

Tool Box Series

Preaching

Good vs Bad



1	Context, References	Pretext, Twist Word
2	Preach Christ, Humble	Preach Themselves
3	Word of God, Gospel	Self Help, Psychology
4	Everlasting Gospel	Winds of Doctrine
5	Every Word of God	Single Topic
6	Godliness, Holiness	Worldly, Compromise
7	Reconciliation, Life	Condemnation, Death
8	Called, Spirit Filled	Hirelings, Wolves
9	Believers Participate	Sheep are Spectators

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Good vs Bad Preaching

Introduction

Have you ever considered being an independent thinker by analyzing and questioning the messages you hear being preached or taught? The book of Acts records that those who think that way have a noble character.

Acts 17:10-11 ... the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Questioning the scriptural accuracy of a preacher may sound intimidating, especially for new or uninformed Christians. However, scriptural ignorance, and complacency, are not an option in the end times with the deception that is coming. The Bible tells us of a great falling away from Christ with false religious leaders and a global religion that will affect everyone on earth. We should not blindly follow anyone but Jesus, so it is essential to know the difference between the voice of Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, and the voice of Satan's messengers, the strangers.

John 10:2-5 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. "

*And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and **the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.** "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."*

This study will help sift through the multitudes of voices, with all the preachers and teachers, to separate the wheat from the chaff, truth from error, and religious cliché from the substance. Our goal is to help give Biblical discernment regarding the message content and the character of preachers. And, if you feel called to preach or teach but are inexperienced, this study will provide scriptural guard rails to help you stay on track when sharing God's word. But this is not a comprehensive study for seminary students who want to be theologians. We will not use institutional jargon but briefly, compare distinctions between good and bad preachers and message content. We want to encourage simplicity and pure devotion to Christ in communicating the unadulterated word of God.

These are just guidelines, the Holy Spirit is the teacher, and He is the one who brings life. Regarding preaching, there are two aspects, the messenger and their message, which cannot be separated. You could say that the preacher has a public and a private life, but what happens in private reveals the true character and determines what kind of fruit they produce, good or bad.

A life spent in prayer, studying the word of God, and walking in continuous obedience to the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit and greater power to see souls saved and transformed forever.

But by contrast, even ungodly hypocrites can put on a religious performance providing riveting entertainment that appeals to the fallen, sinful nature. But God is not mocked, and you reap what you sow. If you plant apple seeds, you will harvest apples. And if you sow to the fleshly lusts and itchy ears motivational messages of worldly success or moral compromise, or salvation by works, what will you reap? Rest assured that whatever they are, they will not be born-again disciples of Jesus!

We will attempt to glean what we can from the scriptures to identify the best practices and ethics for preaching and teaching the word of God. We will outline the good, the bad, and the ugly of preaching and expose some nonbiblical and erroneous preaching methods, as well as the character defects of the ministers that are bad and should be avoided or outright rejected.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to **the doctrine which accords with godliness**, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, **useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth**, who suppose that **godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.*

Philippians 4:9 *(Paul)The things which you **learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do**, and the God of peace will be with you.*

1 Timothy 4:12-13 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

The Messenger

Theologians and seminaries educate and train professional religionists in public speaking, theology, and denominational narratives. That's all fine and good, but that is not how Jesus and the apostles worked with their disciples to train them. Institutional training without the gifts and calling of God is questionable, at best. It seemed incomprehensible to religious leaders of Jesus' time that God could speak through uneducated people, especially two ignorant and smelly fishermen like Peter and John.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

In the original Greek, this verse reads that Peter and John were agrammatos, defined as illiterate, and they were idiots, meaning an ignoramus or an idiot. So, in the eyes of the religious leaders, they saw Peter and John as crude fishermen, illiterate idiots, and not fit to serve God. But Jesus chose Peter and John and made them pillars of his church, with the genuine gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, and God used them to change the world forever. God is the only one who chooses, appoints, and spiritually equips those who serve him, NOT any individuals, religious denominations, or institutions.

Romans 9:15-16 *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So, then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **that no flesh should glory in His presence.***

Just because someone has a title like Pastor, Apostle, Bishop, or whatever does not mean you should blindly trust them. An official title is part of a job description but is not proof of someone's moral character or spiritual attributes. We cannot be presumptuous because who someone is inside their heart and mind comes out when they speak, and that spirit can be transferred to us, whether good or bad.

John 6:63 *"(Jesus speaking) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

Luke 6:45 *(Jesus speaking) The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored*

up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart (or spirit) his mouth speaks.

