

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **FALSE TEACHERS AND ABUSIVE, MANIPULATIVE OR DOMINEERING LEADERS**

*<sup>14</sup>And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.*

*Jeremiah 14:14 (RSV)*

*<sup>9</sup>For they are a rebellious people,  
lying sons,  
sons who will not hear  
the instruction of the LORD;  
<sup>10</sup>who say to the seers, “See not”;  
and to the prophets, “Prophesy not to us what is right;  
speak to us smooth things,  
prophesy illusions,  
<sup>11</sup>leave the way, turn aside from the path,  
let us hear no more of the Holy One of Israel.”*

*Isaiah 30:9-11 (RSV)*

*<sup>4</sup>Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men;  
her priests profane what is holy;  
they do violence to the law.*

*Zephaniah 3:4 (ESV)*

*<sup>31</sup>the prophets prophesy falsely,  
and the priests rule at their direction;  
my people love to have it so,  
but what will you do when the end comes?*

*Jeremiah 5:31 (RSV)*

*<sup>11</sup>“Both prophet and priest are ungodly;  
even in my house I have found their wickedness,  
says the LORD.*

*Jeremiah 23:11 (RSV)*

#### **What to do when you notice abuse or false teaching, depending on whether you are in a leadership position yourself**

If you are not a leader and are just a young or new member of a church, then there is a very little you can do to correct any false teaching or wrong practice. You have no power or influence and you may even be in danger if you stay in that church and try to contend against those false teachings.

One risk is that you would end up being deceived yourself. Another risk is that your attempts to contend for the truth from such a junior position would lead to you being attacked, undermined and slandered

by leaders. I have seen that happen to a number of people, including myself, and have heard of it from many more. It isn't safe and can easily leave you feeling violated.

Therefore, you would do best just to leave that church and look for another. But look carefully, because the new church may well have the same problems too. I have made that mistake myself and have jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. Indeed, I have done so more than once.

However, if you are a leader yourself, it would probably be your duty, at least for a time, to stay in that church and try to correct any false teaching and confront the abuses and wrong practices of members and fellow elders. Look at apostle Paul's letters. He was continually tackling such situations in the various churches with which he was involved. Whenever possible he tried to correct things that were wrong and to appeal to others to change their ideas or actions.

Sometimes he succeeded, but not always. On some occasions he failed completely and was not listened to. In particular he was attacked and slandered when he tried to tackle the 'Judaizers'. They were teaching the false idea that Gentile converts to Christianity needed to be circumcised and become Jews as well as Christians. He faced this kind of hostile opposition at Philippi:

***<sup>1</sup>For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; <sup>2</sup>but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philip'pi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition.***

***1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (RSV)***

In fact, everywhere Paul went he faced opposition, though most of it was from misguided religious people, rather than from the world:

***<sup>24</sup>Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup>on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; <sup>27</sup>in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.***

***2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (RSV)***

However, if you are currently in a junior position, rather than being a leader, it is generally unwise to stay in a bad church in the hope that you can change it. It is almost certain that you will fail, particularly if you are a young believer. It will only result in you getting hurt.

The position would be different if you were a very mature believer, in a leadership role, holding on and fighting for the real Gospel in a situation where a church has been taken over by wrong doctrines and wrong practices. But, you cannot even hope to do any of that as a young believer. The chances are you will achieve little or nothing.

If you can see that there is a leader who is standing up for the truth, then it may well be right for you to stay just to support him in his efforts to uphold true doctrine. But, if no mature leader is doing that you could not do it on your own as a young believer.

## **The different types of characters who become leaders of churches**

It is not safe or wise to assume that all church leaders are honest men, seeking to do their best to serve and lead God's people. Some are, but many are not. Let us examine the three main types of leaders that the Bible speaks of, i.e. shepherds, hirelings and wolves. Every leader will largely fall into one of these three categories. Look first at how Jesus put it:

*<sup>11</sup>I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*John 10:11-15 (RSV)*

### **Shepherds**

This is the group that Jesus Himself was in. It refers to those genuine men whose priority is not themselves, or their 'career' but the sincere desire to look after the people in their care and teach the Bible faithfully. These are honest men who diligently do their duty, always putting the people first and themselves last.

