

# A Handbook For False Teachers

**Introduction.** Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:1, “Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.” While we will deal in folly today, this is a very serious issue. Churches of the Lord have been torn apart by false teachers and it will be beneficial for Christians to know how they operate so that they can be on guard against their evil influence.

## ***I. Choose Your Target***

- A. Before selecting a flock to fleece it will be helpful to first size up the sheep. In this way it will be much easier to develop allies and identify future foes. In Romans 10:2 Paul provides a very useful way to categorize Christians.
1. The Type-A Christian.
    - a) This is your favorite type of Christian — no zeal and no knowledge. These people are, as someone once said, looking for a nice, light little religion, suitable for summer.
    - b) They do not care what you say and they do not care how you say it. To them the church is a country club and the preacher is the golf pro. The only sure bet with this group is that they will remain neutral and disinterested during any moral crisis.
  2. The Type-B Christian.
    - a) Many Type-A Christians began their spiritual journey as Type-B Christians. These members, mostly young, tend to be full of enthusiasm and lacking in knowledge.
    - b) Your greatest allies will come from within this group. They are often obsessed with “building a great church” and do not mind pushing the one that Jesus built out of the way in order to do it (Matthew 16:18, 24).
  3. The Type-C Christian.
    - a) Although Type-C Christians will not support you, neither will they cause you any trouble. They lack zeal but have knowledge.
    - b) They often complain, but they never take any action. Thus, while they certainly will not love you, you are in no danger since they will not love the truth either.
  4. The Type-D Christian.
    - a) This group can be trouble because these members have both zeal and knowledge. Fortunately, they are not very numerous and have experienced a dramatic drop in number during recent years partly due to successful efforts of men like you to discredit them.
    - b) Not only will this group notice when you twist the scriptures, they will actually complain. Even when you dismiss their complaints and denounce them from the pulpit they will still not give up. They actually feel as if the truth is something that has been entrusted to them, something for which they must contend (Jude 3; cp. Acts 17:11).
- B. Sizing up the congregation.
1. Look for an opening at a church in which the Type-A and Type-B members out number the Type-D members by at least five to one. Fortunately, this

- includes 90% of all congregations. By forming a strong coalition prior to the attack, the Type-D troublemakers can be defeated shortly after the first volley.
2. The eldership can be a problem.
    - a) Some Type-A churches have elderships composed of Type-C and Type-D Christians. This can be a big problem since the sluggish Type-C's will be led about by the troublesome Type-D's.
    - b) The only way around this problem is to find an eldership with a strong Type-B who can win the allegiance of the Type-C's. In this way the Type-D's can be forced out.

## **II. Get The Job**

- A. The way to get the job is, quite simply, to misapply the advice of Paul (1 Corinthians 9:22).
- B. Since most elders hate having to look for a preacher, they will often hire the first man that walks in and then fight tooth and nail to retain that man even when they discover that he is void of strength and truth.
- C. If you evade difficult questions and say what they want to hear then the job most likely will be yours (2 Timothy 4:3).

## **III. Lay The Groundwork**

- A. Here is where the fun begins. If you follow these steps very carefully the battle will be won before the fighting begins.
  1. How to win friends.
    - a) Endear yourself to the singles and the young married couples. Your strongest allies will come from the Type-B (zeal without knowledge) members in these groups. When you first arrive you should volunteer to teach their classes.
    - b) These groups will already be pushing for change for the sake of change when you arrive. Your job is to work them into a frenzy.
  2. How to influence people.
    - a) As you win friends you should also work at influencing people. Your best platform from which to do this is the pulpit. When you signed up as a minister you joined a very select group of teachers who can teach for 30-40 minutes at a time without fear of interruption.
    - b) You never have to stop and answer any questions. No matter how ludicrous your message is no one will speak up. Even when the lesson ends no one will make any pointed comments or ask any difficult questions. Instead, your entire audience will simply stand and sing. Truly a unique teaching position!
  3. What to preach about.
    - a) You should preach about love at every opportunity. Of course it goes without saying that you should not delve very deeply into this subject. Do not mention what it means to love God (John 14:15); just mention that it is something everyone should do (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Do not leave anyone with the impression that to love God we must obey God and that to obey God we must study His word. Instead, equate love with happiness

and comfort. If you are happy you must be loving; if you are not happy you must be unloving. To really stress the importance of happiness you might come up with some new terms to describe the worship service: the communion is a “love feast,” prayers are “heart chats,” and the Bible is a “love letter.”