If you sense pride, arrogance, greed, or uncleanness when you hear a preacher speak, leave, get out of there, and go somewhere else. You would not eat rotten maggot-infested food from the garbage can or drink colored water from a toilet bowl because those are unclean vessels and dangerous biohazards that could lead to sickness and death (besides being vile and repulsive). So, we should not consume spiritual food and drink from a preacher whose mind is in the sewer and who feeds on the garbage of this world. Those whom God calls, he equips, but it is the preacher's responsibility to be a vessel of honor, living a clean and godly life,

*2 Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will **be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master**, prepared for every good work.*

*2 Corinthians 7:1-2 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.*

The Message Format

As we evaluate the message content, let's lay down some ground rules. First, we will look at the anatomy of a sermon. The closest Biblical models we have for this are from Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and the letters or epistles, written by the apostles to the churches. Using the example of the apostles, we will use the

template of a letter as a basic format for delivering a message.

Message	
Greeting (From, To)	
Introduction (Topic)	_____

Body (Content, Details, Illustrations)	_____

Close (Call to Action)	_____

Greeting

Letters begin with a greeting, identifying the writer and the recipient. Also, this is typically a warm-up period to build rapport and connect with recipients before launching into the reason for the message.

Introduction

In the introduction, the preacher sets up the reason or theme for the message. It is like a bricklayer using a plumb line, string, and level to build a wall. The first row of bricks serves as a guide for all the bricks that follow. If the first row of bricks is level, straight, and square, then the following bricks can be good.

But if the first bricks are not in a straight line and are off balance, then the wall will be a mess. It is good to lay down the introduction for the topic, draw a straight line, and then stay on topic. If the preacher begins with a false premise or mixed and disconnected thoughts, then that line of reasoning will turn into a wall of confusion with a twisted, and unbalanced and unsupported message, and will likely fall flat and may cause damage or harm.

One old proverb says, if you chase two rabbits, you will catch none, but if you chase one rabbit, you will catch one. After a sermon, if you cannot identify the core topic of the message, you probably will not remember the message. Retention and application may be the difference between ministering in the Spirit, and fleshly entertainment.

1 Corinthians 14:33 God is not the author of confusion

1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

Habakkuk 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it."

The Body

The body of the message is a presentation of all the facts, evidence, supporting scriptures, information, arguments, examples, illustrations, and testimonies. Each speaker has their way of presenting a message that varies according to spiritual gifts and personalities, and styles may range from

passionate preaching, line-by-line teaching, humor, and testimonies, with various types of visual aids. The best case scenario is that preachers hear from God and deliver God's message with scriptural accuracy and under the unction of the Holy Spirit, which produces a lasting impact on the hearers. At least, that's the way it is supposed to be.

The Close – Call to Action

The closing is a call to action, not a farewell. The preacher defines, suggests, and encourages how the listeners should respond to the message and apply it to their life. That response may invoke prayer or another course of action, but there should be a commitment to be a doer of the word just preached with whatever action is required.

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Length of the Message

The length of a message has an enormous impact on how it is received and is very dependent on the environment and the audience. Factors to consider would be schedules and routines, distractions, fatigue, hunger, opposition, and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus and Paul taught at all hours of the day and night and for many hours at a time. At Cornelius's house, Peter only spoke a few words when the Holy Spirit fell on everyone in the house and ended his message.

Acts 20:7-11** Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, **Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.** ... Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, **and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

***Acts 10:44-45** While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard **the word.** And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

Preachers should be sensitive to their environment, adapt, and use their opportunities wisely without wasting time on frivolous and useless things. In most institutional church settings, thirty to sixty minutes are allotted for messages to accommodate multiple services, etc. However, preset schedules may limit the freedom of the Holy Spirit and restrict any participation from the congregation.

Some preachers without time restraints can go way too long (except Apostle Paul), and their sermons can drag on and on, draining the energy, ruining the message, and creating fatigue-induced slumber. When speaking to small groups, on the street, or in a store, there may only be a few minutes to testify or make a point, so in spontaneous situations, brevity is the soul of wit.

Humor

Humor can be good but should not descend into anything crude or sensual. Neither should it turn into a standup comedy routine and neglect the responsibility of bringing God's word to the church. When moral and integrity lines get crossed, it becomes a corrupting influence and grieves the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:3-6 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Ecclesiastes 10:1 Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; So, does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.

Cliches & Filler

The definition of a cliché is a phrase that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought. Sometimes preachers repeatedly use the same cliches for years, over and over.

These sayings may sound good and pump up the crowd, but they become a mindless exercise of filling gaps of time between thoughts and maybe an indication of a lack of content or substance. This routine of clichés can become a tradition of men exposing a superficial, stagnate, artificial, and insincere religiosity.