Such leaders are what we desperately need, but they are rare. To be a leader like this a man needs to be humble, honest and mature and to have already largely succeeded in crucifying his own flesh nature. That is not easy. Peter describes for us what a genuine shepherd should be like:

*<sup>1</sup>So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

*1 Peter 5:1-4 (ESV)*

Conversely, Isaiah speaks of what a false shepherd is like, i.e. a man who isn't a shepherd at all because he is a leader who has no understanding and looks after himself, rather than the people in his care:

*<sup>10</sup> His watchmen are blind,  
they are all without knowledge;  
they are all dumb dogs,  
they cannot bark;  
dreaming, lying down,  
loving to slumber.  
<sup>11</sup> The dogs have a mighty appetite;  
they never have enough.  
The shepherds also have no understanding;  
they have all turned to their own way,  
each to his own gain, one and all.*

*Isaiah 56:10-11 (RSV)*

A shepherd needs to have been well taught himself and to have a sound knowledge of the Bible. A leader who is a genuine shepherd can be trusted because he doesn't want power, money or status. He is not looking for anything other than to obey Jesus' command to look after His people, and to serve and protect them. The ultimate Shepherd was Jesus. His perfect ministry exemplified what a real pastor should be like:

*<sup>11</sup>He will tend his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms;  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.*

*Isaiah 40:11 (ESV)*

*<sup>20</sup>Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,*

*Hebrews 13:20 (NASB)*

*<sup>24</sup>and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

*1 Peter 2:24-25 (NASB)*

*<sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

*1 Peter 5:4 (NASB)*

In this next passage apostle Paul describes his own self-sacrificial approach to ministry. Everything he describes is the hallmark of a genuine shepherd, and the opposite of how a hireling or a wolf will behave:

*<sup>3</sup> We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

*2 Corinthians 6:3-10 (RSV)*

A genuine shepherd is not ambitious for himself and does not seek to build himself up or obstruct the ministries of other men. By contrast, a hireling will oppose talented young men whom God wishes to raise up. Hirelings will resist their ministries because they feel threatened by them and are envious of them. That attitude is all too common in our churches, where insecure hirelings will prevent gifted men from developing into leaders.

Note however the very different attitude shown by apostle Paul towards his junior colleague, Titus, and how he praises him and creates openings for him to serve. Far from being threatened by Titus, Paul positively wants his ministry to prosper and grow. He feels none of the competitiveness and insecurity that is found in hirelings:

*<sup>16</sup>I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you.*

*<sup>17</sup>For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. <sup>18</sup>And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. <sup>19</sup>What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. <sup>20</sup>We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. <sup>21</sup>For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. <sup>22</sup>In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup>As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ.*

*2 Corinthians 8:16-23 (RSV)*

Paul speaks further about this selfish attitude when he refers to men who preach “from envy and rivalry”. He means they see themselves as if they were in a secular commercial job in a law firm or bank and they are competing to be seen as being more successful than other men. They are not shepherds whose only concern is for the welfare of the flock. Instead, their focus is on themselves and advancing their career.

*<sup>15</sup>Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.*

*Philippians 1:15 (RSV)*

## **Hirelings**

Hirelings are probably the largest group. These men are neither wolves nor shepherds. They are the kind of man who is selfish, weak and cowardly. He does not put the interests of the people ahead of himself. He puts himself first every time. However, he is not intentionally seeking to do harm or to attack people, so he isn't a wolf.

He has no desire to do damage deliberately. It is just that if he is ever put in a position where he has to choose between what is best for the people and what is easiest for himself, he will immediately choose the latter. He will always take the line of least resistance. His desire to be popular, to have an easy life, and to avoid effort, difficulty or conflict, takes priority over everything else.

