

## So That You Will Not Be Fooled

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Rich Nathan

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Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Corinthians 12.10

Have you ever been fooled by anyone? I mean, have you ever been really taken in? Maybe someone you were trying to help, they seemed so nice and so sincere, so needy, and then you discovered that this person was not nice and sincere. You discovered that you were being used, or that the truth was other than what the person told you. Perhaps you discovered that there was this dark vein of evil that was below the surface in that person's life.

Have you ever been taken in, really taken it by someone?

Years ago, a man in our congregation came into my office and said that he had come to the end of the rope in his marriage. He loved his wife, was committed to her, but that she was insanely jealous. Nothing that he did could ever address the insecurities in her life.

So, I said, "Tell me about it."

He said, "Well, for example, she is accusing me of having an affair with my secretary. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have an entirely professional relationship. I've been talking with her about Jesus. I have great boundaries. But my wife keeps screaming at me every night about having to fire my secretary. This is not the only person she has accused me of being unfaithful with. I've had it. I can't take it anymore."

So I said to him, "Well, don't do anything rash. Let me get together with your wife and we'll talk."

I got together with his wife and his wife presented herself more irrationally than this man did. She seemed totally volatile and angry. As an initial matter, she was not the sort of person whose perceptions or judgments you might trust. She didn't have any real hard evidence of this affair. It was just a vibe she was picking up when she went into the office. She could tell by the way they looked at each other that something was going on. She wasn't going to stay in a marriage where her husband was being unfaithful.

I asked her to please not make any rash moves, but to stay put and that we would arrange for marriage counseling for them. While I was in the process of arranging the

marriage counseling, she moved out. The man came back in and said, “See, Rich, I’ve been trying to tell you about my wife. She is just out of control. I’ve appealed to her to stay. You spoke to her, but I don’t think there is anything we can do to salvage this relationship. I’m going to contact my attorney.”

I said, “Please don’t rush to your attorney. Both of your lives can turn around. Your marriage can be a testimony of God’s faithfulness. God hates divorce. We haven’t exhausted all of our resources yet.”

I tried to contact his wife. She kept putting me off. I thought to myself, “Well, I’m sure there were problems on both sides, but in this particular instance, this man appears to be doing everything to preserve his marriage and his wife is irrationally continuing to accuse him and attack him.”

But as I went before God on behalf of this couple, something strange happened inside of me. I began to have a growing feeling internally, I can’t fully describe it, but there was a growing sensation that this man was lying to me. I couldn’t put my finger on anything that he had said or done. I had no concrete evidence that I was being lied to. It was just a sense, a feeling, nothing that would hold up in court. So I asked God to uncover him. One of the prayers that I have prayed many times over the years when I have an uneasy feeling about someone is: God, reveal their foundations. You who search the mind and know the heart, pull the covers back on this person and reveal their foundations. I don’t want to be overly suspicious or guilty of judging someone unfairly. Show me, Lord, what’s really there in this person’s heart.

So, I got back together with this man. He said, “Rich, I really feel like I’ve tried everything. I’m going to file for divorce.” He flattered me about my kindness to him and about how great the church was how much he loved my preaching, etc., etc. He said that in light of his divorce, he would probably attend elsewhere.

I will call him, Jim. I said to Jim, “Jim, have you ever done anything with your secretary that would in any way be considered inappropriate?”

He uttered the fateful words: “What do you mean by inappropriate?”

I’ve discovered that if a man is clean, he does not quibble over definitions. When someone starts quibbling over definitions, it usually suggests that there is something there because I know in my life if someone asked me, “Have you done something inappropriate with a member of staff, or with someone in the church, or with someone in the workplace,” I could immediately respond, “Absolutely not. Never, on any occasion.”

But he asked me: “What do you mean by ‘inappropriate?’”

So I said, “Well, Jim, have you ever expressed mutual affection for each other?”

He said, “I might have.”

So I leaned forward and said, “Well, Jim, did you ever kiss her?”

He said, “I might have.”

I pulled my chair even closer and now we were almost nose to nose. I said, “Well, Jim, let me ask you this. Did you ever sleep with your secretary?”

He said, “I might have.”

I leaned back in my chair and said, “Jim, that’s what I meant by inappropriate.”

When I relayed this story to my associate pastor, he slapped his head and said, “Oh, that’s what you meant by inappropriate? How could he have known that?”