Years after the revival has died, the old wineskins will repeat the same old revival clichés like clouds without water. It is much like how Samson would shake himself in the glory days when he had supernatural power. But after Delilah's haircut, the shaking thing didn't work anymore, but that didn't stop Samson from shaking. Many church revivalists continue shaking what isn't working anymore.

***Judges 16:20** Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.*

Details vs Illustrations

One analogy of preparing a sermon compares it to building a house. The **content** would be like the walls and are the scriptures and commentary that support the topic. The **illustrations** are like windows with stories, testimonies, and graphic displays that illuminate and give vision. Both are needed, but with the proper balance. A message with all scriptures and no illustrations is like a house with no windows, no light coming in, and no way to see outside.

And sermons that consist only of stories and testimonies without scriptural content would be like a house with all windows that is structurally weak and could collapse under the weight of the roof. The right balance between scriptures, supporting documentation, and illustrations will produce a more powerful and effective presentation.

Matthew 7:24-25 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: "

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder ...

Relationships and Discernment

Paul referred to Timothy as his son, and he also referred to himself as a nursing mother to the church. Local pastors, elders, or leaders are like parental figures over the church or group they lead. Leaders have a vested interest in their people, for whom they give their time, labor, and sacrifices. They stand with their people through all their ups and downs because they are family. That relationship earns them the respect to give counsel and correction to all the members of their spiritual family.

1 Timothy 1:2 & 18 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. ... This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Hebrews 12:6 ... because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

However, sometimes a preacher comes around and causes a stir in the community. They don't know you or any of the locals personally, but they gather crowds in big or small meetings, give erroneous teachings and harmful counsel, fleece the flock, and then get out of town, leaving a bunch of big messes behind them when they go. Whenever you watch TV, listen to the radio, or are at a meeting, if anyone has questionable teachings or practices, beware and do not follow, subscribe, or buy their products.

First, pray to ask God for wisdom and discernment, and search the scriptures for answers to your questions. If you belong to a church or a small group, go to a respected leader with your questions. They may alleviate your concerns by giving scriptural and rational answers. But if their answers trouble you, and you have no peace, you may consider leaving that fellowship.

But do not ignore any negative feelings that linger with you because the Holy Spirit may be warning you to spare you from deception.

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

Proverbs 11:14 *Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

Proverbs 15:22 *Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

Proverbs 24:6 *For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.*

Psalms 119:98-100 *You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.*

Preparation vs Spontaneity

Some preachers like to fly by the seat of their pants and rely on inspiration to come to them while they preach. They are prone to fish for thoughts during the message and may use emotional gimmicks to stir the crowd and fake it until they make it. They may have exciting moments but are usually low on substance. Other preachers are so prepared that they

robotically read their dry sermons, going point by point without any connection with the people, which can be a dreadful bore or a good nap time.

As always, there is a balance needed between delivering strong content with illustrations, speaking with passion, and rapport with the people. The bottom line is that preparation, content, and delivery are nothing without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Human wisdom and charisma without the Holy Spirit will have no spiritual benefit. Only the Holy Spirit can inspire words with the power to bring life to a dead soul and open spiritual eyes to peer into eternity. The preacher needs to pray and study as if everything depends on themselves but maintain the attitude that everything depends on the Holy Spirit to bless and bring life when preaching.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:13 -14 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Imitators & Actors

Most young preachers have a favorite preacher, and they like them so much they try to imitate their preaching style. God has made each person uniquely different, so preachers should speak from the pulpit in their natural voice and not put on some manufactured preacher's voice for dramatic effect. Some preachers change personalities as they step onto a platform. After getting warmed up, they switch into full preacher mode with a different voice, animation, and a grand display of religious theater that is not natural for them. Fervent and passionate messages are great if they come straight from a heart of sincerity, with the zeal of the Holy Spirit, and without concern for approval or rejection from men.

The following is an article **written in July of 1893 by William Booth**, the founder of the Salvation Army, about this very same issue:

“Talk colloquially; that is, naturally; just as you talk at the table or in conversation. Don’t imagine that you have to shout or use some sort of platform twang. It is astonishing how interesting some people are in private conversation, and how utterly uninteresting they become directly when they mount the platform.

This is largely because they go into some unnatural way of speaking. Be natural in the way you talk. Be yourself, nay struggle to forget even yourself; that is, to lose yourself in the discharge of your duty. While you are thinking about yourself, or rather of what the people may think about you, or of what you are going to say next, or about anything except the salvation of the people before you, you will be hindered, if not actually disqualified, for your duty. Throw yourself into the fight regardless of anything and everything.