A hireling sees church leadership as a career. To him it's just a paid job from which he earns a living and supports his family. Instead of seeing himself as doing God's work, he sees himself as earning a wage. Therefore, he does not care about people like a genuine shepherd does and he is entirely willing to “tamper with God's Word”.

*<sup>17</sup>Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.*

*2 Corinthians 2:17 (RSV)*

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

*2 Corinthians 4:1-2 (RSV)*

Moreover, a hireling cannot be bothered to find out what God wants for His people. Therefore, he is ‘stupid’ as he does not seek God’s guidance or know God’s Word thoroughly:

***<sup>21</sup>For the shepherds are stupid,  
and do not inquire of the Lord;  
therefore they have not prospered,  
and all their flock is scattered.***

***Jeremiah 10:21 (RSV)***

If a church leader is a hireling he is the same as a man who is merely hired by the hour to look after another farmer’s sheep. He does not see those sheep as his own and he will not put himself to any inconvenience for them. Neither will he endure any hardship or danger for their sake. By contrast, a real shepherd sees the sheep as his own and will lay down his life for them if need be, just as Jesus did.

That is why He called Himself ‘the Good Shepherd’. A real shepherd cares for the sheep as he would care for his own children. He views them as his personal responsibility. It is like the difference between a parent and a babysitter. Even the best babysitter will never view the child in their care as a parent does.

A parent will not hesitate to stay up all night with a sick child, even if they have work in the morning. The anxiety for the sick child’s welfare will weigh heavily upon them. Yet, a babysitter will just head off home at 10:00 pm when their job is done and will not give the sick child another thought. The apostle Peter urges us not to act like a hireling but like a shepherd, if we have any pastoral responsibility:

***<sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.***

***1 Peter 5:2-4 (NASB)***

In many ways church leadership can be an ideal career for a hireling. Few jobs involve less accountability. Therefore, if a church leader is lazy and wants to do as little work as possible, he is ideally placed to get away with it. It is most unlikely that anyone will confront him about his laziness in the way they would in any commercial job.

He will be left alone to get on with doing as little as he chooses to do. Most people will assume he is probably putting in long hours of work unseen and give him the benefit of the doubt. I know that ‘Rick’ the church leader I challenged about his misconduct and dishonesty, was also unfaithful in his use of time. Therefore, for example, he would regularly sit and watch DVDs during the day when everyone assumed he was working.

Rick’s church also organised a supposed “evangelistic” trip to witness to holidaymakers at a seaside resort abroad which the congregation paid for. That trip involved several young people who were trainee church workers. However, it emerged later that they did barely any evangelism and spent the vast majority of the week just sunbathing on a beach. They had evidently picked up the same lamentable work ethic that Rick had.

When a hireling is in leadership the people in that church will be neglected and will not be fed properly. It is not that the hireling wishes to harm them. He simply *doesn’t care about them and cannot be*

bothered to put himself out or endure any difficulty or danger for their sake. Therefore the people will suffer the consequence of his indifference and idleness. But God will hold such leaders fully accountable for the harm they do and for the damage they fail to prevent:

***<sup>1</sup>The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup>You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup>The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup>So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. <sup>6</sup>My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.***

***Ezekiel 34:1-6 (RSV)***

Many Christian ministers both begin and end their ministries as hirelings. Such men go into Christian ministry just looking for a career. They have an interest in 'religion' but they also want a paid job and to generally promote their own interests. They put their own welfare ahead of the people and ahead of the truth.

Therefore, even though they do not necessarily have any evil intentions, the results of their ministries are meagre. They will always compromise on the truth if taking a stand would be costly or painful. Under such men any church will decline in quality and become lukewarm. A hireling will not teach the truth because if the truth is taught openly it will always get a leader into trouble, and a hireling is not willing to face that, or even to risk it, as it brings no benefit to him personally.