Have you ever been fooled by someone? Certainly, we all have, haven’t we? Our knowledge is very incomplete. We are subject to flattery and to being manipulated. Some people are very good at play acting and at wearing masks. Some of you have been fooled in business. Some of you have been fooled for years in marriage. Some of us have been fooled in ministry settings.

I’ve been doing this series on Spiritual Gifts, those special abilities given by God to assist us in serving him and others, those special abilities that go beyond our human power and our human capacities that manifest that God is at work in this situation. The gift that we are going to look at today is called the discerning of spirits. And while this gift comes into play in the positive realm, so that there can be discernment and awareness of God, or an angel at work in a situation, I’m going to speak today about the use of this spiritual gift, the discerning of spirits, regarding the negative realm, the revealing of problems, issues, and lies that we would not be aware of apart from God’s revealing grace.

I’ve called today’s talk, “So That You Will Not Be Fooled,” 1 Cor. 12:10.

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<sup>1Co 12:8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

<sup>1Co 12:9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

<sup>1Co 12:10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>1</sup> and to still another the interpretation of tongues.<sup>2</sup>

1Co 12:11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

In v. 10, the apostle Paul said this:

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1Co 12:10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>1</sup> and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

The phrase “distinguishing between spirits,” is probably better translated “the discernings of spirits.” Discernings in the original Greek is

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Diakriseis

This is a combination of two words:

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Dia = through

Krisis = judgment

The gift of discernment is the special ability to judge through something, to pierce what is outward and to get to the inner realities. The gift of discernings of spirits is the gift of seeing below the surface so that you can discover what is really there.

Now, this gift can apply to the discerning of the work of the Holy Spirit, or of angels, as I said. But I want to today focus on the negative, on the usefulness of this gift of discerning so that you will not be fooled. When the Bible speaks about the demonic realm, Satan and his legion of demons, and when the Bible speaks about radical evil, it does not generally present Satan, sin, or evil as something that is so apparent that anyone can recognize evil at a glance. Satan does not present himself to the human race like Count Dracula wearing black clothing and saying to everyone, “I want to suck your blood.” If he did, people would run in the other direction.

People are not generally recruited into false philosophies or religions by posters saying, “How would you like to join something that will make you miserable and ruin your life.” Or “Are you interested in being involved in a group that is controlling, manipulative, and will leave you feeling used and empty? Join us.”

The Bible regularly tells us that Satan and his messengers, as well as sin and evil, are not obvious to a surface read. So, for example, we read about a masquerade that Satan and false religious leaders are engaged in. 2 Cor. 11.13-15,

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<sup>2Co 11:13</sup> For such persons are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

<sup>2Co 11:14</sup> And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

<sup>2Co 11:15</sup> It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

This was a giant charade. Many people are involved in playacting their roles. The Bible uses words like deception, and lies, and distortions and seduction and the wearing of masks to describe the work of Satan. The Bible warns us against people who distort the truth – Acts. 20.30,

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<sup>Ac 20:30</sup> Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

It further warns us about people who wear masks – 1 Thessalonians 2.5

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<sup>1Th 2:5</sup> You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed— God is our witness.

We are told over and over again in the Bible to guard ourselves from being deceived – 2 Timothy 3.13,

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<sup>2Ti 3:13</sup> while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

We are warned against people who pervert the truth, who lie, who seduce people away from Jesus. We are told to guard ourselves from folks who twist God's Word.

The bottom line is that we would not be repeatedly warned in the Bible about deceivers if we were not prone to being deceived. All of us, no matter how high our IQ is and what your professional training is – all of us are subject to having the wool pulled over our eyes.

Some time ago, I read the very humble confession of an attorney who had joined a church plant. The church plant had been launched under a cloud of accusation regarding financial misappropriation. The church planter denied any financial wrongdoing. This attorney joined the church planter's board and was his chief defender. In fact, the attorney went so far as to attack the original church that sent out the church planter and accused the senior pastor of being on a power trip.

There were threats of lawsuits and many unkind emails sent by this attorney back to the original church. But then the lawyer discovered that he had been duped by the church planter – that the church planter was what the original church said he was – a manipulator, a liar, and somebody who was completely unethical in their handling of money. The attorney in this lengthy apology said, "I pride myself as a lawyer in being able to distinguish between truths and falsehoods. I've spent my life sifting evidence. But all of my professional training failed me in this instance. I was utterly taken in by this deceiver."

