

# THE COUNSELOR

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## CULTS ...

### False Prophets: Mixing Truth and Error

#### Part 2 of 3 Havoc, Trauma, and Grief!

Jesus warned us about the false prophets that would come, "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." (Mat 24:11) Many of these self proclaimed "prophets" exist today, luring their victims in with their elaborate "prophetic" Bible interpretations about the end times. They prophesy doom and gloom, twisting the scriptures to line up with their own selfish, evil motives. Jesus also warned us as He described them, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Mat 7:15) These "prophets" use gifts they may have originally been given by God, such as prophetic visions and dreams to discern the current and future state of mankind. Unsuspecting seekers sense that these "prophets" have a deep spiritual understanding and are drawn to them. Victims are not aware of the real spiritual condition of these false prophets. They don't know that these "prophets" are driven by demons! Over the course of time, seekers become victims and before they know it, they are brainwashed and sucked into a dangerous cult.

This article examines a particular type of cult leader (the false prophet); lists the warning signs that your child may be in a cult; outlines how to approach your child; and explores the havoc, trauma, and grief caused to the family when their child joins a cult. **Cults: Part 3** will address the prodigal's return and restoration.

The issue of cults and false prophets is a serious spiritual problem today that requires powerful spiritual solutions. No approach in dealing with cults, false prophets, and cult leaders can succeed without Christ! These problems and issues must be handled by strong spiritual measures involving the Holy Spirit, or failure is imminent. Spiritual discernment and warfare is necessary to confront these adversaries and bring healing for the victims and their families. Mere human methods are powerless and doomed to failure when one tries to fight the demonic entities behind these cults. Human efforts can be used by God, but complete, final solutions involve His methods. God prevails over these evil forces when we abide in Him, and let Him fight our battles and rescue our loved ones from the deception and demonic grip of these cults.



#### The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:6) We are constantly bombarded with false religions, false teachings, false preachers, and false prophets today. We must remain on guard for the slightest bit of deception from false teachers and false religions. They can sneak in subtly and lure strong Christians away from the Truth. (Acts

13:6-12) "Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul,



who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord."

False teachers distort the Truth, and promote lies. They use motivational hype that caters more to the flesh (self) than the spirit, heart, and soul of God's people. These smooth talking popular charismatic preachers are like "rock stars" of the religious world. They are as dangerous as the cults who lead people away from God and draw attention to their leaders instead. Many of the false prophets out there today are cult leaders.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many **false prophets** have gone out into the world. (1John 4:1) We must test the spirits!

## False Prophets

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." (Matt. 24:24). We see God's assessment, attitude and judgment of a rebellious nation along with their false prophets in Jeremiah 5:20-31, "Do you not fear Me?" says the LORD. Will you not tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a defiant and

rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Your iniquities have turned these *things* away, and your sins have withheld good from you. For among My people are found wicked *men*; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so their houses *are* full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich. They have grown fat, they are sleek; yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless; yet they prosper, and the right of the needy they do not defend. Shall I not punish *them* for these *things*?" says the LORD. Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?" "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their *own* power; and My people love *to have it* so. But what will you do in the end?" "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matt 7:21-23)

The Apostle Paul describes the false apostles as agents of satan. "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." (2 Corn. 11:13-14). Paul goes on to say, "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. Apologist and pastor John McArthur points out that the same notion of satanic agents infiltrating God's people occurs in Deuteronomy.<sup>1</sup> McArthur states "The servants of Satan who propagate sin and propagate error come as servants of Satan, they always come as servants of God. They are the most dangerous, religious teachers who name the name of the true God and name the true Christ who pervert the truth, who are satanic emissaries espousing demon doctrine."<sup>2</sup> False prophets are in the same group as false apostles. They are false apostles! They appear Godly and holy but they are really out to destroy God's plan. Of course they

won't but they can wreak considerable havoc, deceiving and taking many down with them. Peter also talks about false prophets, past, present and future, and how many will follow them in their destructive ways blaspheming the truth. (2 Peter 2:1-2).