So, any part of the Bible which is controversial, or politically incorrect, or goes against current orthodoxy, will be ignored. A hireling may not necessarily teach lies deliberately. They will just ignore the truth if it is controversial and stay silent when it is their duty to speak. Hirelings will only say what it is safe to say and the people want to hear, not what they need to hear.

They know that most people just want to be flattered and entertained rather than confronted or convicted. So they give the people what they want. They do not care enough for their people to be willing to take the flak that comes from telling them the truth rather than giving them what they want.

***<sup>1</sup> I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.***

***2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NASB)***

The hirelings are probably the largest group, at least in our own day in the West. They therefore do the most damage because there are so many of them and they are harder to identify because they are not outright opponents of the Gospel. But look how God sees them and the harm they do by not being genuine shepherds:

<sup>7</sup> *“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>8</sup> As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.*

*Ezekiel 34:7-10 (RSV)*

## **Wolves**

In the earlier passage from John chapter 10, Jesus speaks about 'wolves' coming in and deliberately harming and scattering the flock. He also refers to such wolves in Matthew 7:

<sup>15</sup> *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. <sup>18</sup> A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will know them by their fruits*

*Matthew 7:15-20 (RSV)*

Wolves are not unbelieving outsiders from the world. The wolves who will come in to attack and scatter the flock are men who purport to be Christian leaders. In fact they set themselves up as pastors, teachers and prophets and they positively seek to lead God’s people astray or at least to use and exploit them for their own profit.

That is why they do so much damage. If they merely persecuted the church from outside, they would do far less harm. However, because they come into the church and take up leadership positions within it, their capacity to do damage is multiplied many times over.

So, a wolf is not an unbeliever operating outside of the church. He is a phoney Christian operating from within. That means he is a false person posing as a Christian, and seeking a leadership position. They are listened to and believed precisely because they seem to be Christians. They appear to be working for God and for the church.

Thus the people under them put down their guard (if they had ever put it up) and are not vigilant to watch out for or resist such men. Apostle Paul warned Timothy about these men and how they operate in a carnal and dishonest way, opposing the true Gospel, whilst purporting to be Christians themselves:

<sup>1</sup>*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, <sup>4</sup>treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. <sup>6</sup> For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, <sup>7</sup>who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup> As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith;*

*2 Timothy 3:1-8 (RSV)*



***<sup>12</sup>Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived.***

***2 Timothy 3:12-13 (RSV)***

I once had a strange experience with a female church leader whom I considered to be a wolf. I got involved in an online conversation in which she was pushing what I call the “prosperity gospel” and urging everyone to give to their church. I replied to her contradicting her ideas and saying that we are not commanded to tithe to our church.

I also warned people against what I call “money preachers” whose preaching is focused on raising money for themselves by promising that God will bless you if you give to them. To my surprise she then came back online with a warning to all those participating and said, “*Be aware that Sean Kehoe is a false teacher and does not believe in the resurrection.*”

I was taken aback by this, especially as the resurrection had not even been mentioned in our debate. So, this dishonest woman knew perfectly well that what she was saying about me was a complete lie but she was willing to say it just to protect her income.

She saw at once that what I teach about giving would destroy her income if people were to hear it and believe it. Therefore, I classify her as a wolf, not just a hireling, because she was so willing to lie. I should add of course that, as a woman, she ought not to have been leading a church to begin with.

It is primarily against such false leaders that the true shepherds have to take a stand if they are to protect the sheep from false teaching and false practices. The hireling, however, will never take such a stand. He will never stand up and oppose false teaching, even when he knows it to be false. When he sees a wolf coming, as Jesus said, he just leaves the sheep and flees, letting the sheep be scattered and snatched.

A hireling does not care whether a false teacher is leading people astray. However, a real shepherd is grieved by it and will take action, even if it is costly and dangerous for himself. I therefore have great admiration for men who are willing to stand up and confront those wolves and to speak openly about them too, so as to warn the people.

