

Sunday, April 12, 2026

God & Governance Session 7 - Standing Alert: Recognizing False Teachers and Spiritual Deception in Our World

Class Summary

This teaching session addresses the critical issue of false teachers and spiritual deception in contemporary society, drawing parallels between challenges faced by the church in Rwanda and those in America. The sermon emphasizes that false teachers are not limited to one political party or geographical location but are pervasive across all sectors of society. Through examination of multiple scripture passages, the teaching explores how believers can identify false prophets through their fruit, recognize the work of Satan who disguises himself as an angel of light, and remain vigilant against spiritual deception. The sermon stresses the importance of knowing God's Word intimately, staying connected to Christ as branches to a vine, and maintaining spiritual alertness through prayer and community. Rather than promoting fear, the teaching equips believers with biblical tools for discernment while emphasizing humility, gentleness in correction, and the armor of God as protection against spiritual attacks.

Key Points

- False teachers exist across all political parties and denominations, not just in specific groups
- The prosperity gospel is a major false teaching exported from America, particularly affecting Africa
- True believers are recognized by their fruit (Galatians 5:22-23), not merely by their claims of faith
- Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and uses deception as his primary weapon
- False teachers can be identified by examining whether their lives align with Scripture, not just their words
- Those who never admit wrongdoing or sin are liars, as all believers walk in both light and occasional darkness
- Believers must test the spirits and evaluate teachers based on biblical truth, not popularity or charisma

- The armor of God (Ephesians 6) provides protection when we cannot immediately discern truth from falsehood
- Community and fellowship are essential for staying alert and helping one another recognize deception
- Humility in prayer, casting cares on God, demonstrates proper spiritual posture against the enemy
- Correction should be offered with gentleness, but there comes a point when persistent rejection requires stepping back
- Being alert and sober-minded is critical, as Satan prowls like a lion seeking whom he may devour

Scripture References

- 1 Timothy 4:1-2 (Spirit explicitly says some will desert the faith for deceiving spirits)
- Matthew 7:15-20 (Warning about false prophets in sheep's clothing; knowing them by their fruit)
- John 10:1-11 (Jesus as the Good Shepherd; thieves come to steal, kill, and destroy)
- 1 John 4:1-6 (Test the spirits; many false prophets have gone out into the world)
- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15 (Satan disguises himself as an angel of light)
- John 8:44-47 (Satan is a murderer and the father of lies)
- 1 Peter 5:5-11 (Be alert; your enemy the devil prowls like a roaring lion)
- 2 Timothy 2:22-26 (Pursue righteousness in community; escape the devil's trap)
- Matthew 7:1-6 (Remove the beam from your own eye; don't cast pearls before swine)
- Galatians 5:19-23 (Works of the flesh versus fruit of the Spirit)
- 1 John 1:5-10, 2:1-2 (Walking in light; confessing sin; Jesus as our advocate)
- Ephesians 6:10-18 (The armor of God)

Discussion Questions

- How can we discern between genuine spiritual leadership and false teachers who claim to be anointed by God, especially in political contexts?
- In what ways might we unknowingly accept a 'false gospel' such as the prosperity gospel or the 'American Christian gospel' in our own lives?
- What does it mean practically to 'know the voice of Jesus' well enough to recognize when someone is not speaking with His voice?
- How can we evaluate the fruit in someone's life when their public persona might be carefully curated to hide their true character?
- The sermon mentions that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. How can we protect ourselves from deception that appears good and righteous on the surface?
- What is the balance between judging righteously within the church and avoiding the hypocrisy Jesus warns about in Matthew 7?
- How should we respond when we recognize that a fellow believer has been trapped by lies or false teachings, especially when they refuse correction?
- In what ways does humility, as described in 1 Peter 5, serve as a defense against both pride and the schemes of the devil?
- How can we cultivate the discipline to stay alert and sober-minded in an age of constant digital distraction and information overload?
- What role does community play in helping us recognize false teaching and stay rooted in truth, according to the passages discussed?

Homework - Staying Grounded in a World of False Voices

1. Be Alert and Discerning

Scripture warns that false teachers and spiritual deception are normal in “later times” (1 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 7:15). Don’t live on spiritual autopilot.