He goes on to describe their coming destruction. "By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (2 Peter 2:3). The false prophet doesn't reveal his apostasy and heresy outright, no they are smooth in deceiving people, very subtle. McArthur admits that they come as a variety of people and lead victims astray. "...and while the Spirit of God woos men to the narrow gate the false prophets shove them on to the broad way that lead to hell. They come in all levels of sophistication, they come in all kinds of education, in all kinds of garb and dress with all kinds of ecclesiastical trappings but they are all the same."<sup>13</sup>

We must constantly be on guard and aware of false prophets, they can infiltrate among the elect any time and any place. Look at their fruits. **"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." (Matt. 7:17)** Do they have the fruits of the spirit? "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gal. 5:22-23) Do they display the love of God in Christ Jesus? How do they react when confronted with the truth? Do you experience a consistent love of God from them in the way they talk and act? It doesn't take long for them to reveal themselves. They cannot maintain that God like facade forever. **"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." (Matt. 7:18)** They will slip up. You will see the pride, the defensiveness, exclusiveness, anger, and vindictiveness. You will notice the absence of God's love in the false prophet. You will see good fruit if he or she abides in Christ. (John 15:14). Their words and actions will reveal their hearts. Watch their conduct and character.

Nevertheless, it can be hard sometimes to discern the false prophet because they don't look bad on the outside. They can be real good at covering up the wickedness within. They say and do the right things and appear holy. "But if you look closely, I mean if you do some examination of some of the false prophets you're going to find out there's a lot

of skeletons in their moral closet. There's a lot of wretchedness going on, there's a lot of evil greed or there's a lot of money problems, there is a string of women somewhere etc, etc."<sup>14</sup> McArthur warns, "Now listen to me, you check them out people, check them out, not only for your sake but for the sake of the dear people who are trapped in their evil systems, you check them out. Unless their motive is genuine desire to glorify God, unless their motive is holiness, unless their motive is to overcome the offensiveness of sin, unless their motive is to magnify Christ, unless their motive is humility and selflessness then all of their goodness is filthy rags, the menstrual cloths of which Isaiah speaks. In one who appears washed on the outside, the test is the inside."<sup>15</sup> Finally, McArthur states, "And you know what to look for in a false prophet? Very simple, look for a Beatitude attitude, that's the evidence of an internal transformation. Do they cower poor in spirit, deep humility, mourning over sin, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, longing for mercy, peacemakers, willing to be persecuted and reviled and despised and hated for the sake of Christ. Not on your life. False prophets are guided by pride, power, prestige, personality, promotion, they want to be famous, loved, they're not interested in anybody persecuting them, they want to be popular. They're in it, (Second Peter 2:3), "for filthy lucre."<sup>16</sup>

## Warning Signs

Your child may be involved in a religious cult and/or be very deceived by a false prophet if they show many of the signs listed below:

- **Increasing isolation and withdrawal from family unit.**
- **Excessive time spent on the internet, late into the night.**
- **Decreasing spontaneity, a loss of sense of humor.**
- **Emotionally flat.**
- **Increased irritability and angry outbursts.**
- **Loss of interests in activities that they previously enjoyed, hobbies, etc.**
- **Obsessed with End Times Prophecies and Conspiracy Theories.**

- **Strong allegiance to a new group. Acting like it is his new family.**
- **Increasing dependency on the group leader for solving his problems.**
- **Sending money to this group.**
- **Dogmatic and argumentative about Bible doctrine and his new position.**
- **Tries to convert family members related to his position on the Bible.**
- **Warns family of condemnation and severe consequences of not adhering.**
- **Increasingly more prideful and arrogant about religious matters.**
- **All who do not believe him and this new doctrine are doomed to hell.**
- **The fruits of this new ministry are unbiblical, i.e. hatred, confusion, division. Praying curses on people.**
- **Defends the "prophet" and group despite evidence of their failed prophecies.**
- **Defiant and judgmental behavior toward authority and family members.**
- **Distorting the scriptures-adding to or taking away.**
- **Does not associate with people apart from his specific group or doctrine.**
- **Alleges group leader given prophetic words from God.**
- **You cannot question group leader's prophecies because "they are from God."**
- **Questioning prophecies or calling leader a false prophet considered blasphemy.**
- **He considers the 144,000 elect of their particular group.**
- **Drops educational/vocational goals and activities.**
- **Failing grades.**
- **Breaks ties and contact with family and friends.**

