

How to Recognize False Churches When Life Gets Hard - Part 10

Life Church St. Louis June 1, 2025
Lead Pastor Dan Walker, PhD, MDiv

Pray Daily for your Five Friends Focus

Introduction

Matthew 7:15 (ESV) "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Acts 20:29–30 (ESV) "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you... and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 (ESV) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

1. False Churches Appear Spiritual but Deny Christ

2 Peter 2:1 (ESV) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2 Peter 2:2 (ESV) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

2 Peter 2:3 (ESV) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

2. God Knows How to Rescue the Faithful and Judge the False

2 Peter 2:4–6 (ESV) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell ... if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah,,, when he brought a flood upon the world ... if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them.

2 Peter 2:7–8 (ESV) ...rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked...

2 Peter 2:9–10a (ESV) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly... and keep the unrighteous under punishment...

3. False Churches Promise Freedom but Enslave Souls

2 Peter 2:17–18 (ESV) These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

2 Peter 2:19 (ESV) They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption...

2 Peter 2:20 (ESV) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

How to Recognize False Churches Study Guide

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Introduction

1. Why is it important to discern what is true and false in spiritual matters?
2. What does it mean to be warned about people who appear spiritual but have harmful intentions? (Matthew 7:15)
3. What can we learn about the dangers of distorted teachings even from within our own communities? (Acts 20:29–30)
4. How can spiritual leaders appear trustworthy while disguising false teachings? (2 Corinthians 11:13–15)

1. False Churches Appear Spiritual but Deny Christ

1. What are some ways false teachings are introduced without people realizing it? (2 Peter 2:1)
2. Why do people find false churches appealing even when they contradict the truth? (2 Peter 2:2)
3. What are the motives behind the actions of false teachers, and how do they impact others? (2 Peter 2:3)
4. How can we protect ourselves and others from being spiritually misled?

2. God Knows How to Rescue the Faithful and Judge the False

1. How do past examples of judgment help us understand God's justice today? (2 Peter 2:4–6)
2. What does it reveal about God's character that He rescued Lot from a corrupt society? (2 Peter 2:7–8)
3. What assurance can we find in God's ability to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked? (2 Peter 2:9–10a)
4. How can we be a voice of truth to those caught in spiritual deception?

3. False Churches Promise Freedom but Enslave Souls

1. Why are false churches described as waterless springs and what does that imply? (2 Peter 2:17–18)
2. How can something that promises freedom actually lead to bondage? (2 Peter 2:19)
3. What dangers exist when someone leaves the world but then falls into false teaching? (2 Peter 2:20)
4. What role can you play in helping someone escape spiritual deception and experience true freedom?

Conclusion

1. How can you use the Bible as a standard to evaluate the church you attend or support?
2. Who in your life might need your help to find a true biblical church, and what steps can you take to reach out to them?