Over and over again the Bible warns us, no matter who we are or what our professional training is, how intuitively we believe we are, the Bible warns us about our own vulnerability and potential for being fooled.

Now, I would like to apply this to one particular issue in the Christian church today - that is the church's potential for being fooled by false teachers. Do you know that almost every book in the New Testament warns us about false teachers and false teachings? Thus, we read Jesus' words in Matthew 24.4-5

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Mt 24:4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.

Mt 24:5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many.

In the apostle Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, we read these words of warning in Acts 20.29-31

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Ac 20:29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

Ac 20:30 Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Ac 20:31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

Paul's letter to the Galatian church and to the Colossian church is largely about combating false teachings. Thus, we read in Col. 2.4 and 8 these words

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Col 2:4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces<sup>1</sup> of this world rather than on Christ.

The apostle John says this in 1 John 4.1,

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1Jn 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Virtually, every book in the New Testament warns us about the deceitful work of false teachers and our need, therefore, for the gift of discerning of spirits.

People do not write books or hold seminars, or stand behind pulpits in the churches of America and say: “Now, before I get started, let me tell you that everything I’m about to say is a total lie. I’m just spitting out a fine sounding argument that is totally false, in order to deceive. I use Christian words, Christian terminology, but I mean something radically different than what the Bible meant by those words. I’m just up here playacting the role, masquerading in order to cover my real agenda.”

How can we sharpen our discernment? What does the Bible tell us are the general marks of false teachers? What are the blinking warning lights on the dashboard saying, “Watch out here, the engine is about to blow. If you see thus and so in someone’s life, you’d better watch out. You had better be praying for gifts of discernment because there may be some error here.”

Let me list four small things and then one great problem. The four small issues all begin with the letter “I.” You say: How can I tell a false teacher? They have an “I” problem. False teachers love to draw attention themselves – their ministry, their accomplishments, their activities. You see their name plastered all over the building and the ministry. Their picture is everywhere. It is all about “I.”

The apostle Paul says in 2 Tim. 3.1

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2Ti 3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

2Ti 3:2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2Ti 3:4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—

So what are these four “I’s” that characterize false teachers?

First of all,

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Insatiability

Or more simply put, Greed. Enough is never enough especially regarding material wealth. Paul warns us against people who use Christianity as a means of getting wealthy. 1 Tim. 6:5, 10

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<sup>1Ti 6:5</sup> and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

<sup>1Ti 6:10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The warning light ought to go off in your mind about a pastor, a conference speaker, a person on TV when you see them living extravagant lifestyles and being greedy. One of the tests of a teacher is how does this person handle money? If a TV news crew showed up at this pastor's house and they photographed the pastor's possessions, what would they find? One of the things I think about, brothers and sisters, is if a news crew showed up at my house, would I be embarrassed? If I was interviewed about my car, my jewelry, my clothes, or my giving, would it leave an impression that this person may be in this in part for the money?

One of the essential questions that need to be answered in any church is how is the pastor's salary set? Is there an independent group of lay people who are leaders in the church setting the pastor's salary according to some very rational criteria? Or are the people setting the pastor's salary family members beholden to the pastor for their own positions? Even worse, does the pastor set his own salary?

You cannot over emphasize financial integrity. More than a dozen years ago when this church began to grow and our budgets began to grow, I thought to myself: Our church needs an independent audit of our books. I come from a legal background. I am very aware of the fact that all publicly traded corporations have to have independent audits of their books in order to trade their stock. I thought if secular corporations were doing this, how could the church not have an independent audit? Our levels of integrity ought to be at least that of the world.

I called around the various large churches in our city and at that time not one large church I called was having independent audits of their books. I thought to myself: Well, let us be the first, then. Maybe we'll set a trend. And every year at our annual business meeting, we hand out to any of our members a full set of our financials and a disclosure regarding how our salaries are set.



Insatiability is a mark of a false teacher. And so is

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Immorality

We read these words in 2 Peter 2.18-19,

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<sup>2Pe 2:18</sup> For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

<sup>2Pe 2:19</sup> They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

How does this leader relate to members of the opposite sex? Are they appropriate? Do they show healthy boundaries? Are they regularly making comments and acting in ways that suggest that they are open and available for an encounter, or that such a thing is unthinkable?