- **Stops going to family functions, like holiday and birthday celebrations.**
- **Personal appearance changes. Loss of weight. Inflexible, rigid reasoning. Very difficult to get through to him or her.**
- **Planning to or has moved out of the house.**

## You Suspect Your Child is in a Cult

It can be very difficult to cope with the reality that your child is in a cult. Parents struggle with all kinds of feelings including, anger, sadness, guilt, disappointment, and depression. You wondered where you failed as a parent. Dealing with the feelings is hard enough but approaching your child



and getting the expected result you want can be excruciating. Once you suspect your child is in cult you must act, but be very careful in your approach. Most parents fall

into the trap of confronting their child immediately, once they believe they are involved in a cult. Some parents will have more time than others to talk to their children about their cult association. It is important to approach them in a very calm, caring, concerned, loving manner whether you're teenage or young adult child has been involved in the cult a long time or not. You will probably meet more stiff resistance if they have been in the cult over a longer time period. Don't engage them in endless confrontational debates even though you are right and they are way off track. Do whatever you can to preserve your relationship with them while calmly and firmly holding your ground Biblically. Keep communication up. Make your points and then back off. Invite them to elaborate on their position in a respectful manner. You may have to set boundaries on the conversations and interactions with them if they become too confrontational and disrespectful. Love them through this no matter how angry they make you feel with their stubbornness and rebellion. Respond in a loving way. Don't get drawn into heated arguments.

Remember, this is a spiritual problem. There is more going on than you can see. It's true that your child chose to follow a cult and became brainwashed by them, but, your child's continued

cult involvement, strange, erratic, volatile behavior is caused by and maintained by the demonic world of demons, wrought with lies, confusion, and evil intentions. It is powered and maintained by evil forces and cannot be overthrown by human methods. Pray without ceasing for God's direction on how to approach your particular child at every step of the way. Let Christ guide, protect you and your child, and fight these principalities. He is the only One Who can demolish these strongholds. You and others must pray intercessory prayers, but only Christ overthrows His enemies. He wins these wars! Your job is to yield and cooperate with Him. Trust Him. You are not powerless in Christ! Pray also for Him to raise up and reveal His army of prayer warriors to come along side you in dealing with your child's involvement in this cult. Don't panic. God is on the throne! Your child is never too far gone for God to rescue and restore him. Your child is in danger, no doubt, and his or her road may be a long one of many hardships and tremendous grief, as he comes to the end of himself and his pride. He must be brought low, broken, in order for true healing and restoration to occur. Stay in touch with those "saints" who have gone through this before, either first hand or as a ministry to help you now. Stay close to Christ. Let Him comfort you as you approach your child and intercede for him. Expect opposition. You are not fighting your child but the demons inside him/her. Those terrible changes in him are not just from brainwashing, they are the horrible manifestation of the demons inside him. They can and will come out as things proceed according to God's Plan. He will bring your child back. Don't give up. You may lose your child for a season, but don't let go of God as you do your part and trust Him to do His with your wayward child.

Love them. Don't be given over to fear yourself about this. Trust God. Perfect love casts out fear.

(1 John 4:18) Draw from Him. Stay focused. Don't react in negative ways. Don't try to fight fire with fire. Don't think you can snap your child out of this through reason, intellect, psychological approaches including deprogramming, or clever human tactics at this point. If your young adult child is not willing or amenable, nothing will work right now. He has to be broken, come to the end of himself in his own time



(God's time). It is a process and this could be painful to watch or wait for on our part. You cannot help them unless they are ready. Force does not work, it only escalates the situation.

