



The Real Problem is that it is Getting Colder

“Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”

— Matthew 24:11–12

Something that has burdened my heart for more than 20 years now is why so few followers of biblically false personalities claiming to be “Christian” divorce themselves from that figure when it is proved that that such are false either by their fraudulent activities, when they prophesy something in the name of the Lord which fails to come true, and/or their own teaching laid side-by-side with God’s Word is proven to be nothing short of heresy. For example:

- The local hospital holds a press conference to confirm that contrary to Todd Bentley’s claims, there was not a single confirmation that any of the so-called miracles performed were true, directly contradicting his assertions to the contrary. On top of that he leaves his wife and children for the proverbial church secretary and yet **none** of these things persuade his followers of the truth about this heretic.
- You can print out entire websites devoted to documenting the false prophecies uttered by Benny Hinn for the last 15 years. (The **really** short list is comprised of those which came true.) No one leaves; he is bigger than ever.
- The public exposure of Ted Haggard’s secret life of sex and drugs should have come as no surprise after the years of discernment ministries documenting his false teachings. Nobody in his following slapped their head, repented, and saw

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this as evidence to change their ways on either count. Like a recurring movie monster who simply makes another sequel, people are once again flocking in significant numbers to him.

With the huge number of “discernment ministries” filling cyberspace who daily document and warn about these and an embarrassingly large host of others, why is it that the truth rarely seems to work? Remember...I am **not** talking about the unsaved **outside** the church; this is a phenomenon limited to those **within** the church.

When I use the term “discernment ministry”, I am describing those who document what is biblically contrary in such personalities and make a good faith effort to sound the alarm to the rest of the Body of Christ. Setting aside the differences between individual efforts in this arena, allow me to sincerely offer that I am personally very grateful to those who do this, particularly those who are so painstakingly good at it. I know that from time to time there are victims who are rescued as the result of their efforts, but by and large it is not a task you undertake if you cannot bear the overwhelming silence from the audience you are so desperately trying to reach in tandem with the inevitable intense scorn from the opposition. But what I have pondered over and over is that although there seem to be hundreds if not thousands of these false personalities, why is it that the hundreds if not thousands of “discernment ministries” by and large fail to achieve significant results in terms of turning people away from these deceivers? Many of their website forums are rife with what I would call “preaching to the choir” because they seem to mostly reach those who already agree with them. When it comes to reaching the deceived, why does the truth not matter to the followers who publicly claim the label “Christian” and even take pride in their church attendance?

I believe the answer is in Jesus’ words above, taken from the Olivet Discourse. The root cause of spiritual deception is not found solely in an analysis of the antics and teaching of the false personalities; Paul has already defined what is wrong with them...

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*“But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse,
deceiving and being deceived.”*

– 2 Timothy 3:13

We can shout all day long about these false leaders and what success comes our way will probably be mostly in the form of rescuing those on the fringes who have yet to take the full plunge. I believe what is going to authentically redirect the mainstream away from such evil men is when discernment is applied to the followers, **not** the deceivers. The deceivers are already deceived; but why are their zombie followers impervious to even the most rational expression of the truth about them? I submit that they have not been cast under someone else’s spell against their will; I propose that they are at the inevitable destination because of something intrinsically wrong with them spiritually. Specifically, because they have become lawless, their love has grown cold.

It is no longer just individual churches here and there which have chosen to drop God’s Word from their agenda, but now entire denominations, movements, and organizations. This is the simple explanation of how one eventually becomes “lawless”. In the Greek the word “*nomos*” means “possessing the law”, and its counterpart used here – “*anomos*” – means “**not** possessing the law”. The number one reason repeatedly documented in scientific surveys as to why sincere Evangelical, Bible-believing Christians are leaving mainstream churches is their pursuit of some place which restores Bible teaching as the central activity of worship and fellowship. The “*nomos*” are separating themselves from the “*anomos*”.

This is why there is no longer any statistical difference on almost any moral issue between those who say they attend church regularly and those who do not. Having abandoned God’s Word, they agree with their worldly counterparts when it comes to homosexuality, adultery, divorce – pick any topic, if you will. Such never quote from the Bible because they no longer hear it, no longer read it, and now no longer

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know what is in it. The greatest majority of the present generation who call themselves "Christian" is by biblical definition "*lawless*". And Paul provides a very detailed description of how the "*lawless*" behave, a laundry list of characteristics which shows no distinction with the world's ways...

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

— 2 Timothy 3:1-7

But how does the phenomenon of lawlessness logically give way to love growing cold? This is where the diabolical part of Satan's plan reveals itself.

Jesus summed up the whole Law in one commandment...