- **Pay attention to what you’re hearing:** sermons, podcasts, influencers, politicians who claim to speak for God.
- Ask, “Is this consistent with the character of Jesus and the teaching of Scripture?”
- When something sounds off, don’t swallow it because it’s popular or emotionally stirring. Pause, question it, and examine it.

2. Keep Returning to Scripture

The safest way to recognize lies is to be deeply familiar with the truth.

- **Make regular Bible reading non-negotiable.** Even one chapter a day in the Gospels or Epistles will sharpen your discernment.
- When you hear a spiritual claim, **go to the text:** “Where do we see this in Scripture? What does the Bible actually say?”
- Let **clear passages** shape how you understand confusing ones, and let the whole story of Scripture keep you grounded in the true gospel: saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

3. Pray for Discernment and for Others

Spiritual deception is a spiritual battle; we will not win it with intelligence alone.

- Regularly ask God, “Show me truth, expose lies, and keep me from being led astray.”
- Pray **before** you consume a lot of teaching or media: “Lord, help me test what I hear and hold fast to what is good.”
- Intercede for others—especially those who seem confused, angry, or captivated by false gospels or political idols. Ask God to open their eyes and bring them back to His Word and His Son.

4. Evaluate Teachers by Their Fruit and Their Gospel

Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” or uses Christian language is speaking for Christ.

- Use **Jesus’ test**: “You will recognize them by their fruit” (Matthew 7:16–20). Look for:
 - The **fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22–23): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
 - Honesty, repentance, humility, submission to Scripture.

Also evaluate their **message**:

- Does it match the biblical gospel (Ephesians 2:8–9), or does it sound like prosperity, “good outweighs bad,” or God-and-country religion?
- Do they ever admit sin or error, or do they always present themselves as righteous and right?

When you see persistent bad fruit and a distorted gospel, **do not follow that voice**, no matter how gifted, famous, or powerful the person is.

Put simply: stay awake, stay in the Word, stay in prayer, and stay focused on Christ and His true gospel as you evaluate every human teacher or leader and every spiritual voice.

Extra Credit Homework: Discernment, False Teachers, and Spiritual Warfare

Assignment 1 – Compare & Bible Explore

a. Compare Gospels (short chart)

In your own words, briefly describe:

- The **biblical gospel** (use Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 3:23–26).
- The **prosperity gospel** (give money/faith → guaranteed health/wealth).

- The “**good outweighs the bad**” gospel (God weighs deeds on a scale).
- The **American civil religion gospel** (God-and-country = basically “saved”).

Make a simple 4-column chart with:

- Biblical Gospel | Prosperity | Good vs. Bad | American Civil Religion
- And rows:
- How you’re “saved”
 - View of suffering
 - What’s promised

In 3–4 sentences: What are the main differences between the biblical gospel and the others? Which false gospel is most tempting to you, and why?

b. Bible Reading & Questions

Read these passages and answer each in 1–3 sentences:

Matthew 7:15–20:

How does Jesus say we recognize false prophets?

1 John 4:1–3:

What does John tell us to do with “spirits” and teachers?

2 Corinthians 11:13–15:

How does Paul describe false apostles and Satan?

1 Peter 5:8–9:

How is the devil described? What are we commanded to do?

1 John 1:5–9:

What does it mean to “walk in darkness” while claiming fellowship with God? What should we do with our sins?

Assignment 2 – Practical Discernment in Real Life

a. Evaluate One Public Voice

Choose one person who publicly claims to be Christian or speaks “for God” (pastor, author, influencer, or politician).

Write:

Their name (for yourself; you don't have to share it publicly).

1–2 specific statements they've made about God/faith/morality (quote or summarize).

Using the passages above, especially Matthew 7:15–20 and 1 John 4:1–3:

What “fruit” do you see (in words and actions)?

Does their message line up with the **biblical gospel**, or resemble a **false gospel** from Assignment 1?

Write one short paragraph:

Based on Scripture, would you say their teaching is mostly sound, mixed, or fundamentally dangerous? Why?

b. **Apply to Yourself**

Read Galatians 5:19–23.

Mark 1–2 “works of the flesh” that tempt you most.