Also consider doing the following as recommended by The Cult Hotline and Clinic.<sup>18</sup>

1. Don't criticize the group or your child. Nothing is private in these groups. Your communication and relationship can be cut off if you are perceived as critical or an enemy.
2. It is important that you take great care in trying to communicate with your child. Do this in a non-judgmental way. Don't just say, "you are in a cult," or "how could you believe this stuff?". Appeal to them to help you understand what they are a part of and what they feel they are getting from it.
3. Don't give original documents to any party (unless required by law.) Provide copies only.
4. Be careful not to be persuaded by "professionals" to spend large amounts of money for "treatments" or legal action, until you have verified their credentials and qualifications for handling your problem.
5. Don't feel guilty or alone. This is a common problem nationally and internationally. It affects families of all religious, economic and family backgrounds.
6. Reach out to others in your situation. Find a group that meets regularly.
7. Consider family or individual counseling to discuss the effect this has had on all of you, and to formulate a plan to help the cult member feel comfortable communicating with you, or even to help your loved one leave their group.
8. Research the group. Find out about its history, leader, and teachings. Is it abusive, or dangerous? Explore cults in general; how they operate and what sets them apart from healthy organizations. Learn about post-cult issues, like anger, sadness, confusion, fear, shame, and problems with trust, so you'll be sensitive to your loved one's experience after leaving the cult.

Most cult experts advise against kidnapping your child away from the cult unless you truly believe

that they are in imminent danger. Seek like-minded Christian believers who can come along side you and pray for and with you in this time of hardship. Don't give up. Persist in your prayers and trust God. God is much bigger than any cult group. Your child is in His Hands, and He loves them more than you do! Remember that no amount of brainwashing can permanently erase your Godly loving influences on your child. The road back from a cult can be extremely painful and long but they can come back. In fact most victims come out of the cult on their own. Do all you can and let God do His part. You eventually will have to let go and give your child to God.

## Havoc, Trauma, and Grief

The havoc, trauma, and grief caused to a family by their child's involvement in a cult can be devastating. The loss is like a death. The dreams and expectations you had for your child are lost. Every family deals with this in their own way but there are reactions that are frequently observed. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) ([www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)) describes the impact this loss usually has on families.



Unresolved grief can take a toll on family members. It can lead to a decline in wellness. The drain on the emotions can sap the energy and upset the body's balance and possibly compromise the immune system. The grieving process usually involves an array of thoughts and emotions revolving around the child lost to the cult. Parents, siblings and other family members review their relationship with the missing child. The feelings can be intense and extreme (especially for parents) and a long term process. The grieving process usually consists of denial, anger, depression and gradual recovery. Parents of children involved in cults are similar to those parents of missing children. They both go through these stages many times. Parents go through a range of feelings and often spend a lot of time recalling interactions and conversations with their child about the cult involvement.

**Denial** – My son would never get in a cult, he is too smart.

**Anger** – This group needs to be exposed. They can't get away with this!

**Isolation** – No one outside my family understands. I feel so alone.

**Depression** – I just can't get moving. Some days I can't get out of bed.

**Grief** – I lost a part of me when he left.

**Guilt** – I feel like a failure as a parent. I should have prevented this.

**Helplessness** – I feel like there is nothing I can do. Time is flying by.

**Fear** – I am afraid of what they are doing to him. They won't let him leave.

**Shame** – People think I am a terrible parent for letting my son get in a cult.

**Hurt** – This really hurts. We were so close.

"Blessed are those who mourn. For they shall be comforted." (Matt. 5:4) God knows about your sorrow and grief during this time. You mourn the loss of your son or daughter to this cult. Your feelings are real, allow them to flow, but please remember that God can turn your tears to "songs of joy" when He returns and restores your lost child. Some parents may lose their children in this life to a cult, and that is horrible and catastrophic. Most children come to their senses and make that long journey back from all the evils and brainwashing that they experienced. You must hold onto the hope that our Sovereign Lord knows and can bring you and your children through this. You must also understand that everything is used according to His Perfect Plan and Purpose. This will be used for His Glory. That may not offer you much consolation in your grief today, but it does not change the nature of God and His love for you and His people. Let Him walk you and heal you through this process. God knows all about your pain and sorrow over this. Let Him minister to you. Let Him bind up your wounds and carry you through this extremely difficult process. He loves you and wants you to completely depend on Him every step of the way. He knows how this is going to turn out. Trust Him with the outcome. He hears your prayers. He will not abandon you, nor your child as you cry out in your grief for God's mercy, protection, and restoration of your wayward child.

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