

# Discerning the Wolves, Sheep and Horses in Your Church

*Note: This is Part 1 of a two-part series. For Part 2, where I describe the characteristics of sheep and horses, [click here](#).*

The Bible uses certain animals as metaphors to depict certain kinds of people in the kingdom. Pastors and senior leaders of organizations need to discern at least three kinds of people in their organizations to effectively lead.

Although most people may have a mixture of all three traits at times in their lives, it is very possible that either the negative or positive traits of a person can suck them fully into either the dark side or the light of the kingdom of God. It is inevitable that every growing organization and/or church will attract all three of these kinds of people simultaneously.

Following are some of the main characteristics of wolves, sheep and horses as based on my observations during almost 30 years of ministry in the church and marketplace.

## **Wolves**

### **1. Wolves say yes outwardly to spiritual authority but say no in their hearts.**

Wolves attempt to fool the shepherds among them by outwardly being agreeable to the vision, ministry and responsibilities of the organization but inwardly they have no intention of fully obeying spiritual authority. In the beginning, they will do the absolute minimum of what is required—or maybe even excel—but it is merely for the purpose of positioning themselves into a place of trust among the leadership so they can leverage more influence and fulfill their fleshly schemes.

## **2. Wolves have their own vision.**

Senior leaders make mistakes when they think division in their ranks only comes from gossip or slander. There is more division in churches and organizations than most leaders realize because its covert operation is not based on slander but on hidden agendas. Any person who perpetuates their own vision within the overarching vision of a church or organization is in fact a divisive person and a wolf in sheep's clothing.

## **3. Wolves are not ministerially accountable and walk in the dark.**

Any person or secondary leader who doesn't allow their overseer to see what kind of work they are doing, gets annoyed when asked for reports, shuns honest open relationships and accountability or obstructs usual communication systems is potentially a wolf in the making.

## **4. Wolves are not authentic because they attempt to look like sheep.**

People who are not authentic to themselves are candidates for turning on others at any given time. If you are not true to yourself and to whom God made you, you will not be true to other people. Wolves wear sheep's clothing because they attempt to fit into the overall scheme and structure of an organization or church. That is to say, they fit right into all of the cultural norms of their surroundings.

For example, if they are in a church, they will regularly attend church services and leadership meetings, pay their tithes, perform ministry tasks and attempt to outwardly excel in spiritual disciplines more than anyone else. Most pastors are preaching every Sunday to a percentage of people who are wolves since they have no discernment, or because their church is too large for them to smoke the wolves out. Given time, wolves will attempt to position themselves in some way for

more influence so, generally speaking, a senior leader will eventually find out who these people are.

#### **5. Wolves position themselves to be close to those in power.**

As stated in the previous point, wolves crave proximity to power. They will attempt to garner favor with the senior leader by acts of service, sacrifice, financial giving and flattering the leaders among them who are the most susceptible to false praise. For example, if the senior leader is not accessible enough, wolves will work to attach themselves to secondary leaders they perceive have influence with the senior leader. They do this to curry favor with the secondary leader so they can slowly build another infrastructure loyal to a subversive agenda instead of to the senior leader and the vision of the organization.

#### **6. Wolves desire the perks of the organization without paying the price for the organization.**

I have learned that those who really have a sincere heart will function in any capacity without a title or position as long as they are properly stewarding their gifts. Since wolves don't want to pay the price over the long term, they position themselves to receive accolades, prestige and a platform as quickly as possible—even over those who have paid the price for the organization for many years.

Senior leaders have to be wary of those who constantly crave position, titles and authority without proving themselves over the long haul.

#### **7. Wolves camouflage their motives and actions with spirituality.**

These people are not open and broken regarding their personal flaws. Rather, they attempt to put up a veneer of super spirituality to fool others to the point that even the senior leader is not really spiritual in comparison to them. Their

criticisms are not outwardly slanderous but involve subtleties and innuendos that involve second-guessing senior leadership decisions, implying the church isn't spiritual enough or that the senior leader doesn't really hear from God and doesn't pray much and so on. Basically, a wolf is trying to do anything that can successfully instill seeds of doubt about the senior leader in the minds of the people around them.

#### **8. Wolves use and abuse people to accomplish their own agenda.**

Although wolves come off as if they love everyone around them, they are only using these people to gain influence and power. As soon as they have what they want from these naive people, they eat them, spit them out and move on to the next person who can deliver them the platform they desire.

#### **9. Wolves can't be led but must be driven away by shepherds.**

Some senior leaders attempt to rehabilitate every person who comes into their church or organization. This is a huge mistake! A wolf will always be a wolf, a sheep always a sheep and a horse always a horse, no matter how much you fast and pray for them. Once a person is identified as a wolf, a shepherd should confer with other leaders for confirmation of this fact, then monitor this person closely and not allow them any harmful leverage in the church.

In most cases, senior leader can't just throw the wolf out. If the senior leader does this, innocent people who have already been influenced by the wolf will get hurt as well. The senior leader has to wait until the wolf reveals their true motives by "giving them enough rope to hang themselves." When the issue is manifest, the wolf can be driven out.

#### **10. Wolves attempt to destroy the shepherd as a way to consume the sheep.**

By and large, wolves are in competition with the senior leader of an organization they are a part of, instead of serving as

their promoter and protector. The reason for this is because the shepherd (senior leader) has what they crave: the most influence in the organization. Because of this, wolves will do everything in their power to tear down the shepherd so the sheep are vulnerable to their wishes.

#### **11. Wolves are not sons but bloodsuckers of the house.**

Years ago, after a very difficult time in our church, the Lord spoke through a member of our church who said God was going to give me “sons and daughters who would never betray me.” Since that time, I have built the leadership of our church with sons and daughters of the house, not with those merely desiring a position for their gifting to be displayed. This strategy has served our church well the past 20 years. I encourage all pastors to build key leadership with these criteria.

Wolves are those who are not grateful for what the senior leader does or what the organization has to offer. Instead, they are always complaining about their needs not being met. No matter how many times you aid a wolf, they will always crave more fresh meat to eat and blood to drink.