The third mark of a false teacher is

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Independence

2 Peter 2.10

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<sup>2Pe 2:10</sup> This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature<sup>3</sup> and despise authority.

Again, simply put, is this teacher accountable to anyone? Do they have a board, or a team that they work with? Are they able to be challenged about their thoughts and ideas? Or is this person utterly ungoverned and ungovernable? Are they completely independent agents? Does the person seem to have good, healthy relationships of mutual respect and accountability with people on their staffs, or are they kings of their staff? Independence.

And then,

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Innovation

The great recorder of church history back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a man by the name of Eusebius, equated innovation with heresy. In other words, is this person coming up with new and novel doctrines, things that have never been taught before, or are they following closely in the teaching of the apostles?

Here is what we read in 2 John 9.

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<sup>2Jn 1:9</sup> Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Is teaching consistent with the apostle's teaching, or what the apostles would have said if they lived in 21<sup>st</sup> century America? Is this teaching consistent with the apostles' trajectory of teaching? Or is it utterly a contradiction of the apostles' teaching? Certainly, some of the denominational fights and splits that we are hearing so much about in the newspapers deal with this issue of innovation in teaching. In many churches faithfulness to the apostles' teaching has ceased to be a value. There is infinitely more faithfulness to the spirit of our age than to the spirit of the Apostle Paul.

Four I's –

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Insatiability  
Immorality  
Independence  
Innovation

And here is the great test: The false teacher presents another Jesus, a Jesus other than the one we encounter in the New Testament, and that the church has preached and worshipped for 20 centuries. Here is what we read in 2 Cor. 11:2-4,

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<sup>2Co 11:2</sup> I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

<sup>2Co 11:3</sup> But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

<sup>2Co 11:4</sup> For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

As you evaluate ideas, teachings, and books, are you asking God for gifts of discernment? The great test is whether that teaching, book or church presents another Jesus, a Jesus other than the Jesus presented to us in the pages of the New Testament. The test, the big test of teaching, is the Jesus test. What kind of Jesus do people come

away with as they listen to this teaching? Christ is the criterion by which we measure all teaching. 2 Tim. 2.8,

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<sup>2Ti 2:8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,

So how do false teachers present another Jesus?

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Jesus who is not the truth.

They present a Jesus who is not the truth. In so many contemporary pulpits and in so many contemporary "Christian" books, it is contended that we cannot hold Jesus up as the unique Truth, as the unique and final embodiment of God and his truth. In the face of all the contemporary pluralism, it is said: "Maybe in a more naïve age, maybe at a more innocent time people could have pretended that their God was the God. But in the light of all of the pluralism that we encounter in the workplace, any claim that your God is THE God is utterly intolerant and cannot be accepted."

So Bishop Spong the Episcopalian Bishop from New Jersey rails against the notion that Christ is the truth. And maybe some of you have struggled with this notion of saying in your heart that Jesus is the Truth. You say: My goodness, in my workplace there are Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics and atheists. I work with uncommitted Roman Catholics and Unitarians and Jews and ex-Lutherans. There is even a woman who dabbles in Wicca. How in the face of so many different beliefs can I say that Christ is THE Truth. Isn't it enough for me to say that Jesus is MY Truth? Jesus is MY Lord? I'll just talk to people when asked about what Christ has done for me, but I won't make any sweeping claim at all that Jesus is THE Lord, or THE Truth.

Friend, let me say this with all affection. When you reduce Jesus Christ to merely your truth or your Lord, rather than the Truth and the Lord, you are being radically unfaithful to Christ and you are not following in the steps of the apostles and the martyrs. You have departed from the historic faith.

The apostles and the early church were not martyred by the thousands simply because they claimed Jesus is MY Lord. They were martyred by the thousands because they claimed Jesus was THE Lord and Caesar was not. The apostles and the early church were crucified upside down and many were beheaded. There were fed to lions in the Coliseum. They were burned at the stake. They were killed by gladiators. Not because they said: You have your God and we will have our God. It is because they said: Jesus is

MY God and he is YOUR God whether you acknowledge him or not. They were killed for claiming that Jesus is THE Truth, THE Way and THE Life.