- b) The next subject to preach about is criticism. Within a few short months every Type-B Christian in the place should feel that critics are unloving; critics are divisive; critics should be marked and avoided; critics are out to destroy the church (Matthew 7:1). The easiest way to achieve this goal is to equate critics with Pharisees and legalists. Critics are spiritually immature and need to be enlightened. Although it takes time and careful preparation to convince a large group of people that a 20-year-old new convert is spiritually more mature than a 60-year-old elder, it can be done.
4. What not to preach about.
- a) Never preach about moral issues such as drinking, gambling, or adultery. A more dangerous but often more effective approach is take a “progressive” stance on these issues. That is, moral issues are not important if we love each other — only a legalist would think otherwise.
  - b) Never preach about the distinctiveness of the church. Remember, we are all just one big happy family and if we are not happy then we must be unloving. You certainly do not want to disseminate any information about a pattern of organization and worship for the body of Christ (Hebrews 8:5).
  - c) Never preach about the qualifications of elders. Those who are least qualified will be your biggest allies when you make your move (cp. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Also, when the time comes to force out the Type-D elders you certainly do not want any questions regarding qualifications or scriptural authority to muddy your plan. Do not mention Titus 1:9. Now you will be able to preach against those terrible divisive people in Titus without having to explain why Titus clearly did not put elders who confront error into that category.
  - d) Never preach a sermon from Jude. Any book that talks about false teachers who creep in unnoticed, talks about clouds without water carried by the wind, or talks about those who use great swelling words and flattery to gain an advantage is definitely not going to further your agenda (vv. 3, 12-13, 16). Titus 1 and 2 Peter 2 also fall into this category.
- B. John Stuart Mill says, “Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think.”

#### **IV. Drop The Bomb**

- A. Your purpose at this stage is to straighten out those poor, misguided legalists who think they know something about the Bible. In accomplishing this objective it will help if you can be extremely condescending. Be dogmatic, but do not feel that you have to support everything (or anything) that you say. Only a legalist would request that you actually prove something using the scriptures. Instead, talk about new hermeneutical principles and ecumenical paradigms.

- B. The actual subject of your bomb is only a secondary concern. Some have used instrumental music, some have used baptism, some have used the role of women in the church, others have used the Pauline privilege. But be creative and use your imagination.
- C. As you drop the bomb, be sure to blur the line between matters of faith and matters of opinion. Never leave anyone with the impression that we can know the truth. Everything is a just a matter of opinion and your opinion is as good as the next person's. Anyone who claims otherwise is arrogant, intolerant, and puffed up with knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1). Misuse Titus 3:9 to categorize all disputes over doctrine as unprofitable (cp. 2 Peter 3:16).

#### **V. *Run For Cover***

- A. If you have done your job well, most members who disagree with your message will initially remain silent after the bomb due to their fear of being labeled an evil, regressive, divisive, hypercritical, unloving, hate-filled, intolerant, narrow-minded, hypocritical legalist. The first stage in dealing with those who do not remain silent is to divide and conquer them. Make each critic who approaches you feel like he or she is the only person in the entire congregation who disagreed with you. Never give any indication that others have voiced similar concerns. Later you can come down hard from the pulpit against those evil hatemongers who are puffed up with their own knowledge.
- B. Many critics will never make it past the first stage of your defense. For those that do, there is a second stage in which you play the role of a wounded servant of God who is battling with the evil Pharisees. Your standard patent-pending grin should at this stage be replaced with a sackcloth and ashes demeanor. Make it clear that those who spoke against you should have come to you in private like Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). If anyone mentions that Paul rebuked Peter in front of everyone (Galatians 2:11-15), simply say that any response to such a statement would be futile due to the critical, unloving attitude of the interrogator.
- C. The third stage will involve preaching some of your best sermons on division. It is very important that those who have complained about your teaching be labeled as divisive. Never mind that division in the New Testament is always attributed to those that teach error and never attributed to those who confront error (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11). After all, your critics are the ones causing all of the trouble. If they would just let it all drop then the rest of the church could go on its happy and loving way.

**Conclusion.** If you follow this plan then the congregation (or what is left) will be yours. When the dust settles you will have a building full of zealous know-nothings and an eldership that will jump through hoops if you threaten to leave. Keep everyone jumping for awhile then move on. It will be time to find a new world to conquer.

I am deeply indebted to Eric Hall for the use of his material.