

# Want to Know How to Escape Evil False Prophets?

## 7 Best Secrets to Avoid False Prophets Now

How many quail did God send to the Israelites when they complained in the wilderness for more meat? Would you believe a circle with a 20-mile diameter and 3' deep? Yup.

How does their failure, and it was a failure on Israel's part, relate to false prophets in the church? Take 10 minutes and read the evidence for the abundance of quail and its sad result in the lives of the Israelites. It does bear on false prophets in the church and your response to them.

*“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (1)*

*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” (2)*

We have examined the ways to discern false prophets by reviewing Scripture's description of their characteristics. We learned how to identify them, not only by the ways they behave, but also by the errors they teach, and the truths they fail to teach. This final study examines how the Scriptures instruct us to respond to false prophets and teachers.

In these passages, Jude told his friends how followers of Christ should respond to false leaders. These believers became aware of ungodly men who had crept in among them, teaching false doctrines, and leading many astray. Jude felt compelled by the Spirit of God to say, “Stop! We must identify these misleading teachers and properly respond to them.”

The warning he gave to his friends in that first century fits our day, because we also face false prophets. They preach their false messages on television, on radio, and in their books, which assert faulty doctrines and false hopes.

We need Jude's warnings and direction on how to react to them. Believers must recognize them for their own security and well-being as followers of Christ. They must separate from false leaders who would lead them astray from the truth. These teachers mock the name of Christ and declare a false image of God and His truth.

Now that we have some discernment from Scripture regarding false prophets, where do we go from here? Jude outlined in the letter to his friends two steps for followers of Christ to take in response to ungodly leaders.

### **Contend for the Faith**

#### ▪ **Definition of “Contend”**

What did he mean when he told them to “contend?” That word comes from the sport of gymnastics, an active event in Jude's day. It describes the contest among competitors who strive for a prize. Each of them wants to

win the victory wreath and wear the crown. They contend with all their concentration and energy. Jude exhorted his friends to contend for the faith in this manner.

Contending for the faith includes overcoming faulty notions. We must have a knowledge and understanding of the truth to identify error. It calls for examination of those whom we follow to discern between the false and the true. (3) We do not follow them just because they come professing the name of Jesus. We must examine them and test them to see if they teach and obey the truth.

Jude urged the Church to fight and struggle with all their strength against false leaders. He cried to them to ward off the adversary with fervency and zeal. That flies in the face of much of what the professing Church proposes today.

## ▪ **Fallacies Against Contending For The Faith**

### **Fallacy #1**

At this point, fallacies arise that prevent many from resisting error. Many call it unChristian to fight for the truth.

Yet, Jesus gave us a clear example when He fought against the scribes and Pharisees of His day. He spoke against their false teachings with strong derision. (4) Jesus always pointed out error as He spoke the truth.

Many in our day fear what people will think, when they stand for the truth. They suspect they will be chastised for causing division and splits in the Church and will be seen unfavorably by their friends.

We spend a lot of time contemplating what other people will think of us. We use it as an excuse for inactivity and failure to obey God. We sacrifice the truth for the sake of false unity to avoid hurt feelings. That is compromise.

### **Fallacy #2**

Another fallacy rests upon a wrong interpretation of “judging.” Many misinterpret Jesus’ statement,

*“Judge not lest you be judged”* (5)

as meaning that Christians should not judge anyone at all.

In fact, if you read the rest of the chapter, you will notice that Jesus did not tell His audience not to judge. He instructed them on *how* to judge. He warned that they would suffer judgment in the same fashion that they judged others.

Therefore, judge with care. Make discerning, careful judgments based upon Scripture and the truth. We dare not let error grow because of a misunderstanding about judging.

### **Fallacy #3**

Others deflect the counsel of Jude by thinking that it does not matter, or is unimportant. The spiritual welfare of the Church matters. It reflects on the glorious name of Christ and His honor.

If it does not matter, why did Jesus pray the Father to send the Spirit of Truth to believers? Why, did He call Him the spirit of Truth? He prayed the Father to send the Holy Spirit for this very reason: the truth matters. Believers need the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth.

Many believers think that the teachings of false prophets and teachers do not affect them. Untrustworthy doctrine does influence how we live. It causes doubt and unbelief, which are enemies to faith in Christ. It

generates questions about God and His character. These weaken individuals and the Church.

#### **Fallacy #4**

The last fallacy is the toughest one of all, because it sounds so spiritual. This error causes many to say, “I’ll stay here, and I will stand for the truth. Even though the leadership of the Church possesses the characteristics of false prophets, I will stay here and try to fix it.”

Seldom does anyone stay and fix error in the Church. Paul warned the Corinthian believers,

*“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” (6)*

When Paul spoke of evil communications, he described companionships, friendships, and relationships. He reminded his friends of the dire consequences of evil associations that corrupt their good habits, character, and moralities. Sin never improves upward.

