

When Satan Goes to Church

2 Corinthians 11:13–15

In this chapter, Wiersbe makes a truthful, eye-opening statement.

He says, “Satan doesn’t always fight the church—sometimes he joins it.”

Satan’s most dangerous work is not done outside the church, but inside it, where truth is:

- Subtly distorted.
- Motives are corrupted.
- Appearances replace spiritual reality.
- Wiersbe warns that Satan prefers imitation over opposition.

Satan is not threatened by church attendance, religious language, or ministry activity.

He is threatened by truth, humility, and discernment.

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

“For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no great thing if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their destiny will be according to their works.”

-2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Satan’s servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

Error often looks attractive, helpful, and reasonable.

Deception thrives where discernment is weak.

Truth: The closer a lie is to the truth, the more dangerous it becomes.

There are six ways Satan works in the church:

I. Satan Can Be Found in the Pulpit

False teachers are not always obvious.

They speak truth selectively and subtly promote themselves.

Their ministry emphasizes personality over Christ.

Satan disguises his servants as ministers of righteousness.

A preacher may possess education, morality, and charisma while lacking a genuine relationship with Christ.

Wiersbe Insight: The test of a servant is not charisma, but faithfulness to Christ.

Warning Signs:

- False teaching.
- Compromising Scripture.
- Preaching man’s ideas instead of God’s Word.
- Outward religion without true conversion.

II. Satan Can Be Found in the Pews.

Wiersbe says, "It is easier to become a member of the average local church than it is to join a civic club."

Not everyone who joins a church belongs to Christ.

"Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared." **1 Timothy 4:1-2**

Matthew 13, Jesus gives the parable about the wheat and the weeds.

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while people were sleeping, his enemy came, sowed weeds among the wheat, and left." **Matthew 13:24-25**

"'An enemy did this!' he told them." **Matthew 13:28**

Warning Signs:

- Profession without transformation.
- Leadership chosen for popularity rather than character.
- Immature believers placed in influential positions.

False believers may eventually influence the church, especially if placed in leadership before genuine spiritual maturity is evident.

"Too many churches put new Christians into places of leadership instead of giving them opportunity to mature."

III. Satan Can Be Present in Worship.

Wiersbe's point is that worship must be governed by both the Spirit and the Word.

Satan can work through:

- Dead formalism.
- Emotional fanaticism.
- Disorder.

"Since God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints," **-1 Corinthians 14:33**

- False teaching through music.

He says, "A singer has no more right to sing a lie than a preacher has to preach a lie."

- Entertainment replacing worship.

"Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." -

Colossians 3:16

IV. Satan Can Be Found in the Offering.

Generosity can flow from the wrong place.

Even giving can become an avenue for pride, hypocrisy, or self-promotion rather than worship.

If it does not flow from a place of worship, then the giving is misplaced.

How to Give—Matthew 6:1-4

Wrong Giving— Acts 5 (Ananias & Sapphira)

Satan filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit.

Religious appearance masked a deceitful heart.

Warning Signs:

- Giving for recognition
- Seeking applause
- Manipulating generosity for influence

V. Satan Often Appears in Business Meetings and Leadership.

Church conflict often arises when earthly wisdom replaces heavenly wisdom.

Wiersbe states, "There is wisdom from above, but there is also wisdom from beneath."

"Who is wise and has understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom's gentleness. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't brag and deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace." **—James 3:13-18**

Wisdom from beneath is "earthly, unspiritual, demonic."

This wisdom will gradually affect the church, and before long Satan is in charge.

Satan frequently works through selfish ambition, pride, and power struggles.

Wiersbe says, "There are no seniority rights in the local church."

Evidence of Satan's Influence:

- Bitter jealousy
- Selfish ambition
- Pride
- Personal agendas
- Control
- Refusal to submit

Wiersbe titles this person a "sanctified obstructionist", who wants to run everything and have their own way.

VI. Satan Works Through an Unforgiving Spirit.

Small offenses can divide an entire church when forgiveness is absent.

Satan delights in resentment, bitterness, and unresolved conflict.

"Petty things keep the saints from enjoying one another."

"Happy is that church whose members have good memories for God's blessings and bad memories for man's sins."

Warning Signs:

- Holding grudges
- Pettiness
- Refusing reconciliation
- Gossip
- Division

The Solution:

- Speak the truth in love.
- Practice forgiveness.
- Pursue unity.
- Deal lovingly but firmly with divisive influences.

Every believer—not just pastors—has the responsibility to recognize Satan's schemes within the church.

The church's defense is:

- Truth over deception.
- Discernment over naivety.
- Humility over pride.
- Forgiveness over bitterness.
- Biblical leadership over personality-driven leadership.
- Spirit-filled, Word-centered worship over entertainment or empty ritual.

Satan does not have to shut down the church to accomplish his purposes. He only has to subtly redirect it from God's mission.

His greatest victories often come through deception rather than destruction.

When Satan goes to church, our response is not fear. Our response is faithful discernment.

The church must remain anchored in God's Word, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and vigilant against anything that pulls it away from the truth.

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." **-1 John 4:1**