

## Identifying Wolf Activity

Acts 20:28-31 (NIV)

**[28] Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. [29] I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.**





**If by some unfortunate situation, strife, division, disunity does begin to progress and gain momentum in a church. Then we will definitely begin to see “Wolf” activity. This is not a good thing, since we as christians are referred to as “Sheep”.**

**But it can also happen while a church is at peace. Someone begins to do the work of a Wolf.**

**So we need to do a study on how to Identify Wolf Activity.**

**I. The greatest attacks to A Church will be: Strife, Division, Disloyalty. (Remember: IT'S THE ONLY TOOL SATAN HAS) FOR ANYTHING TO STOP WHAT GOD IS DOING, IT WILL ALWAYS ARISE FROM WITHIN THE PEOPLE OR CONGREGATION. NO OUTSIDE WEAPON FORMED AGAINST US CAN PROSPER. (Isa. 54:17)**

**A. It can simply be a person who' giving into the flesh / old nature,**

**1. The old nature, flesh is very wicked in and of itself.**

**B. Or it can be demonically inspired.**

**1. Demons can't do much without accessing the physical realm. They will find the weakest link/weakest person (Weakest typically means the most immature) and use them.**

**2. Immature people typically get stirred up about things that are not that important.**

**> And the things that should be dealt with, are over-looked.**

**C. How does a Sheep become a Wolf?**

**1. It happens when people are not willing to resolve relationship issues - God's Way. They get hurt feelings, pick up offenses, etc. - and don't do what scripture says is suppose to be done in those situations. NOW YOU HAVE FERTILE GROUND.....**

**2. It can happen if someone gets full of pride and becomes arrogant, unteachable, thinks they have insight / knowledge the leadership don't have.**

- a. So now they either need to lead the people because the leadership just doesn't understand or have the insight.
- b. Or they need to protect the people from the leadership.

3. The problem deepens when these people are not recognized for what they really have become - Wolves. They are now in disobedience and probably rebellion.

- > Often they will now feel it's their call to save the rest of the people from the leadership.
- > And all the things we talked about last Sunday begin:
  - Factions, Divisions, Strife, Wrangling, Gossip, etc.
- > And rather than going to the leadership, (deacons, elder, pastors) they begin working around behind the leadership and go directly to the congregation. (Gossip, etc.)

4. Some people may even begin the transformation - innocently.

- > They are not out to cause problems. They aren't trying to get into strife. They just don't agree with something, and then it's handled the wrong way.
- > That moves into strife.
  - > Which moves into division and disunity.
    - > Which will cause people to choose sides, and some will be pulled out of the flock / Church.
    - They don't even know what's really going on.
    - But they picked up a 2nd and 3rd person offense.

(Exp)

5. Then there are some people who will intentionally try to present themselves as faithful, loyal sheep who have simply

**been hurt, taken advantage of, or have gotten the bad end of the deal.**

**Yet inwardly they've become a Wolf.**

**> They have ulterior motives.**

**Here's the part that can be difficult for church people to understand. This is not an outside person who comes in to tear the church apart. This is the person across the aisle, the one you sit next to, the one who has been in the church - possibly for years > serving, helping, giving - These are the ones who turn into the wolves. Not some stranger.**

**+++++ So we need to learn what a Wolf looks like in scripture.**

## **II. Characteristics of Wolves**

**Matthew 7:15-20 (NIV)**

**[15] "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. [16] By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17] Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**



**A. (v. 15) - From the outside, or the surface - they look like normal believers.**

**B. (v. 16) - You recognize them by their fruit.**

**C. (v. 17-18) - Just like trees produce what is in the tree. (Good or bad)**

**D. (v. 19) - The bad trees will eventually be judged.**

**E. (v. 20) - So by their fruit you will recognize them.**

**1. What is the fruit we're looking for?**

- a. Signs, wonders, miracles?**
- b. Getting people saved?**
- c. Fruit of the Spirit?**
- d. What?????.....**

**2. We're told in the first 5 words of the passage:**

**> "Watch out for false prophets".**

**a. What does a prophet do?**

**> Speaks for God, or on behalf of God.**

**> They give you God's input on the matter.**

**3. That's what wolves do.**

**a. They will claim to be telling you what God really thinks.**

**b. What the truth really is.**

**c. But they are doing what we talked about in the last message....**

- d. If you listen, you will begin doubting the person - wondering if what you've been told is true - start being convinced they are wrong (and you haven't even talked to them) - begin feeling like you need to be careful and pull back a little....

**4. THERE IS NOW BAD FRUIT APPEARING BECAUSE OF WHAT WAS SAID BY A CERTAIN TREE.**

**(The fruit is the words that are spoken)**

- a. You have a bad tree.
- b. You have a wolf.

**5. You recognize them by their fruit - THEIR SPEECH / WORDS**

**++++ Jesus explains shepherds / wolves by painting a picture.**

**(PROJECTOR)**

**John 10:1-15 (NIV)**

**[10:1] “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.**

**[2] The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.**

**[3] The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. [5] But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.”**



[6] Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. [7] Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. [8] All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [9] I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

[11] “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. [13] The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

[14] “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

#### **F. John 10:1-15:**

##### **The Facts & Illustration: (Skip This)**

- v. 1-6 - The sheep/shepherd principle/illustration.**
- v. 7, 11, 14 - Jesus is the Shepherd, and the Gate.**
- v. 2-4, 16 - The sheep recognize his voice and follow him.**
- v. 11, 15 - The Shepherd lays down his life (Psuche) for the sheep.**
- v. 14-15 - The Shepherd has relationship with the sheep.**

