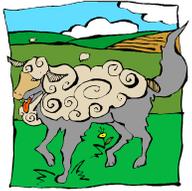


THE COUNSELOR

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WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Sarah met Frank at the church she had been attending for almost three years. Frank seemed like a nice guy, he appeared to be a strong Christian, was good looking, educated, articulate, and open about his feelings. Sarah had a good paying job and was well respected by her church friends. Frank asked her out to lunch one day after church and they had a good time. They hit it off very well. The prospects for getting together again were promising. They went out again for lunch and their relationship began to grow. Frank was charming, he said all the right things, and was a perfect gentleman. Sarah began to trust him more and more as they began dating regularly. They hadn't been dating more than two months before Frank began alluding to marriage in his conversations with Sarah. She was swept off her feet. She liked Frank very much. Sarah really didn't see it coming. She was completely taken in by this wolf in sheep's clothing. Frank began talking about money deals and investments, and how he could really make a fortune with a little seed capital. He tells her that he has a deal cooking that is guaranteed to pay astronomical returns. Frank seems to know what he is talking about; he's been in the realty and investment industry for years. Sarah lends him \$10,000. They continue to date and Frank routinely gives Sarah progress reports on how the investment is about to pay off. He says, "Just give it a little more time." Sarah senses a change in Frank's attitude toward her. Frank doesn't seem so warm, he appears restless, he doesn't return her calls as quickly, and sees Sarah less often. He reassures her saying, "Everything's fine, I am just tired and overworked." That was Friday. Sarah never hears from Frank again. She never recovers her money and feels used and abused, completely devastated.

Frank is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Wolves are out there taking advantage of women every day. They know exactly what they are doing. Their victims are women of all ages, teenage girls, college students, single professional women, single parents, and widows. They don't always take the money and run; sometimes they use women sexually, cheat on them, discard them, and move onto their next victim. Sometimes they use the woman's position and influence to get what they want. These women are usually lonely, hungry for companionship, affection, and want a secure relationship. They are tired of living alone and don't want to remain single the rest of their lives. These men are con artists, shysters, and thieves. There are also women wolves "dressed in sheep's clothing" too, but this article addresses men wolves.

DYNAMICS

It happens over time. A wolf knows he must creep into his prey's life, win her trust, heart, and confidence in him, before attacking. He appears as a lamb, never a wolf. He is very hard to detect, especially for those vulnerable and at risk to his schemes. He looks for women who could fall for him and pursues them if they show any interest. His victims are drawn in by his charm. He gives them what they need to feel loved and respected. He is a master at lying, manipulation, and deceit. He sounds so convincing and appears so warm and likeable that you just can't resist his friendship. He does whatever it takes to get women to fall for him. He dresses well, talks well, and behaves better toward women than most men. He actually is too good to be true and that's what ironically draws women in. They never had such good treatment from a man before, not from their fathers, former husbands, boyfriends, even brothers. That's what intrigues and lures women toward him. He just keeps doing and saying nice things. There is nothing wrong with this guy. As so it seems.....



The wolf progressively gets deeper into his victim's life over a brief time period, some wolves take much longer. They can be very patient. The "Christian" wolf in sheep's clothing cleverly uses Christianity to connect with his victims. He knows enough scripture and faith stories to appear deeply "spiritual." He shares his Christian experiences to convince his victims that he is a Godly man and potential mate. Underneath, he really is immature, lacks integrity, and spiritual depth. The wolf likes his victim's godliness, and openly claims how much he admires her spiritual maturity. He uses anything and anyone to make his character look good. He will get women to feel sorry for his problems and baggage. He will use his family members, siblings, parents, and friends to draw his victim in by lending him credibility. The wolf will even go as far as using his children as pawns to hook his victim. Women will fall in love with his children and want to mother them. They become attached to his children, which was part of his plan from the beginning. Next, the wolf moves a little closer by connecting and attaching to his victim's friends and family. They all like him at first. They comment on his qualities. By this point, some red flags have been presented to the victim which she chooses to ignore because the relationship looks promising. There may be that one friend, or relative that says, "There's something about this guy that just isn't right, I don't know what it is." Listen to this relative. Most victims don't pay much attention to this one person's negative feedback about him, they move forward with the wolf. Once the family is comfortable and familiar with the wolf, he makes his next

move. He solidifies his new support system. And then come the requests. He may want to meet with a specific relative or friend of the victim to present some "opportunity" (hidden scheme/scam). He begins making requests for financial favors, borrowing money, using the car, house, and so forth to set his trap. He may also begin getting a little more physical, definitely moving in the direction of sexual exploitation. He goes from the subtle to the blatant. He does this in such a way that his victim is hooked and unsuspecting



