

# How to Discern False Teaching

1. **Value the Church** - embrace the gift of a wise, loving, diverse community and caring, humble, prayerful leaders
2. **Know the Word** - When determining if a resource (Christian book, Bible study, sermon, article, song, etc) is trustworthy and Biblically sound, we must first know the Bible! We cannot trust what we do not know. To discern truth; we must know the truth. We must also be careful not to approach these questions with only our emotions.
3. **How to identify a False Teacher:**
  - a. **Content** (*this "math" strategy to identify false teaching comes from James Walker, director of the apologetics ministry Watchman Fellowship - \*check out their website*)
    - i. **ADD** - Do they add to the Word of God?
    - ii. **SUBTRACT** - Do they take away from who Jesus is and what he has done?
    - iii. **MULTIPLY** - Do they multiply the requirements for salvation?
    - iv. **DIVIDE** - Do they divide the Body of Christ?
  - b. **Character**
    - i. What do I see in their attitude and actions? Do they reflect the Fruit of the Spirit?
    - ii. Are they pursuing holiness and humility? Are they serving others or building up their own kingdom?
  - c. **Community (Crowd)**
    - i. Whom do they surround themselves with?
    - ii. Are they open to feedback? How do they respond to criticism?

## False Teaching – What else do I look out for?

- Those who use Christianity for their own personal profit (Prosperity Gospel)
- Those who use their position to take advantage of others or show a pattern of unholy conduct.
- Those who show a history of disrupting the church
- Speculator – frequently looking for hidden codes (without a good biblical/theological foundation for their conclusions – usually more newspaper than Bible) or using Scripture out of context.
- Single Issue Specialists – be cautious about getting drawn into an author or viewpoint that seems to only hammer one issue or one area of study
- Anyone who doesn't regard God or God's Word as Holy

## What if I am considering a book and haven't purchased it?

- Ask a trusted friend or pastor
- Read the back of the book and determine the purpose.
- Who wrote the Preface or endorsed the book? If it is an author you trust and know to be solid, you can consider their endorsement as one part of your decision.
- Take a quick look at online reviews - Caution: website reviews are notoriously slanted (and this has gotten much worse in recent years because of artificial intelligence); all reviews must also be tested against God's Word.
- *Remember - we can learn from people that we might not fully agree with!* This is an important part of maturity. We can be critical readers without separating ourselves from everyone with a different perspective. However, we want to be careful how authors and books are shaping both our thinking and our actions.