

A Message to Heresy Hunters Seeking Strange Fire Where There Is None

Since I was first born again, God has allowed me to witness **spirits of error** and full-blown **deception** over and over. And He's called me to confront it more times than not. I've wept over souls falling headlong into pits of deception and been persecuted for walking away from ministries where **strong delusions** were leading people away from Jesus.

But make no mistake, there's a huge difference between discerning a **spirit of error** that keeps people from a full understanding of Jesus and accusing people of full-blown **heresy** that keeps people from receiving salvation. Even though deception is running rampant in the body of Christ, I shun the work of **heresy hunters** who have made it their mission to discredit anyone and everyone with whose theology they share a point of contention.

I get emails from **heresy hunters** every day suggesting I expose some ministry or another (and sometimes calling me foul names for hitting "delete"). Most of the Christian personalities these **heresy hunters** are working to expose aren't heretics at all, though most flow in a measure of error because none of us have it all right all the time. Some are clearly deceived, but they still don't qualify as heretics. I also get emails from **heresy hunters** who sometimes disagree with what I write. But an email last week from a woman named Yvonne took the heresy hunting to a hellish level.

A Heresy Hunter Baits Me

"As I read the seven signs of a cult as outlined by Mike Bickel (sic), I must say my extensive experience with IHOP members, an IHOP church and the written and recorded claims of

IHOP founder Mike Bickel (sic), IHOP fits all seven signs of a cult!," she argued. "You should read this online piece from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry."

The **Holy Spirit** prompted me to take the time to click the link and read the material. It was utter nonsense. Noteworthy is the fact that the author of the piece quoted extensively from Pastor John MacArthur's work to discredit the **International House of Prayer** (IHOP) in Kansas City, a 24/7 **prayer** and **worship** movement led by Mike Bickle. Also noteworthy is the fact that McArthur is organizing a "strange fire" conference in October, claiming that the **charismatic movement** "offers to God unacceptable worship, distorted worship. It blasphemes the Holy Spirit. It attributes to the Holy Spirit even the work of Satan."

Dr. Michael Brown has been pleading with Pastor MacArthur's ministry to sit down and discuss his inflammatory claims about the **charismatic movement**. Brown has appealed to him to embrace God's true fire. Brown noted how Pastor MacArthur's scathing indictment names "fine godly leaders like Mike Bickle and Lou Engle, claiming that they are guilty of blaspheming the Spirit."

Condemning Me to Hell

Yvonne seems to be coming from the same spirit. Again, after I reviewed the material she sent I told her it was nonsense. Her response to me: "Depart from me I never knew you, is what you will hear when you stand before Him, for promoting and profiting from a heretical cult. I should have realized you were part of it."

How sad for the likes of Pastor MacArthur and Yvonne, both of whom I am convinced love God and His Word, to harass and **persecute** their brothers and sisters in Christ in this manner. Of course, Yvonne was quoting from the passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus told many who will say to Him,

‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:22-24)

Yvonne’s indictment doesn’t bother me a bit. I just look back to the introduction of the Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5: 11-12).

As much as I respect those who are faithful witnesses to the truth—and as much as I acknowledge there is **strange fire** in the **charismatic movement** and deception (and even heresy) in some camps in the body of Christ, we have to be extremely cautious in flippantly condemning someone to hell because they don’t agree with us.

When it comes to **heresy** we expose it and refuse to fellowship with those propagating it, but even then we don’t chase them down and persecute them. We pray that God will break in with light and expose the darkness that has clouded their minds. To take any other approach is simply a wrong spirit that could ultimately lead you into a deeper deception than the one you believe they are exposing. Amen.

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