With sorrow, I tell you that you seldom does anyone fix error in the Church. Scripture confirms this conclusion. Jesus, for example, never stayed where the people did not want Him.

In fact, when He sent out His disciples on a mission and gave them power over all kinds of evil things, He told them what to do if the people rejected their message. He said, “If you go into a city or into a house and they reject you, leave. Shake the dust off your feet. Go to the next town.” (7)

One of the hardest things for people to do is to leave a church. You have friends there. You have happy memories associated with that church. You may know the pastor and his family very well, and you care about them. You have a level of comfort in this fellowship.

However, if the pastor and the church’s leadership exhibit the features of false prophets, you face a difficult decision. If you determine that they do not proclaim the truth nor follow scriptural directions, you must not stay there. Paul warned his friends,

*“Come out from among them and be ye separate.” (8)*

What God calls you to do is not easy, but it is the right thing to do. Jesus did not tell us it would be easy to be His disciple. In fact, He called it a cross. He said, “If you want to be my disciple, take up your cross and follow me.” That is what God calls us to do.

A dear friend of mine put it in a memorable statement. He said, “If you run with a skunk, you will smell like one.” Unfortunately, you will not fix the erring Church.

My friends, this is no time for games. We are to stand for the truth. Jude wrote his friends to urge you, because of the false men that have come in amongst you to contend for the faith.

The Bible records Paul’s confrontation with Peter, when Peter behaved incorrectly in the church. To Peter’s credit, He heeded Paul’s admonition. (9)

Again, Paul warned his beloved Timothy of false prophets and told him not to follow or listen to them. (10) Once we identify the false prophets and teachers, we must reject them. In both the Old and New Testament, the Scriptures give us that directive. God’s word commands us to avoid and withdraw from them. It warns us not to listen to them or their teachings, even if they perform miracles that appear from God. (11)

Contending for the truth requires that we seek God and find leaders who seek God. As when Samuel went to look for the man after God’s heart, we must avoid looking at the personality and appearance of someone.

Depend upon the Holy Spirit to help you see the heart. The heart expresses itself in outward behavior. A Godly man or woman will exhibit Godly character.

### **Conform to the Truth**

#### ▪ **Counsel #1**

In verse 20 of his short letter Jude said,

*“But ye, beloved, build up yourselves on your holy faith. Pray in the Holy Ghost. Keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (12)*

Experience God yourself and confirm it. Know that it is true and then conform your life to it. Live after that truth. Conform your life to the truth.

The advice of Jude parallels Paul’s advice to Timothy. Paul told him,

*“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (13)*

#### ▪ **Counsel #2**

Conduct Yourselves with Compassion.

*“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” (14)*

Jude spoke to the believers, “Have some compassion. In your withdrawal and deliverance from doubters, have some compassion. Deliver some so as by fire, dragging them out. Do not stay there with them, but drag them out.”

Jude desired compassionate confrontation, not contentious confrontation. He wanted his friends to stand for the truth, but to speak the truth in love.

Chapters two and three of Revelation contain seven letters dictated to John by the Lord Jesus, which John delivered to the appropriate churches during his lifetime. If you read those two chapters, you will discover that error, sin, faithlessness, and demonic worship consumed six out of seven. These Churches followed false gods, even permitting false teachers to teach.

You will find that in every instance Jesus rebuked them. He does not smile at unbelief, which deeply offends Him. Through John, the Lord Jesus rebuked these churches for their sin. He chastised them and called them to repentance.

He instructed the members of the churches to turn aside from the false teachers and follow Me. God rebukes unbelief every time at every turn, among those whom He loves. Yet, in our turning from false prophets to pursue Godly leaders, we must do so with compassion.

### **Summary**

I pray that by now you perceive the severity of the problem. This is not merely a difference of opinion. This is a pervasive, severe problem. The professing Church today contains false prophets, pastors, teachers, and leaders who lead it into dangerous confusion and unbelief.

I trust that you see the attitude of God toward it in Jude's and Paul's comments. God is deeply displeased. He is righteous, and He will withhold His favor from a church that is casual about truth. There will be no blessing, and He will judge.

Scripture is consistent in its teaching that God does not tolerate sin. Repeatedly He judged His people when they turned away from Him and embraced sin. Beginning with His dealing with the Children of Israel described in the Old Testament, His believers depicted in the New Testament, and in the Church throughout history, God's judgment is sure.

One of the first and most severe judgments is His withdrawal. Because it happens subtly, we often do not realize it. Gradually, we begin to replace the actual presence of God with man-made enthusiasm. We may clap and sing, "Praise God!" but He withholds His blessing.