Now, having made those bold statements, let me quickly share with you what I am not saying. I am not saying that there is no truth in any other religion, or philosophy. There is much that is true, good, and loving, helpful and kind in the world's great religions outside of Christianity. As the Wheaton College Philosophy Professor, Arthur Holmes, is fond of saying,

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All truth is God's truth.

And so we find much truth outside of Christianity. When we say that Jesus is the Truth, we are also not interested in imposing our views on others. It is not enough to believe you have the truth. A biblical Christian must share that truth in a fully Christian way. The approach of sharing the truth is not an imposition. It is not by way of power. It is not by way of shoving the truth down other people's throats.

The approach of sharing the truth in a fully biblical way is always one of humility, sacrifice, and service. We want to win our city not by passing laws which force people to believe as we believe or practice as we practice. We want to win our city by serving our city, by sacrificing for our city. It is the desire of Vineyard Columbus to be the best friend that our city has in the entire community. That's why we are all putting up a community center – to love and support our city; to be friends with our city.

Biblical Christians are very suspicious of any kind of approach to law which puts Christianity in a privileged position, a power that promotes our view of God or our form of prayer. We understand, as biblical Christians, that salvation is not forced on people. We respect the image of God in every man, woman and child, so Christians ought to be the most suspicious of imposition.

You know, I've got to say this, but Christians are often accused of imposition of their views when frankly my experience in my 50 years of life has been that many Christians are among the most tolerant people regarding diversity. And many of the folks who are defenders of tolerance are often the most intolerant and bigoted regarding views other than their own. Take classes in the social work college. Take certain English or philosophy classes. You will often find the most intolerant perspectives regarding divergent political views or religious views.

So when we say that Jesus is the truth, we are not saying that there is no truth anywhere else. Plus we are not saying that we want to impose our view on others. And we are not saying that we know for sure what God's judgment is going to be on the lives of those who do not verbally confess Christ as their Lord. The church has always believed that infants and children will ultimately be welcome into the kingdom of God.

The church has always left room for the mental disabled who are unable to confess Christ. When we say that Christ is the truth, we do not know how much apprehension of Christ is the bare minimum to get into the kingdom.

But the Bible is very plain, however, regarding the way to be saved. Repentance and faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. You must turn away from your sins and you must turn to Christ. Exactly what level of apprehension a person must have in order to turn to Christ, we leave that up to the judgment of God.

What we do know is that all religions do not teach the same thing about God and about Christ. We do know that it is not enough to be sincere. “Well, as long as he is sincere, everything is OK.” - NO. Everything is not OK. You can be sincerely wrong. You can be sincerely wrong about matters of spirituality and about salvation as much as you can be sincerely wrong in every other realm. We Christians say that God has spoken finally and sufficiently in the Bible, and most particularly in Jesus of Nazareth, who is God Incarnate. Any presentation of Jesus that does not present him as the final, ultimate, unique truth is teaching another Christ.

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Jesus who is not enough.

In listening for another Jesus, the New Testament warns us about the Jesus who is not enough. Throughout his ministry, the apostle Paul was constantly dealing with the faction that he often referred to as the Judaizers. Like Paul, there were Jews who had accepted Jesus as Messiah, but the Judaizers argued that trust in Christ was not enough to achieve someone’s salvation. They argued that in addition, Gentiles also needed to be circumcised and follow Jewish food regulations and to obey the Jewish Sabbath. So Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians with one message: Trust in Christ is enough. You do not need to add circumcision, food regulations, Sabbath observance. In fact, if you add these things in a vain attempt to be saved, you are actually bringing yourself into spiritual bondage.

And so the apostle Paul says in Galatians 4.8, 9,

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Gal 4:8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

Gal 4:9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? <sup>4</sup> Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Legalism, friends, is always a form of spiritual bondage. If you think your acceptance before God is based on anything other than Christ and his shed blood, you are, according to Galatians 4.8-9 bringing people under demonic domination.

In a different way, there were false teachers coming into the church in Colossae, who also taught that Christ was not sufficient. For this group, Christ was not Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the name above every name. He was on a par with the angels and could not provide protection to the Colossians from demons and principalities and powers. These false teachers insisted that the Colossian believers needed spiritual insight that only came through their mysterious teachings and that they needed to invoke angels for their protection from demons, and that they needed to engage in various ritual observances and fasts.