**The Application: (Keep in mind - the local pastor is the under-shepherd)**

- v. 1-3 - There is a correct way to gain access to the sheep. It is via the shepherd. (Watchman) Trying to get to the sheep via by-passing the shepherd is the way of a thief and a robber. (Wolf)**
- v. 4-5 - It's the shepherd who is suppose to lead the sheep. No one else. The sheep should not entertain input that by-passes the shepherd. In fact they should run from it. (Wolf)**
- v. 7-8 - Thieves & robbers (Wolves) will try to gain access to the sheep. They will try to by-pass the shepherd / gate.**
- v. 9 - The best protection for the sheep is the shepherd.**
- v. 10 - Thieves & robbers (Wolves) only have their agenda in mind. They want the thing to go their way. Shepherds want to bring life (Zoe) and the best to the sheep.**
- v. 11-13 - It's the shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Hired hands will run when it looks like they could be in danger. They are more concerned about their welfare, than that of the flock. It's the shepherd/owner who has the most to lose in the flock, so he's willing to risk his life (Psuche) for them.**
- v. 12-13 - Wolves (Thieves & Robbers) always come. The wolf will always attack, devour, and scatter. And according to Matthew 7:15-20, it will be done via talk / words.**
- v. 14-15 - The heart of a shepherd is relationship and wanting the best for the sheep, even at the expense of their own lives. (Psuche)**

**(PROJECTOR)****Acts 20:28-31 (NIV)**

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**G. Acts 20:28-31:**

- v. 28 - The Overseers (Elders, Bishops - I Timothy 3:1-6; Titus 1:5-9) are the Under-Shepherds. (Shepherds under the Chief Shepherd - I Peter 5:1-4)**

**They are the best defense against Wolves. (Thieves & Robbers) (John 10:3, 9-13) That is because they are to be the Gate (Entry point) and the Watchman (Overseer) to the flock, and they're willing to lay down their lives to defend the flock. (John 10:1-3,7-8)**

- v. 29 - Wolves always come. They will destroy the flock. Even if they start out innocently.**

**They will do that by putting their own interests, opinions, purposes, reputation, etc. - above what's best for the sheep - because they are thieves and robbers who are listening to the wrong side, they're being **INSPIRED BY THEIR FLESH OR THE DEMONIC REALM.****

**v. 30 - They arise out of the sheep/church itself. They distort the truth in order to plant doubt, dissension, strife, disloyalty, division. It might be the truth of the Word. It might be the truth of the vision, shepherd, or other leaders. Their intent is to get people turned away from the group and follow their thinking, plans, purposes.**

**Ultimately members of the flock will be drawn away and scattered. (John 10)**

**v. 31 - The Shepherds/Elders/Overseers need to stay on their guard against this happening. The people must be continually warned from the sincere and humble hearts of the Shepherds.**

**H. When dealing with wolves, we cannot ignore the fact they are around. We can't let them do whatever they want. Jesus already told us the outcome of that. (John 10:10)**

**Besides the instructions given above, Jesus did tell us something else on how to handle the situation.**

**Matthew 10:16-17 (NIV)**

**[16] I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. [17] "Be on your guard against men.....**

## **I. Matthew 10:16-17a:**

### **1. Wisdom and Innocence produce protection.**

- a. Snakes are constantly sensing their surroundings. We are to do that, be very aware of what is happening around us.**
- b. But we're to be gentle in our approach - like a dove. Snakes are quick to strike. Doves are not harmful and striking like a snake.**

### **2. Then Jesus goes on and explains the kind of things that wolves will do. (v. 17-39) In the middle of it Jesus drops some very powerful bits of advice.**

**Matthew 10:17-39 explains how to posture yourself to deal with them.**

- a. Matthew 10:19b-20: “Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”**
- b. Matthew 10:22b: “He who stands firm to the end will be saved.”**
- c. Matthew 10:26-28: “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”**

- d. **Matthew 10:29-31: God takes care of the sparrow, and we're worth more to God than a sparrow, "So don't be afraid".**
- e. **Matthew 10:32-33: Acknowledge God, don't disown him.**
- f. **Matthew 10:34-39: Sometimes dealing with the wolf, will separate relationships. Even family relationships. Here is where we must be careful not to disown God for the sake of those relationships.**
- g. **Matthew 10:40-42: There are rewards for doing what is right before God.**

**III. To affect a church the most, Division/Strife/Disloyalty (The Wolf) will try to reach the leadership, or at least a position of public influence. Because they are the ones with the most accessibility and influence over the other people/sheep.**

**It is the over-seers job to watch for this. Here is where a realm of trust has to come from the people. Too often a decision is made by the Leadership or Pastor's about a particular person, and then the congregation (or certain people in it) get upset over it. They don't think it's fair or correct.**

**The problem is this: not all the information about a person that the Leadership, or Pastor knows is devulged to the rest of the church people. That would be slanderous, divisive, causing strife, and breaking confidentiality. So they make the decision**

**and put individuals into positions and remove them from positions - without a lot of public discussion.**

**For the carnal christian, that causes problems. They want to know what is going on and why it's going on. So instead of going to the Pastor or Leadership and asking them, they start doing what the scripture says we're not to do. They go behind the back and try to figure it out for themselves. This is where gossip, strife, division, dissension, disunity, etc. will begin.**

**The real reason immature people do this is:**

- a. They personally have trust issues with everyone. They don't trust anyone. Everyone is a suspect in their mind and lives. Suspicion fills their thinking. So it is normal for them to deal with church leadership this way. They deal with everyone this way.**
- b. They don't trust their Pastor's or Leadership. To fix that, they need to deal with whatever has broken the trust and is now causing the distrust.**

**If they refuse to do that, it would probably be better for them to find a church where they feel they can trust the Pastor's and Leadership. Because in this setting, they are not really submitted and following anyway. It's only a matter of time and Trouble will develop around them because of their Dis-Trust.**