Don't imitate anyone else, however much you may admire them, or however useful they may be. Even if you could acquire what is best in their manner of saying and doing things, it is very improbable whether you would be likely to be more useful than you will be in acting out your own original self. But imitators of other speakers in manner or voice are usually worse rather than the better for it, seeing that they ordinarily acquire the most objectionable features of the person they copy”.

The Message Content

Now we will consider what is being shared or imparted during a sermon, the all-important content. Everything in a church can look great, have great music, with friendly people, but if the preacher is spewing false teachings, then nothing is as it seems, and deception and ruin are lurking in the shadows. The truth of God's word is all-important for the church, and it is the pillar and the foundation on which the church stands. Without God's truth, there is no church, and the building, the music, and the friendly people do not matter.

Depending on the degree of error, false teaching will eventually manifest with different levels of spiritual blindness and destruction. A little bit of leaven will leaven the whole lump, a little bit of poison in the Kool-Aid will kill you.

*1 Timothy 3:15 ... if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.***

*1 Corinthians 5:6-8 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.** For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, **not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

The following is an overview of important factors to consider when evaluating the difference between the good preachers and messages and the bad ones.

We will work from the following chart going forward.

Good vs Bad - Preaching

1	Context, References	Pretext, Twist Scripture
2	Preach Christ, Humble	Preach Themselves
3	Word of God, Gospel	Self Help, Psychology
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1. Context vs Pretext, Twisting Scripture

First on our list of what divides good from bad is that good preachers stay within the context of the scriptures, while bad preachers twist the scriptures to change the intended meaning to fit their narratives. Twisting the scriptures is nothing new and will get dramatically worse as deceptions increase before the coming of the Lord.

When we question the meaning of any verse of the Bible, we can get the context from the preceding verses and the verses that follow. We can also reference other related verses and possibly use resources like dictionaries to clarify the intended meaning taken from the body of the surrounding scriptures of the verses in question.

We interpret the Bible with the Bible, and a scripture text, taken out of context, becomes a pretext or a false assumption.

Text = written material regarded as conveying the authentic or primary message

Context = the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

Pretext = a reason given in justification of a course of action that is not the real reason.

Anyone who twist and takes the scripture out of context is facing severe consequences from God.

*2 Peter 3:15-16 Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, **which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.***

Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

2. Preach Christ vs Preach Themselves

The bad preachers like to preach about themselves, drawing disciples to themselves, and they are self-centered with inflated egos and wallets. Their churches are personality cults built on the charisma of the preacher who takes center stage while preaching a different Christ. Ironically, their Christ is a mirror image of themselves. But their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible that the apostles preached.

The good preachers exalt and magnify Jesus Christ while humbly rejecting the praise of man and avoiding self-promotion. John the Baptist took himself out of the picture to give Christ all the glory, and he described himself as just a voice to prepare the way for Jesus.

***John 1:22-23.** Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD,"" as the prophet Isaiah said."*

The apostle Paul considered himself dead at the cross, and for the remainder of his life, he allowed Christ to live vicariously through him. Paul took no credit for his accomplishments, and he attributed every good thing to the grace of God and gave God all the glory.

***Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Paul was determined to preach Christ and leave himself out of the picture.

1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

The focal point of all preaching should be Jesus, period. Hungry souls do not need to hear about all the preacher's life and antics. People need the gospel about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the realities of eternity. Sad to say, sincere but misguided people will be hypnotized by the charisma of a preacher and become mentally and financially manipulated by them. The obsession with self-promotion, pride, and greed has its roots in Lucifer, a.k.a. Satan and the Devil. When Lucifer rebelled against God, he made five statements that started with him saying, "I will," which was his downfall.

Isaiah 14:11-15 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol (Hell), To the lowest depths of the Pit.

By contrast, when Jesus was facing the cross, he prayed while sweating drops of blood and said, “not my will.” Jesus was not self-promoting or grasping for power, but to the contrary, he laid aside all his divine powers, humbled himself and became a man, and humbled himself even more by making himself a servant.

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if it is **Your will**, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, **not My will**, but Yours, be done."

Philippians 2:5-8 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross!**

The Spirit of Christ promotes a humble life of selfless sacrifice and obedience. Satan is the polar opposite of Christ, and those who imbibe Satan's spirit and character are full of pride, lawlessness, narcissism, and self-promoters. It is startling how quickly a man of God can pivot from receiving inspiration from God to allowing Satan to speak through him. Many worship leaders and Pastors are vulnerable to the pride of ministry and unwittingly crossover into the sin of Lucifer. The Apostle Peter fell into this trap immediately after his big revelation about Christ.