Paul doesn't mince words regarding the false teachers. Rather he says in Colossians 2.8,

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Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces<sup>1</sup> of this world rather than on Christ

Christ is sufficient. He is enough. You don't need angels to protect you from the demonic realm. You don't need to observe various holidays. You don't need various rituals. Christ is sufficient friends not just for eternal life, but for life right now. And it is here regarding life right now that many people do not believe in the sufficiency of Christ. Week by week, I receive emails from individuals in the congregation. People tell me about getting sued unjustly. Single parents write to me telling me that they are struggling to make ends meet, or they write about the difficulty of raising a rebellious child.

I met a mom recently who had several young children. She is in the last stages of cancer and is deeply concerned what will happen to her children when she passes, particularly since one of her children's dads was an abuser. I talk with so many of you who are separated in your marriages, struggling with an addiction. Over the centuries millions of people have found encouragement and comfort and the strength to go on in the words that God spoke to the apostle Paul. 2 Cor. 12.9

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2Co 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Haven't you discovered in your own life, friend, that Christ is enough? The apostle Paul was no stranger to problems. He had been in prison. He was beaten with whips, and

one time with rods. He was constantly in danger from criminals. He was shipwrecked and opposed by Jews and Gentiles. He was often hungry and thirsty. He was often isolated. The man to whom God spoke the words in 2 Cor. 12.9,

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2Co 12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

Was a man who understood personal pain in his own life. He was no stranger to pain or problems. Friends, are you experiencing personal pain in your life? Is there some problem that goes beyond your resources? Is Christ sufficient for you?

You know, sometimes we can’t know that Jesus is enough until we find ourselves in situations where we have nothing else and no one else other than Christ. We are so afraid of pain. We are so afraid that we are going to face something in our future that will be too much for us – cancer, Alzheimer’s, the loss of a spouse, the loss of our health, the loss of a job, the loss of a child. The reason why we read in the Old Testament about the Israelites journey across the wilderness and God’s provision for the Israelites in the desert is because God wants us to know that when all the props are pulled away in your life, then Jesus is enough. When you find yourself in a position where you don’t have enough money in the bank to buy your way out, you don’t have a spouse or a friend to lean on, when there is no one and nothing to turn to other than Christ, have you found yourself in that situation and then discovered that Jesus is enough?

In my own life, and in the lives of countless Christians, I can honestly say to you that the moments of greatest growth and greatest breakthroughs with God are those times when I discovered the truths of 2 Cor. 12.10,

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2Co 12:10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Or even better,

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For when I am weak, I have discovered that he is strong.

SLIDE

Jesus who is without a body.

When do we hear another Jesus taught? Whenever someone believes that Christ comes into the world without a body. Most contemporary Christians do not appreciate the New Testament emphasis on the church as Christ's body. We go to church when we can, but we get so busy that we don't connect with other believers. We just come in and out of church on Sunday as if church is a place we go to rather than a people we belong to.

There is a wonderful book titled How People Grow by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. They are both Christian therapists. Here is what these two Christian therapists say:

#### SLIDE

"Virtually every emotional and psychological problem from addictions to depression has alienation or isolation at its core, or close to it. Recovery from these problems always involves helping people to get more connected to each other at deeper and healthier levels than they are."

They go on to say hardly anyone in their experience recovers from addiction without connection with a support system. Some stop their addictive or compulsive behaviors, but their relational patterns do not change and most times they relapse if they aren't connected to a group.

Let me ask you some personal questions:

- Friend, do you struggle with depression?
- Are you struggling with any life controlling habits? Things you wish you could stop, but you just don't seem to have the strength to overcome?
- Do you believe in a Christ who has no body? A Christ that you can be joined to without being joined to his people?
- Is the problem in your life of depression or addiction accurately being diagnosed by Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend that you are isolated from the body of Christ?
- Or that you need to learn how to become connected with Christ's body at deeper and healthier levels.
- What issue in your life would not be largely assisted by deeper and healthier connections with other Christians?

Virtually every day I receive an email or a testimony, or a letter from someone who tells me that they have found victory or growth as a result of getting plugged into one of our groups and worked on their stuff in a group setting.

