

5 Critical Steps to Safely Handling a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Fairly recently I dealt with a wolf in sheep's clothing issue that was complicated and difficult. It amazes me that as I have talked with others I've learned that many people have gone through this kind of thing in the body of Christ, yet few people are talking about it. I think often we've all found ourselves experiencing the gash of a wolf, and because we genuinely want to think the best of the other people, we turn the other cheek. We think forgiveness means you keep staying vulnerable and rarely speak up.

Forgiveness doesn't mean allowing yourself to continue to be chewed on and devoured. Matthew 7:15 tells us to be aware that there are wolves in sheep's clothing seeking to devour the sheep. We also know from Scripture in the last days false prophets and these wolves will increase. People often have this misguided notion that these wolves will be obvious to recognize and would never dare set foot in church or on a platform. That's not true. There are wolves lurking in pews, sadly sometimes behind pulpits and out in the business arena. It's more common than people realize. This is not meant to make anyone fearful or paranoid, but it is meant to wake you up and teach you how to deal with these situations.

So how do you recognize a wolf in sheep's clothing? Become a fruit checker. Be very slow to enter in business deals, appoint people in your leadership and open your inner circles with people. When you do appoint people, do business deals with them or allow them in your world, don't ever do so out of fear, manipulation or lack of finding someone else to fill that role. I know that isn't what people want to hear, but like the old saying goes, "People are like tea bags; when the

heat gets turned up, the real them comes out.” Wolves will dangle fear in front of your eyes. They will try to convince you that they are the next anointed person and, if you don’t agree with them, then you’ll be missing your destiny. They thrive on intimidating people, and once they are crossed, they won’t just forgive someone and move on. They will go in for the kill. This is why you must pause, seek the Holy Spirit and check the fruit in people’s lives. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit and is needed in every believer’s life.

However, once you realize you’re dealing with a wolf, how do you handle the situation?

1. Pray! I know this seems like an easy solution, but really you need to hear from God on how to deal with each situation. Take a moment to step back from the scene. I’ve noticed a lot in life that when I am in the midst of the fire, sometimes it can be a challenge to discern what God is saying. Jesus was always getting alone with God. He often took a step back from the chaos of the disciples and people pulling on him to get fresh perspective on situations.

2. I’ve heard way too many stories of pastors and leadership knowing a particular individual is a wolf and allowing the person to devour their sheep. You cannot allow this to go on. Recently the Holy Spirit led me to Ezekiel 34. This Scripture is a charge where God is upset at how the shepherds have dealt with the sheep. He holds them accountable for allowing the sheep to be scattered and easy prey. Dear Shepherds and other leaders in the church, you must deal with wolf situations. You cannot run from them. You also can’t assume that just because you’re not the pastor you shouldn’t have to deal with a wolf. Pastors need the help of the mature believers.

As I am typing this, I feel that many want to argue with me. Don’t we want to minister to the wolf? Shouldn’t we be concerned about their salvation? Don’t we have an obligation there? Yes, I want the wolves to wake up from their deception

too, but how many sheep will you sacrifice in order to do so? Will you allow the 99 to be mauled in hopes the one will wake up? Let me put it to you this way: if you were dealing with a dog with rabies, would you allow that dog with rabies to bite all the other dogs? Of course you wouldn't. You'd separate the one with rabies.

What pastors and leaders fail to realize is when they are avoiding dealing with the wolf, those innocent sheep are being ravaged, and the devil is using this to destroy those sheep. We as leaders have an obligation to the entire group to call the situation out and deal with it as needed. For those who want to argue Luke 15:4 to me, which is the parable of the Lost Sheep where Jesus leaves the 99 to go after the one, absolutely Jesus does this. But I'm sure he left someone in charge to watch the 99 as he went after the one. He is going to make sure all of his sheep are taken care of. He is not going to throw the 99 off a cliff in hopes he can find the one.

3. The Bible is very clear on how to handle situations in the church (Matt 18:15-20). Basically it says that if you have a problem with your brother or sister in the Lord, go to them. If it's not dealt with, bring a witness. If it's still not dealt with go to leadership, then to the pastor. If it's something that is a perpetual sin, mark the person in the church, so that the sin doesn't affect the rest, and have nothing to do with them. Now before I get a whole bunch of emails telling me how they have seen this handled right or wrong, hear me out. First of all, marking a person in front of a congregation is extreme and isn't something that would be practiced often (at least I hope not), but the point to this is what I mentioned above: it's to protect the rest of the sheep. Ninety-nine percent of situations and disagreements in a church most likely do not need to be taken to this extreme. However, God put that in the Bible for a reason. It's for sheep protection. I also want to mention that nowhere does it

say here if a person offends you, then you need to go gossip about it either. You talk to the person and then bring in leadership. You allow a neutral third party into the disagreement.

4. Let your words be seasoned with love and discernment. Many people have this crazy notion that to love someone and to show love means that you just let them continue to use you. That is not the truth. That will tear you apart. Loving people is also bringing correction. Absolutely God cares for that wolf, but like any wild animal, sometimes you shouldn't get in a cage with it. You can love it and pray for it from afar. People often like to portray the image of Jesus with the children of Israel crawling up in his lap. He is that. However, he is also the same Jesus who went into the temple and drove the sellers that were manipulating His people out by a whip. He is also the same Jesus who called the Pharisees a bunch of "white-washed tombs" and "a brood of vipers." Jesus had no problem calling people out.

5. Stop being manipulated. Stop fearing man. I find that many people who get entangled in the trap of a wolf often were manipulated and ultimately were afraid to stand up to the person. Sometimes the victims of wolves don't speak up because they "don't want to make waves." But I want to ask you a question. If you are on the side of righteousness' sake, then why do you fear? If God is for you, seriously, who can be against you? I've watched these situations play out sometimes from afar and sometimes personally. God will bring this situation around and prepare a table for you in the midst of your enemies (Psalm 23:5)

Wolf encounters aren't easy. They are often messy and are challenging to work through, but no matter what happens, God is bigger than any pawn of the devil. The truth of the matter is if the enemy didn't think he needed to stop you, he wouldn't have tried to mess with you. You have to face each situation with wisdom and determine that the fear of man will

not stop you. We must protect the innocent sheep, and we must raise up a standard from the pulpits and the pews. We must be flocks that wolves know they will not be able to hide among. The more mature must be like a sheepdog, ready to bark at the wolf and protect the innocent if needed. We cannot allow our flocks to be ravaged. We must raise up a standard for God's righteousness and refuse to be moved. {eo}

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