

Advice about False Prophets

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1 Thess.5:19-20

Spiritually our culture is awash in a tsunami of empty information, ignorant speculation, and meaningless conversation. There have always been false prophets (Deut.18:20-22; Jer.23:23-32, Matt. 24:24-26; 1Jn.4:1-6; etc.) But never before has there been such universal access to them. Anybody can “self-publish” on the internet now, which means anybody can appear to be credible. The Flat Earth Society is growing, thanks to social media!! False prophets and heretical theology flourish in cyberspace.

I. Some things to do...

- A. Be a part of a healthy local church that is Christ-Centered, prayerful, historically grounded, and provides regular biblical exposition and application.
 1. Acts 2:42. True New Testament teaching, prayer, koinonia, and the Lord’s table.
 2. Matt.28:18-20. Stay on mission.
- B. Steep your own mind in the words of Christ through his original apostles (the NT) (Jn.15:1-8; 2 Cor.10:4-6; 2 Pet.1:16-21)
 1. Thinking shaped by the Spirit through the Word becomes more trustworthy with time and practice. Like all art and skill.
- C. Pray for spiritual discernment constantly. Eph.1:15-23
 1. Keep your guard up at all times. Be careful what you listen to.
- D. Develop spiritual friendships with balanced and mature believers that you trust morally and theologically. Acts 2:42; 2 Tim.2:2.
 1. The Spirit works among us, not just within us.
 2. Our faith and knowledge of the Lord is personal, but not private.
- E. Put all “prophecy” to the New Testament test. 1 Thess.5:19-22
 1. The presence of the Spirit in all believers gives the freedom and responsibility to test all prophecies.
 2. The accuracy test: did it happen? The biblical test: is the doctrine taught by the original apostles?
 - a) Cults teach doctrines they say are biblical, but that have been wrenched from their contexts and misapplied.

II. Some things to NOT do...

- A. Do not over-value others’ extrabiblical intuitions (or your own for that matter).
 1. Intuition alone, (without cognition and volition shaped by the Word) is not a good guide.
 2. Our feelings are easily influenced by many unspiritual things.
- B. Do not abdicate your responsibility to think biblically. 1 Thess.5:19-20
 1. We must evaluate any “message” we hear. Acts 17:10-11.
 2. Do not be coerced into obeying “prophets” or “apostles” who emphasize their own authority and refuse to let you evaluate their messages.
- C. Do not believe “prophets” that you do not personally know to be biblically credible.
 1. All the spiritual ministry described in the NT happened among people who knew each other and evaluated each other’s ideas. (1 Cor.14:29)
 2. Do not put much weight on prophets on the internet or TV.
- D. Do not follow “prophets” or “apostles” who do not teach the same things as the original Apostles or who usurp their authority. Acts 2:42; 2 Cor.10-12
 1. Do not receive “divine doctrines” based on their own visions and dreams instead of on the biblical witness.
 2. The Corinthians were notoriously gullible and followed these “super apostles” instead of Paul because they were easily impressed with the glitz and glamor of spirituality.
 3. The true message from God today is the gospel itself—who Jesus is and what he has done. Heb.1:1-4.
 4. False messages often emphasize the *power of the believer over the authority of Christ and his original apostles*. The “good news” then appears to be about *us* rather than about the Lord and his work. There is a fine line between faithful, effective witness and presumptuous, triumphalist arrogance.