

INTRODUCTION

*The wicked plots against the righteous
and gnashes his teeth at him, Psalm 37:12 (ESV)*

I have never seen any book which deals with how to identify and handle the wicked, or even what it means to be wicked. Twenty years ago I wouldn't have believed it possible if someone had told me I would one day write a book on this subject. At that time I knew very little about the wicked and, in particular, had no idea that they were so numerous. Above all, I never imagined that so many were to be found *inside churches*. When I started out as a Christian I was even more naïve, or 'simple', as the Bible puts it. I often failed even to recognise the wicked, let alone know how best to handle them.

But, over many years, God put me through a rigorous training programme whereby He brought into my life far more than my fair share of wicked people. I met some of them when I was a police officer for three years in the mid-1980s. My experiences in that job began to open my eyes to the realities of this world and how the wicked operate. However, that was only the start and I actually met far more of them in the years after I left the police, in workplaces and amongst those whom I acted for, and against, in my career as a lawyer.

However, I have probably encountered more wickedness *within churches* than outside of them, including many wicked church *leaders*. Their worldliness, dishonesty and manipulation was shocking. What was hardest to come to terms with was how brazen and unrepentant the wicked are, even inside churches. They seem to have no fear of God and no expectation of having to meet Jesus Christ face to face on the Day of Judgment and give an account. Somehow, they are unconcerned about this and they do as they please, without any apparent regard for how God sees their actions.

For some years I could not really believe what I was seeing or hearing when I discovered things the wicked had done. I kept telling myself that I must be imagining it, or exaggerating. But I wasn't. Most of the time I was actually under-estimating the true scale of the problem. Indeed, I probably still am, despite writing this book. Yet, as my eyes gradually opened, I saw that people's capacity for wickedness, even within churches, was far worse than I had suspected. God also exposed me to countless other learning experiences within my law firm, which I wholly owned, and also in previous law firms, where I was either an employee or a partner.

In this book I set out some of the situations I faced and the various people I had to handle. The facts are all true, although names have been altered for the sake of those concerned - even the wickedest of them. I still pray for these people, and even feel that I owe them a debt, in a certain sense. Without their evil schemes I would never have had the learning opportunities which led to this book. I have written it for the sake of those who are still as naïve and unsuspecting as I once was. How I wish someone had put this book into my hands 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago.

It would have prevented many misjudgements and saved me from a lot of the devious tricks that I fell for. It would also have helped to open my eyes much faster than they did open during those years. But there was no such book. Or, if it existed, I never saw it. I cannot claim that this book will solve every problem and identify every deceiver and manipulator in your life. The wicked people that you meet will each have their own features. However, the general principles and advice set out in this book will shift the odds in your favour. Then, at the very least, you won't be as naïve and undiscerning as I was in my early encounters with the wicked.

Another of my objectives for this book is to seek to persuade you that the wicked are vastly more numerous, and have much more influence over your life, than you probably believe at present. Too many of us go through life largely unaware of the impact that the wicked have. In particular, we do not realise, or are not willing to accept, that the wicked are to be found in churches, as members and even as leaders. The unbiblical structure of traditional, hierarchical churches deepens the problem. Many

are led by ‘clergymen’ who are building careers, and even empires, for themselves. Also unhealthy man-made traditions are followed, rather than what the Bible says.

The net effect of all this is that it is probably within the *leadership* of churches that the highest proportion of wicked Christians are to be found, rather than amongst the ordinary members. The traditional manmade model of church structure means that wolves and hirelings are not prevented from getting to the top, as they should be. On the contrary, their advancement is made even easier because the absence of biblical safeguards leaves the way wide open for them. Such carnal, *clergy-minded* men believe they are above God’s people and feel entitled to rule over their churches.

They act in an authoritarian and controlling manner, rather than as the gentle servants and shepherds that church leaders are meant to be. Please see Book 8 in this series for a fuller discussion of the problems caused by unbiblical church structures and practices. However, I will give examples in this book of some of the wicked church leaders I have dealt with and explain the methods they used to use, exploit, dominate, manipulate, control and deceive people. Such men are very highly skilled in the art of deception, especially with anybody they perceive as a threat.

As your discernment begins to grow those techniques will be used against you because, if your eyes are starting to open, the wicked will immediately notice. You will be seen as a threat and they will take steps to silence you and marginalise you. They feel entitled to do whatever is needed to defend themselves and their own interests. So, they react in the flesh and lash out, without any thought as to what God may think of their behaviour. They can easily persuade themselves that any reaction or tactic is justified if it is in response to a perceived threat to their own position.

However, the truth is that many of our reactions aren’t justified. We are always required to act, *and react*, in a godly way, even when we feel threatened. Indeed, it is precisely at such times that we most need to control ourselves and to do what is right, not what is expedient. That is how we Christians are supposed to operate, but it is not how most of us actually behave, even in churches. We therefore need to be realistic and wary about that, yet without being afraid of the wicked. We must not be intimidated into silence, or inactivity, when we should be making decisions and taking firm action.