Matthew 16:13-18 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter ...*

How impressive, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter (Rocky), and Jesus himself says that Peter got his revelation straight from God the Father! You can imagine how that affected Peter's ego, so shortly after that, this happens:

Matthew 16:21-23, *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

This spiritual flip-flop, changing sides back and forth, is a frequent but subtle switch and happens all the time. God chooses weak and foolish people, and he uses them mightily, then they get proud and steal God's glory from the victory for themselves.

Gideon faced an opposing army of 135,000 men, and he had an army of 32,000 men, so God told him he had too many men, and here's why:

Judges 7:2 *And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'*

So, God reduced the size of Gideon's army to 300 men against an army of 135,000. That's 450 enemy soldiers against one Israelite soldier in hand-to-hand combat, and guess what? Gideon still took the credit for the victory and stole God's glory! As Gideon prepared his men to attack, he gave them their battle cry, saying to shout, the sword of the Lord, AND OF GIDEON!

Judges 7:18 *"When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!'"*

After God gave Israel the victory, Gideon took 43 pounds of gold as his plunder and made an idol of gold to celebrate his victory. Later that idol of Gideon's victory was worshipped by the Israelites. How many of us make idols from our victories and place them on a pedestal seeking admiration from others instead of giving all the glory to God? In every message preached, Christ should be the victorious hero, and he alone should be the only one receiving praise!

Judges 8:27 Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Gideon began his ministry by tearing down his father's idol. He ended his ministry by making an idol of his victory, leading Israel to worship the idol and him by association. Preachers who put themselves on a pedestal and want the praise of man are not denying themselves, not taking up their crosses, and are making themselves enemies of the cross of Christ.

Philippians 3:18-19 (Paul speaking) For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Paul just preached Jesus Christ as Lord; he was there to be a servant to the people, and he always pointed away from himself and toward Christ, and he acknowledged that only God brings life and gives the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:4-7 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not

mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So, who makes things grow, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God!

The focus of every message should be about Jesus, not the messenger.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

3. Word of God, Gospel vs Self Help, Psychology

Good preachers are not always popular or liked because they will not back down from preaching the truth, the unadulterated gospel of Jesus, from Genesis to Revelation. That would include fire and brimstone if the situation mandates it, likewise with death, hell, judgment, repentance from sin, and Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Paul said that he did not shun his responsibility to preach the whole counsel of God, and in fact, Paul said, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

Acts 20:27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching

1 Corinthians 9:16-17 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!** If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of **the gospel I preached to you**, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.** Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Jeremiah tried to hold back from speaking out, but the word of God was like a fire inside him, so he had to speak out. Good preachers deliver God's truth without fear or concern for the approval of man.

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." **But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.**

The Bible tells us about a great apostasy or departure from the faith in the last days. Churches, false preachers, and religious people will partake of the moral rot of the culture, consumed with the love of themselves, money, and pleasures, and living only for this life. They won't tolerate true men of God but will hire false preachers to tickle their ears with a feel-good gospel of human potential and success. Meanwhile, these preachers of vice and greed will make merchandise of the tickled ear reprobates.

As we get closer to the coming of the Lord, the teaching errors will become more demonic, declining, and falling over a cliff into the depths of depravity. The current trends of false preachers are: to advocate for sexual perversion, surgical mutilation of children, abortion, inflaming racial prejudice, empowering the medical police state, global climate fascism, and unifying the world's religions as one to establish the harlot church for the false prophet and antichrist. End times false ministers and others profess to be Christian because of attendance at a building that claims to be a church that may have some outward religious trappings. But they are spiritually dead, cut off from the life of God because they have rejected Christ. Paul advises us to have nothing to do with them.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they

will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

2 Peter 2:1-3 *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:*

whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not.

4. Everlasting Gospel vs Winds of Doctrine

Next, we examine the contrast between teachings that have eternal principles, contrasted against those that emphasize temporary, trendy, or unimportant things. Messages emphasizing an earthly vision, living for today, and whatever is currently popular and trending will create instability. We can compare trendy teachings to being blown around by strong gusty winds or tossed to and fro by powerful waves. Messages based on temporal things are short-sighted, earthly-minded, compromising, seek instant gratification, and can be a distraction from God's eternal purposes.

Contrast that with the concrete stability of teachings that are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Messages that stress eternal principles bring an awareness of the future consequences of our actions which should dominate our thinking and theology and compel us to prioritize our time, relationships, and service to God.

***Revelation 14:6** Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people*

Isaiah 40:6-8** The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" **All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ...

... The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. **He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his (eternal) reward.**

When you are listening to a sermon, you can ask yourself these questions;

- In 100 years from now will future generations relate to this message?
- If we could go back 100 years in the past, would they have been able to relate to it?
- Would Jesus, Peter or Paul recognize this as a true gospel message, that is inspired by the Spirit of God?
- Where did they get the content for this message? Was it the Bible, testimonies, secular, or other?