God never blesses that which is false. He may permit it. But, that is not His blessing. Read the vivid example in the Old Testament where the Children of Israel cried, "God, give us meat. You have given us this manna, and You have given us water, but can You provide meat?" God said, "How much meat do you want?" So, he sent them quail.

Do you have any notion how much quail God sent to those Children of Israel? The quail that God sent covered a circle 32-40 miles across, 3 feet deep. My friends, that is a lot of quail! (15) They were so thrilled that thousands of them literally gorged themselves to death eating that quail. We read the writer of Psalms harking back to that instance who wrote,

*"He gave them their request..."*

But, here is the part I want to impress upon you:

*"But he sent leanness to their souls." (16)*

You call that a blessing? That is a judgment. The greatest judgment they suffered was not death by gorging themselves on the quail. They experienced leanness of their souls because God was not there.

### **Therefore...**

The same condition describes the Church today. We cannot address the issues of false prophets and teachers that I have expressed in these studies on our own. We need the Holy Spirit.

We need the Spirit of God first to teach us the truth so that we know the truth, and we need Him to give us discernment so that we can distinguish between the false and the true. Sometimes the line is close and hard to discern.

How will we do that? The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, will guide us into the truth. Remember. Jesus said,

*"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (17)*

The Church needs a revival. I do not mean an artificially generated experience, where the preacher jumps around and people fall on the floor as if swayed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. That cheap imitation does not come from God.

I am talking about a revival where the Spirit of God moves and convicts of sin so profoundly that men fall on

their faces before a holy God and cry out to Him for mercy. We must see our true condition before God. We cry out to Him for mercy, because He demands holy lives from His children.

We need a revival that proclaims the truth that calls upon men and women to repent and turn from their sin, and to believe and trust Jesus

Will you respond? I pray that the Spirit of God will open your eyes to see the truth and to cause you to trust Him and to conform your life to the truth in faith.

*Dear heavenly Father, You did not say it would be easy to follow You. However, You did tell us that You would never leave us or forsake us. You would be with us, You would help us, and You would give us strength. When we encounter difficulty, frustration, temptation, and trial, You promised You would help us. You promised You would comfort us, encourage us, and enable us by Your Holy Spirit to do that which You call us to do.*

*Father, I pray for my friends that in Your grace and mercy that You will send forth Your Holy Spirit to them to open their eyes to see the truth and to bring them to faith and trust in You.*

*Bring about in them the spiritual revival that they need and that I need so we might be true followers of Christ, children of God who are different, who conform to the truth of Your Word, that Your name, Father, and the name of Jesus Your Son, would be honored, glorified, worshipped, adored, and feared. We will give You honor, glory and praise, triune God for what You accomplish. Amen.*

### References

1. Jude 3-4.
2. Jude 20-23.
3. 1 John 4.1-3.
4. Read Matthew 23, for example.
5. Matthew 7.1.
6. 1 Corinthians 15.33.
7. Matthew 10.1-15.
8. 2 Corinthians 6.17.
9. See Galatians 2.11-16.
10. See 2 Timothy 2.16-18.
11. See Deuteronomy 13.1-4, Jeremiah 23.14-22, 1 Timothy 6.1-5, and 2 Timothy 3.1-5.
12. Jude 20-21.
13. 1 Timothy 4:13-15.
14. Jude 22.
15. Numbers 11.31-35.
16. Psalm 106.15.
17. John 14:16-17.

### Questions For Study

1. How do you, as an individual, contend against faulty notions, grown deep within you from early childhood? How do you recognize errors in thinking that you have observed for many years?
2. Do you think of “contending for the faith” as an unChristian indulgence? How do you discern between a critical attitude and an effort to maintain truth? How far are you willing sacrifice for the sake of truth?
3. What did Jesus say about judgment? How is done correctly? What procedures can you incorporate to safeguard yourself against inaccurate judgement?
4. How much does false teaching matter to you? List the issues that you consider to be very important. List issues that you consider to be of lesser importance. Asks the Lord to give you further wisdom about whether your priorities are in synch with God’s Word.
5. In what ways can false teachings hurt the church? In what ways, can they hurt you and your family?

6. How do you decide whether you should leave a church that promotes false teaching? Have you ever done that? Have you considered at any time that you should do that? Even though it is very painful to leave a church for many reasons, how bad must it be before you would do it? Can you trust the leading of Jesus Christ in matters like this?
7. Have you conformed your life to truth?
8. In what ways can you demonstrate compassion when you realize that a brother or a church is following false teaching?
9. Do you discern between blessing and “leanness” in your church, Bible Study, Sunday School Class, Christian seminar or retreat, Christian books, Christian radio and television broadcasts? If you discern leanness, what will you do?
10. Will you join the host of believers in Jesus Christ who are praying for revival?