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

— John 13:34

This is what is wrong with these people. Because they have forsaken the Word, they no longer love as God's Word defines "love". What they tout as "love" is a false, unbiblical love. By withdrawing from God's Word, they are incapable of keeping even the most basic requirement of the Law. It all begins to disintegrate into "*lawlessness*".

There are two great concepts provided in Scripture: Truth and Love. This is not a trick question, it is not a rhetorical question, I want you to think about this sincerely: Does Truth trump Love, or does Love trump Truth? (The answer is **NOT**, "They are equal".) Love is *always* trumped by the Truth because Love must be *defined* by the Truth. We do not know what "love" is without God's Word to define it for us.

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(This is not a license to beat someone up with Truth; I am just providing a theological order to things here.)

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

— 1 John 2:3–6

The Apostle John, as the end of the 1st Century church was drawing to a close, echoed Jesus’ own earlier teaching in the shadow of the cross...

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

— John 14:21

When someone has attained the full status of “*lawless*” and now practices a love that is what they “feel” love should be instead of how it is defined by the Truth of God’s Word, we should not be surprised that they are unresponsive to all the “facts” we have collected about the object of their affection. Why are we surprised that those rejecting **the** Truth cannot be reached by the truth alone?

An “*anomos*” love says you cannot discriminate against gays and lesbians serving in the church because that is insensitive and twisting God’s Word out of context. An “*anomos*” love says you cannot criticize anyone, even if on biblical grounds because that is “judgmental” and “unloving”. An “*anomos*” love does not want to enforce scriptural standards when it comes to divorce and relationships because their romanticized notion of love is held in higher regard than God’s Word on such matters. An “*anomos*” love says, “Let’s be seeker sensitive and not offend anyone by bringing up the cross or making anyone feel bad by preaching the Gospel”. An “*anomos*” love does not love the

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sinner enough to address the issue of sin and figures if they are left alone, everything will eventually work out.

I am not saying this is hopeless, I am just saying that we need to re-think how we approach those currently lost, that we will be much more effective speaking to the behavior of the deceived than to that of the deceivers. Discernment ministries provide the factual basis for understanding who is biblically false, but that should not be the sum of our approach. We need to reach out to the lost on the same spiritual level which has brought them to this precipice. It is going to have to take the form of being personal, of much prayer for a softening of their heart, and in many cases a form of "tough love" which is a psychologized term for "biblically accountable". We are going to have to pray and minister to the spiritual weaknesses which they have allowed to bring this situation about in order to extract them from the very place their behavior towards the Truth has inevitably led them.

But in group settings we may need to also cling to the importance of many battles that are taking place. It is worth fighting for the restoration of God's Word not just for our self but for all those in the flock who will stream into an eventual state of lawlessness. It is worth fighting unbiblical worship and the incorporation of marketing psychology in the name of being "seeker sensitive". It is worth fighting for a congregation that will be visibly different from the world. It is in these and many related areas where our "discernment" of what is actually wrong with these nominal Christians can make a difference, not halting at identifying the false leaders for who and what they are, but in assessing why their followers are spiritually fruitless. Our efforts cannot stop at identifying the characteristics which define a false teacher or false prophet; we have to identify why our brothers and sisters are so susceptible to them. It is not so much what is going on with the *deceiver* as what is foundationally wrong with the *deceived*.

In other words, because the deceived no longer apply the standard of God's Word to their life, we cannot expect that they will turn around

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and begin holding false personalities accountable to God's Word. This is the delusion that some discernment ministries experience, thinking that if they only tell the truth about these figures that their audience will see the light and flee from them. Until the deceived see the truth about themselves, not only will the deceivers never go away, they will steadfastly continue to grow. The greater need is the exposure of the motives and behavior of the deceived when it comes to the most effective application of discernment.

I am going to shamelessly plug a friend's book, [The Love Revelation](#). After 16 years as a pastor, [Dr. Bill Walthall](#) recognized this essential problem, that the average Christian cannot seem to provide a biblical explanation of "love". (This is the first of what in all probability are going to ultimately be three books. The second one is currently being drafted.) This is not a textbook; it is not theological work intended for seminarians; it is intended to warmly educate everyday Christians as to the biblical definition of "love". This may not be the "end-all/be-all" solution, but I am convinced it is things like this which we can use to reach many of the lost because it addresses not what is wrong with the deceivers but what is wrong with the deceived.

Yes, I am a die-hard optimist. I think it is still possible to reach these people, but not by simply sending them a link to a website or story about the latest shenanigans of their replacement parent-figure. Their love is only going to return to normal temperature if they return to the priority of God's Word. Otherwise it is going to get much colder still.

In His Love,

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