That is one reason we previously used the article of William Booth from 1893 to show that his words are still as relevant to us today as when he gave them. Truth is eternal. Fads come and go, but we have the everlasting gospel that never changes. Jesus is the rock of ages, and he never changes.

Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.**

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Some pastors and leaders are sheep themselves, followers of the crowd, dragging their people into whatever wind is blowing at the time. If the latest fad is worldly, weird, or greedy, do not accept it, and get out of there and find other sober-minded, rational believers and leaders who will protect the flock from heresy.

Ephesians 4:11-14 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

5. Whole Counsel vs Single Topic

Some “Christian” groups specialize in a single theme and stay exclusively on that topic. For example, under the heading of financial prosperity is the health, wealth, and positive confession movement with a single focus on becoming wealthy. They go to the extremes of believing they can create wealth by speaking money into existence. Their greed drives them to see everything through the corrupt lens of money, which leads them to twist every scripture to fit their narrative. Many groups have hang-ups, but the prosperity, seeker-friendly, and church growth (megachurch) movements have recently come to the forefront and have turned the church into big business. Jesus said, you cannot serve two masters, and you cannot serve God and money.

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**"

Sad to say, but some preachers love money more than God and have taken large groups of people captive into their deception. Beware of greed-based, money-driven ministries. If money is the main focus of their messages, run for your life!

Others specialize in one-topic subjects like Sabbath worship, the reformation, relationship experts, and the list goes on and on. It is not beneficial or spiritually healthy to focus on one singular topic while excluding all others. We cannot ignore the command that man shall not live by bread alone but by **every word** of God. We need balance from Genesis to Revelation.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**'"

Proverbs 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

Proverbs 16:11 A just weight and balance are the LORD'S

With such a wide variety of things to study in the Bible, why be stuck on one topic? That's like eating the same thing every day, year after year. Somebody may argue that the children of Israel ate manna every day for forty years. That's true, except that "manna" literally means, "what is it?"

Exodus 16:15 So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "**What is it?**" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

So, every day for forty years, the children of Israel woke up saying, Lord, what is it today? What is the word from God for today? Also, the manna would breed worms if they kept it overnight, so they had to get fresh manna every morning. Yesterday's word of the Lord was for yesterday and is old and worm-infested now, so we need to get a new word from the Lord each day!

Exodus 16:19 Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it (manna) until morning." However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; **they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell.** So, Moses was angry with them.

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Why get stuck in a rut with one message over and over? Dwelling on the past can create a risk of eating maggot-infested food. For anyone in this situation, escape, get out of the cage, and move onward into the promised land and explore the height, depth, and length of God's word!

Ephesians 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that **I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ** ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints

what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

Acts 20: 26, 27 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God".

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

One reason for five different offices and ministry gifts to the church is to have a variety and provide a balance of perspectives and functionality. That is another reason that each person should contribute their talents to benefit the whole body of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . . may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together **by what every joint supplies,** according to the effective working **by which every part does its share,** causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

1 Corinthians 12:5-11 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

6. Godliness, Holiness vs Worldliness, Compromise

Good preachers have goals to develop the character of Christ and a godly lifestyle in themselves and their disciples. Bad preachers put on a public persona of godliness, but in their private life is a different story. They may have an inner circle surrounded by compromise, worldliness, and corruption and live no differently than ungodly secular people, or worse, hiding secret sins.

In the end times, there will be two churches forming simultaneously. The first is the bride of Christ, who will meet Jesus in the air when he returns, and they go to heaven. Then there is a global religious system called the Harlot church, which will go to hell with the anti-Christ. These two will grow side by side like the wheat and tares, until Jesus separates them.

Matthew 13:30 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Even sincere believers can be seduced and deceived by the teachings of false preachers. Jesus speaking to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, pointed out several false prophets, one of them was Balaam.

Revelation 2:14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who **hold the doctrine of Balaam**, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to **idols**, and to commit **sexual immorality**.

Jesus is making a direct reference to Numbers 22 to 24, where an enemy king hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel. Balaam could not curse with his words because he only spoke the word of God. Instead, he counseled Balak to send young women into the camp of the Israelites to seduce them, and Israel fell into the trap. At first, it began with sexual immorality, and then the Israelites backslid into worshipping the idols and pagan gods of the Moabites

The modern Balaam preachers quote the Bible, prophesy for money, encourage sensuality, allow promiscuity, idolize material possessions, and are in bed with the secular culture. Outwardly they have the appearance of Christians, a church, and a preacher, but there is an atmosphere and undercurrent of blatant hypocrisy and brazen sin.