The late Dave Hunt of the Berean Call was a prime example of such a man. He told the truth fearlessly and took a lot of abuse for doing so. Sadly, some of that flak came from naïve, misguided Christians, many of whom were genuine believers who just did not realise what was going on. But, most of it was from compromisers and hirelings.

Such insincere men particularly objected to Dave Hunt openly naming those wolf like leaders who were teaching and practicing falsehood. But that is exactly what the apostle Paul did, and so did the apostle John. They openly named the wolves and warned the people, even at great cost to themselves. Therefore, so did the late Dave Hunt. (See his website [www.thebereancall.org](http://www.thebereancall.org)).

There are few Christian leaders, anywhere in the world, as brave, honest and selfless as was the late Dave Hunt. The prophet Jeremiah was similarly brave when he confronted the false prophet Hananiah. Note also how stern God’s message was for that false prophet:

***<sup>15</sup> And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hanani'ah, “Listen, Hanani'ah, the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. <sup>16</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I***

*will remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the LORD.’”<sup>17</sup> In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hanani'ah died.*  
*Jeremiah 28:15-17 (RSV)*

*<sup>15</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not come on this land’: By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. <sup>16</sup> And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—they, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their wickedness upon them.*  
*Jeremiah 14:15-16 (RSV)*

And note how direct God Himself is in saying that these false prophets are liars and that He did not send them. Evidently, God is just as blunt as apostle Paul in stating the facts about false leaders:

*<sup>8</sup> For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream <sup>9</sup> for it is a lie which they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the LORD.*  
*Jeremiah 29:8-9 (RSV)*

Moreover, Jesus gave us further warnings about these false leaders who would come into the Church. He told us to beware of them and to be on our guard, and that we would know these people by their fruit. The point is we have been warned so many times that false leaders would emerge that we can hardly claim to deny that it happens or even to be surprised by it. On the contrary, we are meant to be expecting such men and to be constantly on the alert watching out for them:

*<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. <sup>18</sup> A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will know them by their fruits.*  
*Matthew 7:15-20 (RSV)*

Apostle Paul gave a similar warning to the church in Ephesus that such wolves would inevitably come in:

*<sup>28</sup> Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*  
*Acts 20:28-31 (RSV)*

Jude also gives this warning about those people who purport to be believers and who will gain admission to the churches and then bring in licentiousness and deny Jesus Christ. In other words, they seem to be part of our churches but they are actually carnal and false and are not genuine believers:

*<sup>3</sup> Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. <sup>4</sup> For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation,*

***ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.***

***Jude 3-4 (RSV)***

Jude goes on to describe these false people more fully and to say what will become of them:

***<sup>10</sup> But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed. <sup>11</sup> Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perish in Korah's rebellion. <sup>12</sup> These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever.***

***Jude 10-13 (RSV)***

Given that Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Paul and others repeatedly warned us of these wolves, and told us to be on our guard, it is peculiar that in the Church today we have not only put our guard down but we resent the men who are honest enough to expose the false teachers. They are criticised for “creating division” when all they are actually doing is helping us by warning us about wicked men.

Therefore, in the modern Western churches the only people who are condemned are those who seek to stand up for the truth, i.e. the real shepherds. Meanwhile, the wolves and the hirelings are accepted and admired or at least quietly tolerated.

And even when it is proved beyond all doubt that a man is a false teacher, or even corrupt in his morals and finances, few if any Christians feel angry about their falseness. Certainly, they do not attract the hostility that is directed at men like Dave Hunt who exposed the wrongdoers. It's odd and perverse, but that is consistently the way most people react.

That is the state of affairs at the moment, which explains why Jesus had to give the warning so starkly. He knew that many of us would ignore Him. Most of us just assume that every church leader we meet is an honest man, without testing or checking anything. But why would Jesus and Paul give the warnings at all if such an assumption was meant to be made?