I am not a wolf...
I **AM** not a wolf....
I am **NOT** a wolf...I am not a **WOLF**....

that they are about to be devoured by his selfish actions. The trap is set. He springs it by taking full advantage of his victim's trust. He leaves with the money, sexual gratification, or the position he came for. His victim is stunned and shocked, she feels guilty, ashamed, angry, foolish, and completely betrayed. She is wiped out! The wolf moves on. Everyone and anything is dispensable to get his goal. He goes on lying and deceiving. Some of these guys actually believe they won't get caught. They think they will never be held accountable.

Who's At Risk? Lonely, frustrated, emotionally starved women of various ages are vulnerable. Some women are more susceptible than others.

The ideal profile for women at risk for falling prey to wolves in sheep's clothing includes women who:



Tend to overlook serious flaws in others.



- Have access to money.**
- Are driven and successful.**
- Are Godly women.**
- Are trusting and generous.**
- Have been single for awhile.**
- Crave attention and affection.**
- Are nurturing.**

- Carry a lot of baggage.**
- Are lonely.**
- Are usually attractive.**
- Have low self esteem.**



- Have issues.**
- Are in transition.**
- Are looking for "Mr. Wonderful".**

Women with the above features don't always become victims but women with these tendencies should watch out for wolves in sheep's clothing. The women described above are prime targets for most wolves, but some wolves will settle for less to get them by. They will do anything to inflate their own false sense of worth. They thrive on compliments. They are very self driven. They prey on women of different national and ethnic groups, developmental stages of life, younger women, older women, single, even married

women! The women don't necessarily need to be attractive. Wolves look for vulnerability and weakness in their victims. They look for women with issues, women who miss the wolf's deceptions. They like women who do not challenge them. They look for good Christian women because they know Christian women are looking for the strength of Godly leadership in a man. You can find wolves in sheep's clothing in churches, at religious functions, Bible studies, and Sunday school classes. You will even bump into them at Christian bookstores and concerts. Wolves know where to find you. They always go after personal gain. They are charming and disarming. Women will unknowingly set their relationships with their own children aside to follow these wolves. Sometimes they tragically put their children at risk for pedophiles.

DISCERNMENT

How do you know if a wolf in sheep's clothing is circling around you? What are the red flags that the guy you are talking to right now is a wolf? What are the signs? What do you do when you suspect you are dealing with a wolf? Most men, Christian and non Christian, are not wolves in sheep's clothing. I don't want every woman reading this article to be completely mistrustful of men, but it is very important to be aware of this. A wolf in sheep's clothing can do a lot of damage to you and the Body of Christ as a whole.

