at church conferences, on TV and radio, in the words of the music we sing, on YouTube, in books and the list could go on. Some false teaching can be obvious but often it is not.

Large Group Discussion: If false teaching is out there, and we know it is, how does it slowly seep into our churches and the gospel? How do false teachers worm and work their way in with devastating results? How do they get by us? How do they escape our watchful eyes? Use the following STOP and THINK exercises to address these questions.



How might the following questions suggest ways in which false doctrine and teaching can infiltrate and undermine the church?

Is the preaching from the pulpit biblical or do the pastor’s ideas coming from somewhere else?

Do people just assume that the pastor is always right and are afraid to question what the pastor is teaching?

How well do church leaders know the each other and those aspiring to be leaders in your church?

Are people in leadership held accountable by others?

Do church leaders know what is being taught in Sunday school classes, children's classes and small groups? Is there any accountability there?

Is there sin "in the camp" that has not been addressed by church leadership?

Has anyone in your church be disciplined by the church? Does the church have a procedure in place should discipline be necessary?

Are decisions made based on what the pastor wants rather than the unity of the church leadership team?

What other questions would you add to the list?



How do we protect ourselves from false teaching?

Know and grow in the truth by studying the Word of God.

2 Timothy 2:15 - Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Eph. 4:11-14 –“ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of the Messiah; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;”

Use discernment and wisdom.

Heb. 5:14 – But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Be well read, studied, and trained in what is right and true and the counterfeit will readily stand out to you.



What are believers to do about false teachers and teaching?

Don't be surprised – there will be false teaching and false teachers. It is not a possibility but a certainty. Jesus told us they would appear. (Mark 13:22-23) And Peter says, “*There will be false teachers among you.*” (2 Peter 2:1)

Make sure that that someone is indeed a false teacher. Check to see if they fail the test for true doctrine or demonstrate any signs of false teaching.

Remember, we will quickly be able to recognize some, but others will be like wolves in sheep's clothing. If you are not sure, consult with someone who is well trained in the truths of scripture and can help you to discern if the doctrine is true or false.

The scripture tells us to “contend earnestly” for the faith – read Jude 1:3. What does it mean to contend for something?

To “contend” is to defend or fight for a belief or to keep affirming that a belief is true. It is usually a verbal striving in the hope to convince others of the truth who are opposed to that truth. Read Acts 15: 1-2. What do you observe about contending in these verses?



If someone is teaching false doctrine, are we to try to show them the truth, if so, how?

See what Paul says in 2 Tim. 2:24-26 – “*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*”

Now read Titus 3:9-11. How are these verses different than the verses you just read in 2 Timothy? How do we deal with the biblical tension between “contending for the faith” and “avoiding foolish arguments?”

How might **Matthew 18:15-20** address a situation of a false teacher in the church?

We must warn others of false teaching that is around. Carefully read these words from Paul: 2 Timothy 4:1-3, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 6 and Acts 20: 28-32. What do you learn about how to teach? About how people may respond to truth? And what you are to do to guard and shepherd others?

We must be sure to correct the false teaching with God's truth. Jesus said, “*sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth.* (John 17:17) Remember that “*The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*” (Hebrews 4:13) Know and use the word of God. Can you think of a time when scripture was used to correct a false teaching?

There will be times when we must call false teachers and false teaching out publicly sometimes even naming names. It's important that we realize that these people may try to go about unnoticed "secretly introducing destructive heresies." (2Peter 1:1) Read I Timothy 1:18-20 and 2 Timothy 2:15-18 and notice what Paul does in these verses in this situation.



Are there any particular false teachings that are actively being presented in your society today? What are they and how should Christians and the church respond to them?

If other Christians seem to agree with a false teaching, should we silence our concerns? Why or why not? Is there any time when Christian unity requires showing love to one another at the expense of the truth? Why or why not?

Read 2 Timothy 4:2-4. What do you learn about "itching ears" in these verses? What will help you resist the temptation to say only things people want to hear?

Application: Summarize this session by answering the following questions:

- What are the greatest threats by false teachers to the church in your area?
- What is my biblical responsibility toward false teaching?
- How can I follow Christ (and we as His people) and grow stronger in the grace of of our Lord?

Share your answers with a classmate and pray together before you return to your home.

Seminar 3 Assignment is due today (See Session #1). Share your Statement of Faith draft with your teacher. After hearing the comments, go home and rewrite your Statement between now and the next session. Bring it with you to Session 4 and discuss your ideas with the leaders at that time. May the Lord bless you as you think thoughts after Him.