So, friend, you find yourself coming here regularly, but just on Sunday morning. You come in and you go out. Listen to a teaching, but you are not yet a member. Are you worshipping another Jesus? A Jesus without a body? May I encourage you to take the



next step in and get connected to his body by going to our Newcomers' class and becoming a member of the church?

You go to church here, but you are not connected to one of our groups. Are you worshipping another Jesus? You say: Well, I'm just too busy, Rich. I say this with affection: if you are too busy for relationships with other Christians in this church, then your priorities need to change because you are worshipping a Jesus without a body.

You say: I am a single mom with kids. I don't have anyone to watch my kids. We have a single moms group that meets here at the church and we will watch your kids for you.

Get connected to Christ's body.

You say: I'm married with children, but none of the groups seem to provide childcare and my kids need to be in bed. Surely, there must be some solution to this. Wives, connect with a women's group and have your husbands watch the kids every other week. Husbands, connect with a men's group and meet the guys for breakfast or meet the guys on the off weeks when your wives are home. Oh, it is ideal if you can go together, but if you can't, connect with the body.

SLIDE

Jesus who is not just.

And finally, we worship another Jesus when we worship a Jesus who is not just. Whenever a church preaches God's forgiveness but not God's justice, the church implies that Christ does not care about people's sin or their pain. There is an exceptionally powerful book written about seven years ago by Gary Haugen titled The Good News About Injustice. Gary Haugen is a graduate of Harvard. He is a brilliant attorney. While he was working for the United States Department of Justice, he was on loan to the UN and directed the UN's genocide in Rwanda. As part of his work in Rwanda, he needed to investigate a list of mass graves and massacre sites by the UN. So one by one, his team dug up mass graves where in this horrible orgy of violence, the Hutu's hacked to death hundreds of thousands of their Tutsi neighbors.

Gary visited a Catholic Church in the city of Kibuye. The provincial governor and mayor ordered all the Tutsis to the Cathedral ostensibly for their safety. Hundreds of Tutsi men, women, and children, babies and little ones were herded into this Cathedral to try to escape their Hutu neighbors. Then the governor ordered the force from the national police and a force from the extremist Hutu militia to surround the Cathedral. Then working with machetes, metal rods, spears, and wooden clubs with nails, the mob cut the Tutsi men, women, and children down by the hundreds and bludgeoned them to death. In the midst of this horror, Gary Haugen, who is a committed Christian, asked himself this question: Where is the God of justice?

What does it mean to live in a world where people slaughter children inside the walls of a Roman Catholic Cathedral? What does it mean to live in a world where there are millions of child slaves in India who spend their entire childhood working 70-80 hours a week to pay off their parent's \$25 loan that they took out from a loan shark? Where is the God of justice where there are tens of thousands of boys and girls forced into prostitution for the pleasure of American and European men in places like Mexico and the Philippines, Thailand and India?

As Gary Haugen points out over and over again in this book, there is a God of justice, and he wants to use you and me to make a difference in this world. If you look out on the world at any time and you throw up your hands and say: Things are too terrible. Nothing can be done. Then you are worshipping another Jesus, a Jesus who is unjust and a Jesus who will not resource his church enough to make a difference in this world.

But if you, like me, believe in the real Jesus, a Jesus who holds every rapist and child abuser and spouse abuser and loan shark and pimp accountable, if you, like me, believe in the real Jesus, a just Jesus who deploys his church to work justice in the world, then you are accurately discerning the truth.

Friend, in a world full of deceitfulness and masquerades and charades, we need to worship the real Jesus and pray for gifts of discernment. Let's pray.

## So That You Will Not Be Fooled

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Rich Nathan

June 24-25, 2006

Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Corinthians 12.10

I. Have You Ever Been Fooled?

II. Why Do We Need The Gift Of Discernings Of Spirits? (1 Cor. 12.10; 2 Cor. 11.14,15)

III. What Are The Marks Of False Teachers?

A. Warnings (Mt. 24.4,5; Acts 20.29-31; Col. 2.4,8)

B. Four Issues

1. Insatiability (1 Tim. 6.5,10)
2. Immorality (2 Pt. 2.18, 19)
3. Independence (2 Pt. 2.10)
4. Innovation

C. One Great Issue: Another Jesus

1. Jesus Who Is Not The Truth .
2. Jesus Who Is Not Enough.
3. Jesus Who Has No Body.
4. Jesus Who Is Unjust.