Likewise, we have a duty to avoid being naïve, such that the wicked walk all over us, because we can’t believe that anyone could be wicked enough to do the things they do. Under-reaction, or non-reaction, is almost as bad as over-reacting or reacting in the wrong ways. Therefore, we need to increase our discernment and respond firmly to the tactics of the wicked, but *without resorting to the same tactics ourselves*. That’s probably the hardest part of all because, although God wants us to be as *wise as serpents*, He also requires us to be as *innocent as doves*. That seemingly contradictory pair of objectives is hard to achieve, but it is possible, if you really want it.

I need to add an important counter-balancing point to be borne in mind by those who are persuaded that the wicked are numerous and need to be taken seriously. We also need to avoid going to the opposite end of the spectrum, whereby we are suspicious and distrustful of everyone. Those who were once oblivious to the threat posed by the wicked will often go too far the other way and become paranoid instead, seeing wickedness and conspiracies everywhere. They can end up distrustful of everyone, even of those who have consistently demonstrated, by their fruits, that they *are* trustworthy.

Most Christians are clustered at the ‘South Pole’, in that they are naïve, overly trusting of everyone they meet, and unable to discern anything. But those who have been emotionally scarred by bad experiences at the hands of the wicked often go all the way across to the ‘North Pole’. They then trust nobody, suspect everybody, and can become dysfunctional through paranoia. They may consider that to be discernment, but it isn’t. It is actually a serious error and may end up causing as much damage as if they had remained at the ‘South Pole’, where they were utterly naïve and trusted everybody.

Bear in mind the Devil’s overall strategy, which the demons implement. Their preference is for you to be naïve, undiscerning and easily deceived and manipulated. However, if they see that you are

beginning to wake up, and are trying to grow in discernment, the demons will alter their approach. They will seek instead to make you paranoid by feeding you all sorts of rumours and lies, hoping to get you to over-react and falsely suspect innocent people. Then you may become alienated from the good and decent people whom God has brought into your life, and with whom He wants you to cooperate.

Imagine a general practitioner who is unaware, or unwilling to believe, that anybody at all has cancer. Thus he never diagnoses *any* of his patients with cancer, or sends any of them for tests, or gives them any treatment for cancer, because he doesn't recognise its existence. Or it may be that he assumes cancer to be incredibly rare - the kind of medical condition which he might come across once or twice in a 40 year career. Thus, anyone presenting with symptoms consistent with cancer will be reassured and told not to worry, or diagnosed as having some other, lesser ailment.

Such a misguided doctor would probably fail to diagnose, or deal with, real cancer cases on a monthly, or even a weekly, basis. That would be very damaging. However, what if he went to the opposite extreme and it became his working assumption that *all* his patients have cancer and that they all need radical intervention, including chemotherapy or even surgery? He too would be a menace and would do great harm, due to his mistaken assumptions and his excessive zeal in contending against something which, very often, isn't there at all.

We need to head for the 'Equator', whereby we become genuinely discerning, seeing wickedness where it really is, but not imagining it to be where it isn't. It is a place of balance, in which we assess and classify every situation or person with an open mind, based on the evidence and on shrewd, wise discernment. Neither child-like innocence and naivety, nor sour-spirited prejudice are any good. I elaborate further on the vital need for balance in chapter 5. Please refer to that, and take its advice seriously, if you wish to grow in discernment without becoming paranoid and falsely suspecting or accusing everybody you meet.

I don't want to make any inflated claims for this book. It will not solve, or prevent, all your problems, but I believe it can *reduce* them. At any rate, it will put you further forward than if you had to figure everything out for yourself, as I had to. I hope this book will help you to achieve more victories, and sustain fewer defeats, in the battles you have to face. By the way, those battles will certainly come, whether you want them or not, especially if you have the love of the truth and aim to serve God faithfully. The unbelieving world, the demons, and the apostate churches, will make quite sure of that.

This book will also help you to fight those battles in the right *manner*, in or through your *spirit* or '*new man*', rather than your '*flesh*' or '*old man*'. (See Book 7.) It all has to be done with integrity and self-control, not by imitating the carnal, worldly people with whom we have to contend. The first goal is to grow sufficiently in knowledge, wisdom, understanding and discernment to become able to identify the wicked. The second goal is to learn how to handle them effectively and appropriately, without either over-reacting or under-reacting.

We live in a very wicked time in world history. Indeed, given the hugeness of the apostasy in the churches, and also the abortions that are now taking place on an industrial scale, ours may even be the most wicked generation that has ever lived, at least in the West. Moreover, the breadth and intensity of that wickedness is growing, most notably in the rise of Islam, militant homosexuality, gender confusion and aggressive political correctness. If we are to handle the wickedness of our age we must become like the men of Issachar, who came to join the young King David in his early days. The Bible makes this unusual statement about them, which we should all want to be said of us:

Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...
1 Chronicles 12:32 (a) (RSV)

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