

Connect Service Notes

Living Well: Kingdom Principles for a Flourishing (Part 6): Avoid false teaching

KTLC | 2PMam 11 October

Key Scripture: Colossians 2:20-23

Who Is Forming You?: Every one of us is being formed by the voices we trust, the images we absorb, the habits we repeat and the communities to which we belong. False teaching is dangerous because it rarely identifies itself as false. It may sound confident, quote Scripture and appear deeply spiritual, while gradually drawing us away from the freedom and transforming power of Christ. In Colossians 2:20–23, Paul gives us three ways to recognise and resist it.

1. False Teaching Adds Something to Christ: The false teachers in Colossae implied that faith in Jesus was not enough. To become truly spiritual, believers supposedly needed additional rules, practices and experiences. This remains an important test of Christian teaching. We should be cautious whenever someone suggests that we need Jesus plus a particular leader, political ideology, private revelation, ministry system or set of cultural preferences. Faithful Christian leaders do not make people dependent upon themselves. They help people understand Scripture, recognise the voice of Jesus and grow into mature discipleship. Ask: Does this teaching make Christ more central, or does it make the teacher increasingly important?

2. False Teaching Substitutes External Control for Internal Transformation: The commands “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” offered the Colossians a visible and measurable form of religion. Rules can provide boundaries, but external restrictions cannot, by themselves, transform the heart. A person can follow a demanding religious code while remaining proud, dishonest, envious or unkind. Fear may produce compliance, and guilt may alter behaviour, but neither necessarily produces spiritual maturity. The Kingdom of God asks a deeper question than simply, “What are you avoiding?” It asks, “What kind of person are you becoming?” The Holy Spirit forms people who are truthful, generous, forgiving, courageous and consistent. Christian maturity is not demonstrated by how many things we condemn, but by whether the character of Jesus is becoming visible in us.

3. False Teaching Appears Wise but Cannot Change Us: Paul acknowledges that false teaching may have “an appearance of wisdom.” It can seem disciplined, impressive and spiritually intense. But intensity is not the same as truth, charisma is not character, and popularity is not evidence of God’s approval. Paul’s final verdict is that such regulations are “of no value” in overcoming disordered desires. They may manage outward behaviour, but they cannot renew the inner life.

Only Christ, through the Holy Spirit, can bring that transformation. This usually happens through the patient practices of repentance, obedience, prayer, Scripture and honest Christian community. When evaluating teaching, we should ask:

- Is Scripture being explained faithfully or used to support someone’s existing opinion?
- Can the leader and the teaching be questioned?
- Does it produce mature disciples or dependent followers?
- Are humility, holiness, integrity and love becoming visible?
- How are weak, questioning or inconvenient people treated?

The real test of teaching is not simply whether it moves people in a meeting, but what kind of people it forms in everyday life.

The Central Challenge: Remember these three truths:

1. False teaching adds something to Christ.
2. False teaching substitutes external control for internal transformation.
3. False teaching appears wise but lacks the power to change us.

Do not surrender your freedom to teaching that makes Jesus smaller, leaders larger, grace narrower or fear stronger. Stay close to Scripture, remain rooted in accountable Christian community, listen to the Holy Spirit and keep Christ at the centre. Living well is not the art of appearing spiritual. It is the lifelong surrender through which the Holy Spirit forms the character of Jesus within us.

Discussion Questions

1. Who or what is currently having the greatest influence on the way you understand success, identity and spiritual maturity?
2. What are some contemporary examples of "Jesus plus" teaching, where something extra is presented as necessary for spiritual acceptance, maturity or significance?
3. Where might you be relying on external rules, appearances or religious activity instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to address your motives and desires?
4. What practical tests can your cell group use to distinguish between teaching that merely appears spiritual and teaching that genuinely forms people into the likeness of Jesus?