Jude 1:10-12 *Woe to them! For they have **run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit**. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, **serving only themselves**.*

2 Peter 2:12-15 *But these speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and **will receive the wages of unrighteousness**, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, **carousing in their own deceptions** while they feast*

*with you, having eyes full of **adultery** and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart **trained in covetous practices**, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, **following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness**;*

***2 Peter 2:18** For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, **they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness**, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption**; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*

On the contrary, the Apostle Paul said doctrines should teach how to live a Godly life, and if they do not teach Godliness, get away from them.

1 Timothy 6:1-6** ... so that the name of God and His **doctrine** may not be blasphemed. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and **to the doctrine which accords with godliness**, he is proud, knowing nothing ... useless wranglings of **men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself

7. Reconciliation, Life vs Condemnation, Death

Finally, Good Preachers are Spirit-filled and have a ministry of reconciliation. The Apostle Paul never forgot that he was a Pharisee and that he viciously persecuted the church.

Looking back on the days before his conversion, he said that he was the greatest sinner because he persecuted the church. Paul demonstrated his gratefulness by becoming an ambassador for Christ, preaching reconciliation to God, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Paul is still an ambassador through his letters, which continue to reconcile people to God.

On the other hand, Bad preachers preach wrath and condemnation, and they may drive people further away from God, doing more damage than good. Legalism produces pride, self-righteousness, condemnation, and spiritual superiority. They use intimidation and pressure tactics on their followers to enforce compliance with their version of spirituality. **Notice there are two types of ministries, one brings life, and the other brings death.**

*2 Corinthians 3:6-9 ... who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the **ministry of death**, written and engraved on stones (the 10 commandments) was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the **ministry of the Spirit** not be more glorious? For if the **ministry of condemnation** had glory, the **ministry of righteousness** exceeds much more in glory.*

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us **the ministry of ...***

... reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Ministry absent the gifts, power, and grace of the Holy Spirit is condemning, legalistic, and exploitive:

Matthew 23:13-15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to ... "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Colossians 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

*2 Timothy 3: 4-5 ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **having a form of godliness but denying its power.** Have nothing to do with them.*

*2 Corinthians 11:20-21 (the Apostle Paul speaking)
In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. To my shame, I admit that we were too weak for that!*

Sometimes denominations or churches have written or unspoken rules that amount to human attempts to achieve God's righteousness. They may be well-intentioned, but their legalism usually has the reverse effect. The law condemns, makes guilty, or produces pride. But only the Spirit of Life in Christ can set us free from the law of sin and death and resurrect us to walk in the newness of life.

*2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. **He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

*Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His Own*

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (This is the chapter on the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, read the whole chapter!)

Galatians 3:1-5 *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? **This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** Are you so foolish? **Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?** Have you suffered so many things in vain if indeed it was in vain? Therefore, He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

Each person should pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who will teach us the truth and guide us in the way we should go. He will make us his messengers and give us discernment to find other messengers who are after God's heart. We need men of integrity, called, equipped, and obedient to the Holy Spirit to be leaders and examples for the church.

John 6:63 *(Jesus speaking) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**"*

Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

8. Called, Spirit Filled vs Hirelings, Wolves

Next on our list of what separates good and bad preachers is the calling of God. God chooses his messengers and equips them for his purposes, and when someone finds that purpose, it becomes their mission and the driving force in their lives. Some bad preachers were called but went astray, others were never called but use religion as a job to pay the bills, and then some are charlatans and scammers chasing money. These people have been separated from God, deceived, and are spiritually dead. Here is the bottom line, only God chooses, approves, and equips his ministers, period.

Hebrews 5:4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

*Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And **how shall they preach unless they are sent?***

*John 10:12-13 "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, **sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees;** and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. **"The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.***

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan, himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

God decides who he calls and how he equips them. We do not choose the time and details of our physical birth, and we do not choose our calling or gifts when we are born again spiritually. God assigns all the callings and spiritual gifts to each person according to his eternal purpose before they are born.

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Romans 9:10-16 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls, she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

A good analogy to show the difference between people that God calls and those who he did not call would be the difference between a Chihuahua and a Great Dane. They are similar in that both are from the dog family, but that is where the similarities end. A Chihuahua will never have the ability to grow like a Great Dane because that is not in their DNA. God ordains the DNA, which determines all the gifts, talents, abilities, and growth potential.

A church member and an apostle are both saved and belong to the family of God, but they do not have the same spiritual DNA and how they operate in the church is different. Each person needs to identify their gifts, functions, and authority in the body of Christ and then stay within the boundaries that God has assigned to them. A calling is not what you do, but who you are, and you cannot be anything else, and there is no escaping from it, ask Jonah.