Always pray for wisdom and discernment when you find yourself interested in a man. Ask God to reveal quickly hidden motives or agendas that are ungodly. Ask God to help you look into the heart of this man. Observe him. Look for consistencies in his words and actions. Listen closely to the topics and themes of his discussions. Look at him when he is not looking at you. Watch how he interacts with others. Observe his eyes, does he appear genuine and Godly? Does he look at women lustfully? Do you catch him looking at you that way? Does he talk too much about himself, money, or sex? Does he seem insecure and continuously mention his past revenues and accomplishments? Do you see Christ's humility in him? Is he a wounded man, eliciting sympathy from you about his recent divorce or emotional pain from not seeing his children? Is he moving too fast? These are only a few questions you should ask God and yourself. More importantly, when you are secure in your relationship with God, no matter how much you desire a boyfriend or potential mate, you are much less likely to be deceived by a wolf in sheep's clothing. Sometimes the wolf has a lot of money. That's appealing to a woman. Don't let the money deceive you. You can become extremely miserable, broken hearted, and abused, and totally removed from your first love (Christ) with a rich sheep in wolves' clothing. Finances are only one factor in a marriage. You don't want to be unequally yoked to a rich man who eventually abandons you. The wolf has no intention of staying with you. That's not his plan. The same goes for good looks, smooth talking, sensitivity, and all the qualities you think make a good husband. They are empty and dangerous without Christ. The key factor in any Christian relationship should be the presence of Christ! Focus on learning very quickly where this guy stands with the Lord. Does he pray and have quiet time with the Lord? Does he read his Bible? Does he live what he reads. Does he reflect Christ? A strong Christian man cannot hide his love for God, it comes out all over the place. He is stable and loving. He is secure with himself and Christ no matter what his circumstances. Does he tell you that he sees you as a strong spiritual woman and depend on you for prayer or teaching? This is bad because he should be getting his support from other Godly men. Watch him over a long period of time. How does he interact in church? He does not have to tell you he loves the Lord, you should see it. Get to know him. He will reveal his heart toward you about everything over time. Both of you should guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23). Exit the relationship at any slightest hint of lies, trickery, addictions, or immorality. Challenge him if he begins to appear manipulative. Don't be afraid to let go of a relationship that would eventually devastate you. God will bring you the man of your dreams or He will give you the grace to remain single. Don't get attached to his children too soon. Get to know him first. Control the pace of your contact with him. Let God guide you and reveal things each step of the way. Be leary of doing favors before you really know this man. Do *not* lend him money. Do not let him kiss you or hold your hand. Watch out for guys that infiltrate the church and remain on the periphery, scouting out the women. Beware of men that don't have or develop strong relationships with Godly men. These loner types are looking for weak, wounded, newborn "sheep" to prey on. Stay close to your circle of mature discerning Christian friends your age. Don't let the wolf in sheep's clothing separate you from the pack of your friends early on. Keep your eyes on the Lord and trust Him. That which is hidden will come to the light. (1 Cor 4:5).

We have a responsibility as Christians to warn potential victims and help restore them. We also should alert Church leadership of wolves in sheep's clothing. The Church has a responsibility to protect it's flock by intervening on behalf of the victim. The Apostle Paul spoke loudly and clearly on this and similar issues. He warned widows to watch out for wolves and called the Church to take care of these women. (Acts 20:27-31, 1 Timothy 5:3-16, James 1:27)

HEALING

God wants to heal you, and it will take work and time. You *will* love again The aftermath is very painful. It's a lot like grieving. Women feel very used, abused, and abandoned when they discover their man was really a wolf in sheep's clothing. They go through all kinds of emotions like anger, hurt, confusion, depression, and sadness. Many become extremely angry at themselves for being taken. "Why didn't I see this coming?" "I feel like such a fool." You lament over lost money, time, and compromises you should have never made. It's hard enough to let God take you through forgiving the wolf, eventually, but it's usually harder to forgive yourself. I recommend the following steps to healing and recovery for those deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing. You *can* and *will* be healed.

- First, run to God and pray for His help. Seek out those Christian sisters and brothers you trust for support. Don't isolate yourself.

- Secondly, accept the reality of what has happened, despite your shock and disbelief. Don't look for ways to fix it. Don't try to pursue the wolf to get even, make it right, or restore the relationship. I am not suggesting that you do nothing if you lost a great deal of money. Seek wise Godly counsel about this. Try to recover your money. Don't take matters into your own hands. Vengeance is the Lord's (Romans 12:19; Deut 32:35).
- Thirdly, realize that it will take work and time on your part to heal. Be patient with yourself. You will have many bad days before it's gets better. You will hurt for quite some time. This is not only like a divorce but a very traumatic one, especially if you have become very involved with this man, his children, and family.
- In the fourth place, focus on your own spiritual renewal. You thought your spiritual life was good but your relationship with the Lord has suffered. Return to your First Love. You may not feel like reading your Bible or talking to God, but you will have to move toward Him. Read the Psalms. Cry out to God. Ask for His forgiveness as well. Return to Him. He will make you stronger in the process and you will mentor someone in the future who is being or has been deceived by a wolf in sheep's clothing.
- In the fifth place, monitor your healing over time. Notice how you move in and out of different moods, but always forward, stronger and closer to God. Seek pastoral or Christian professional help if you still have serious problems recovering. Allow yourself a little time, at least three or four months. Get help if you are depressed or just cannot let go, and are completely consumed with this every day. Do not rush into another relationship to facilitate healing. Heal first before even considering going out with another guy. You may still be too vulnerable and emotionally unavailable for a serious relationship.

You know you are on your way when you hardly ever think about the wolf anymore. The memory is there but the pain has faded. You have moved on from victim to victorious in Christ. God will make you better [not bitter] than you were before. Let Him. ✚



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