Mark 1–2 “fruit of the Spirit” you especially want God to grow in you.

Write a short prayer (3–6 sentences) confessing sin, asking God to help you walk in the light and to grow those specific fruit.

c. **One Concrete Step This Week**

Choose ONE:

- Fast for 7 days from one news source or social media feed that stirs up anger/fear; use that time for Bible reading or prayer.
- Confess one specific area of hidden or excused sin to God (and a trusted believer if wise) and take one step of repentance.
- Encourage one believer who seems shaken/confused: call/text/meet and share a Scripture and prayer (no political arguments). Write down which one you chose and when you did/will do it.

5-Day Devotional: Discerning Truth in a World of Deception

DAY 1: THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Reading: John 10:1-11

Devotional: In a world saturated with competing voices, Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd whose sheep know His voice. The false teachers come only to steal, kill, and destroy, but Christ came to give abundant life. How do we recognize His voice amid the noise? Through intimate relationship. Just as sheep recognize their shepherd through constant companionship, we discern Christ's voice by abiding in Him daily through Scripture and prayer. The counterfeit becomes obvious when we know the genuine. Today, ask yourself: Am I spending enough time with Jesus to recognize when someone speaks contrary to His character? Cultivate that relationship, for in knowing Him deeply, you'll instinctively recognize what is false.

DAY 2: TESTING THE SPIRITS

Reading: 1 John 4:1-6

Devotional: John's urgent command to "test the spirits" reminds us that spiritual discernment is not optional—it's essential. Many false prophets have gone out into the world, and our responsibility is to evaluate what we hear against the truth of God's Word. This isn't about being cynical or suspicious of everyone, but about being biblically grounded and alert. The primary test John offers is simple: Does this teaching confess Jesus Christ as Lord who came in the flesh? Yet we must go deeper, examining the fruit of those who claim to speak for God. Are you equipped to test what you hear? Commit today to knowing Scripture well enough that false teaching becomes immediately recognizable, like a musician detecting an off-key note.

DAY 3: KNOWN BY THEIR FRUIT

Reading: Matthew 7:15-23; Galatians 5:16-25

Devotional: Jesus gives us a practical diagnostic tool: examine the fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. When evaluating teachers, leaders, or our own lives, we must look beyond words to outcomes. The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—should

characterize those who truly walk with God. Conversely, the works of the flesh reveal those operating in darkness, regardless of their religious language. This principle applies equally to political leaders, pastors, and ourselves. Take inventory today: What fruit is your life producing? Are you nurturing the Spirit's work in you, or are you tolerating patterns that contradict your confession of faith?

DAY 4: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Reading: 1 John 1:5-2:2

Devotional: One unmistakable mark of a false teacher is the refusal to admit wrongdoing. John makes it clear: if we claim to have no sin, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar. Authentic Christianity involves walking in the light, which includes honest confession when we step into darkness. This doesn't mean we remain in sin, but that we acknowledge it, confess it, and receive God's faithful forgiveness. Be wary of leaders who never admit mistakes, who never apologize, who always deflect blame. Such pride reveals hearts disconnected from truth. Examine your own heart today: Are you quick to confess and repent, or do you hide, justify, and deflect? Walking in the light requires humility, but it leads to genuine fellowship with God and others.

DAY 5: STANDING FIRM WITH THE ARMOR OF GOD

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 5:5-11

Devotional: Our enemy is real, strategic, and relentless—prowling like a lion seeking someone to devour. But we are not defenseless. God has provided complete armor for spiritual warfare: truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and His Word. Notice that verse 18 emphasizes prayer and alertness—we must "pray at all times in the Spirit" and "be alert." This is not passive Christianity but active, vigilant faith. When you cannot discern the source of attack, when lies seem convincing, when you feel vulnerable—put on the full armor. Humble yourself under God's mighty hand, cast your anxieties on Him, and resist the devil, standing firm in faith. Remember: you are not alone. Believers worldwide face the same battles, and the God who called you will strengthen and establish you.

As you complete this devotional plan, commit to ongoing discernment. Stay rooted in Scripture, connected to Christian community, and alert to the spiritual realities around you. The truth will set you free.