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

The Apostle Paul, before he met Christ, was called Saul, and he was breathing threats and slaughter on his way to persecute Christians. Then a bright light enveloped him, and he heard Jesus call him. Jesus chose Saul (Paul), and not the other way around.

Acts 9:3-6 As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So, he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Jesus did not only choose Paul, he chooses everybody that gets chosen. He made it clear to his disciples that he chose them, and not the other way around.

***John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

***Ephesians 1:4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*

Back to Paul. Later, God spoke even more clearly to Saul and confirmed it with the elders.

***Acts 13:2-4** As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

There has never been anyone so driven by the convictions of their calling than the Apostle Paul. He was willing to do anything, enduring hardships and suffering, and boldly risking his life because of his burning passion for Christ. His calling and the power of the Holy Spirit equipped him to preach and have the grace, strength, and endurance to do what he did. His life and message are so powerful that future generations yet to be born will be blessed by his writings and testimonies.

Philippians 3:7-8** But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom **I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

***2 Corinthians 11:23-25** Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more: in labors, more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to*

stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.

To anyone claiming to be a somebody in the church world, read that list of Paul's qualifications as a minister again. He didn't mention how many cities where he planted churches, how many souls he won, how many books of the Bible he wrote, how many miracles he experienced and performed, and how many visions and revelations he had. The only qualifications Paul boasted about was his weaknesses and sufferings in service to Christ. May God help us to renew our minds and learn from his example.

9. Believers Participate vs Sheep are Spectators

We have reviewed some differences between good and bad preachers, not to criticize or discourage but to instruct and give discernment. The principles we went over can be used to diagnose preachers, or they can help give guidelines on what to do and what to avoid when you teach or preach. Not everybody will forsake everything and be a full-time missionary, pastor, preacher, or leader, but everyone can and should learn, grow, and lead others to Jesus and disciple them.

For most people, Christianity is a spectator sport where everyone enters the building, takes a seat, and watches the show. That mindset is contrary to scripture and just plain wrong in every way. People with the spectator attitude are spiritually immature, easily manipulated, and possibly just religious without having a salvation experience. Jesus gave a command, not a suggestion, that his followers go, preach, teach and make disciples.

Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "**Go** into all the world and **preach the gospel** to every creature.

Matthew 28:19-20 (Jesu speaking) "**Go therefore and make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

The writer of the book of Hebrews rebuked those who were not teaching and said they were immature spiritual babies. Every follower of Jesus should be able to teach the basics of Christianity to others. The more we teach, the stronger and more mature we become.

Hebrews 5:12-14 **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

Paul sent a letter to the church in Corinth which describes the distribution and variation of gifts that should operate when the church is gathered together with everyone participating. The churches back then did not function with the speaker spectator division like churches today.

Their meetings were more like a spiritual potluck dinner where everybody brought their gifts, a song, a testimony, a word of knowledge, so they all brought something to the table so that everyone gave and received blessings.

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11 1Co 12:4 There are **different kinds of gifts**, but the same Spirit. There are **different kinds of service**, but the same Lord. There are **different kinds of working**, but the same **God works all of them in all men**. Now **to each one** the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, **to another** the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **to another** faith by the same Spirit, **to another** gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **to another** miraculous powers, **to another** prophecy, **to another** distinguishing between spirits, **to another** speaking in different kinds of ... tongues, and **to still another** the interpretation of tongues. **All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.***

All Christians should actively share their faith, that is the purpose of this book, and the other books in the toolbox series, which are designed to equip believers with the tools they need for personal and small group studies. Paul told Timothy to teach faithful people, and they should teach others, and everyone who actively participates will grow spiritually.

*2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.***

Call to Action

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his return would be like birth pangs, growing in intensity and frequency and globally. All those signs happen at once, and we can see them happening in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to a one-world government ruled by the antichrist. Also, there will be a great falling away from Christ, with churches becoming perverted, politically woke, and government-controlled. Eventually, all true believers will have to come out of the dead institutional denominations and fake churches. Thank God we have a blessed hope that Jesus will rapture the church before wrath and judgment hit the earth!

While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and learn to live by faith. This book is part of a series of basic teachings that all Christians should know and teach. We call it the "toolbox series" because each study is a tool for you to share your faith with others. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at Ears2Hear.online.

The Tool Box Series

This book is part of a series of Bible studies that are basic teachings for followers of Jesus. We call it the "toolbox series" because each study is a tool for you to use in building your faith and sharing with others. These "tools" can also be used as a start-up kit for small group Bible studies and shared online. For other resources like free Bibles and study materials, visit our website at:

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