

PASTORAL EVALUATION

II PETER 2:10-16

**GOD EVALUATES PASTORS ACCORDING TO THEIR HUMILITY,
PURITY, AND SUBMISSION.**

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PASTORAL EVALUATION

II PETER 2:10-16

I spent a lot of time making sure that we don't get fooled by false teachers. In other words, I have been preaching through II Peter as if it were a warning to us to be on guard by studying our bibles diligently and pursuing holy lifestyles as individuals and as a church. And I think that is the intent of Peter's letter.

However, I think that as I read and study through this book as a pastor, it is also a warning to me, other pastors, and church leaders to make sure that we are not false teachers. In other words, we can use these characteristics of false teachers and use them as self-evaluation tools.

This morning, we are going to see that false teachers are characterized by arrogance, sexual immorality, and greed. When I was in Chaplains' basic training for the Army, they told us there were several chaplains serving time in the Army prison. We looked at each other wondering what a Chaplain could do that would end him or her up in jail.

The instructor simply said, "Sam." He went on to say, "Sex, Alcohol, Money people. If you want to go to prison as a chaplain, just mess up in one of those areas; sex, alcohol, or money." I've never forgotten that.

I think that's a good way for pastors to keep ourselves in check. Some things we have to watch more carefully than others.

For me, I don't worry much about having an affair or getting involved with women. That's probably because of the low self-esteem I started with and because of all the reinforcement I've gotten from my wife through the years.

Let me give you an example. One day I was in my study while my wife and her sister were talking in the kitchen. I don't think they realized I was in the next room.

My wife told her sister, I had a dream last night. It was fantastic! I dreamt John and I

were on vacation at the beach, when all of a sudden I found a bottle washed up on shore. I pulled out the cork, and Whoosh, a genie appeared. He said, “You have released me from my prison. I will grant you 3 wishes. And there’s one added bonus. In addition to giving you what you ask for, I’ll give your husband double.”

I said, “Let’s get started. First of all, I’d like a million dollars.” And Poof, there it was. I looked over, and there was two million dollars at my John’s feet.

The genie then asked me what I wanted next. I said, “I’d like a huge beachfront mansion.” Poof, I looked back and there were three mansions, one for me and two for John. My sister-in-law said, “So in the dream John got double of what you asked for. So what did you wish for on your last wish? Luig said, “I told the genie to scare me half to death.”

So now you see why I don’t think I’ll ever be tempted to have an affair or get involved with women.

One of the things churches do each year is a pastoral evaluation. The board reviews numbers, finances, membership, and the general performance of the pastor.

However, I think pastors should be harder on themselves than any board or outside evaluation could ever be on them. We pastors should take passages like this morning’s and self-evaluate ourselves according to God’s standards. Based on that approach, we arrive at the main idea of this morning’s text. **GOD EVALUATES PASTORS ACCORDING TO THEIR HUMILITY, PURITY, AND SUBMISSION.** I came to define these qualities by taking the negative characteristics Peter describes false teachers with and then finding the opposite positive traits that God expects authentic pastors to exhibit, and using them as a tool to measure how I’m doing.

In verses 10-12 Peter says that false teachers are evaluated by arrogance. In other words, **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR ARROGANCE.** Whether we like it or not, pastors are placed in positions of authority and with that authority comes power. Power is a very seductive thing that all of us have to be careful of. Lord Acton said, “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” That is a quote that ought to strike fear in any pastor or church

leader. I don't think having power and authority over one another was part of the original creation intent. We were to have dominion over the earth and animals, but never over one another. Relationships deteriorate after the fall, and ever since; some sort of human hierarchy became necessary so that we would not end up killing off the human race. The problem with power is that it is extremely intoxicating and dangerous. Most of you, I'm sure have by now seen the "Lord of the rings" trilogy. Next time you watch it, pay special attention to what takes place as people experience the power of the rings.

I think perhaps that's why it is so difficult for politicians to remain upright and moral in their conduct. When we get into positions of power, we can justify almost anything. And oftentimes we justify our behaviors in the name of trying to do something good for those under our control. I can't solve politicians' problems. I can't even solve the church's problems. About all I can do is keep a careful watch over my soul and continue to instruct your leaders as to the dangers of power. Just like politicians, it becomes very easy for us to justify all sorts of things based on our notion that we are trying to do good for you, the congregation.

The best we can do as leaders is to remain humble and submissive. The first half of verse 10 describes false teachers as people who despise authority. Grammatically, verse 10 is a link to what has become before in the text and what is about to follow. The first half finishes up the thought Peter started about the destiny of false teachers and those who follow them. They will continue to be hardened in their sins and their immoral lifestyles until that one day when they find themselves in front of the judgment seat of Jesus and He sends them to hell for an eternity. Now in the first half of verse 10 he is going to emphasize the fact that many of them had a chance to know the truth, but let their passions run wild. These teachers did not want to submit to the authority of the Apostles' teachings, nor did they want to submit to the clear teachings of the Old Testament.

Ultimately God is the primary authority. The church defines God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Next, we are under the authority of Scripture. When people try and disprove the authenticity and accuracy, what they are actually doing is trying to escape from being held to the lifestyle spelled out in the Bible. Next, God gave us the church, one another to be accountable to. Further, we are to be held to the authority of the

government.

One of the problems in our country is that the church has become great Americans but very poor church members. We have come to hold dearly the concept of congregational government. And so the church has become a very political organization where we vote on issues and decide things on a majority vote. Rarely do churches make decisions based on prolonged prayer and fasting. Most churches can't even get 20 people to come regularly to prayer meetings. Well if we start to view the church as a political institution, we can see why pastors often become arrogant or at the least, find themselves in a fight for control and power. That's the reality in our country.

In other countries, where the culture is tribal or patriarchal, pastors are just automatically given power and authority. It comes with the title and position. I think the Bible is somewhat ambiguous about church organization.

In order to prevent myself from being tempted into falling into the position of being confused by power, I have consistently diluted the power given to me. I have refused to let you call me "pastor," because when most people use that title in church, it elevates the pastor to a level above the congregation. My understanding of biblical leadership is that it consists of a group of people. I have trained many of you to preach, teach, and do all the other pastoral duties. The more we share the ministry process, the less chance there is of someone being confused by power. Over the years, you have asked me how you should address me. Should you call me Doctor, Reverend, Pastor, Reverend Doctor or Doctor Reverend? Just to make it simple, for short, you can call me "Your Immanence" or "Your Holiness" whichever you prefer. Just kidding. Call me John. That would be fine. But just to summarize, we could say that one of the marks of an authentic leader is one who knows how to give up and share power. In order to be a good leader, one must know how to be a good follower. Good pastors do not despise authority. By the way, that goes both ways. Good congregations are not characterized by trying to manipulate the church through political power plays as well.

And that brings us nicely to the second half of verse 10 through the first half of verse 12 where Peter describes false teachers as people who despise submission. The

second sentence of verse 10 starts out, “Bold and arrogant.” These are words filled with emotion. In Greek they point to someone who is daring. It describes someone who is recklessly and arrogantly daring. The Old Testament Hebrew used the phrase, “sinning with a high hand.” In other words, we are talking about people who are not afraid to stand up and defy God. They feel no need to submit to the authority of God, the Bible, the body of Christ, or the government. They certainly feel no need to submit to the congregations they serve. I think that point is clear.

What follows is not so clear. The rest of verse 10 thru the first half of verse 12 is very difficult to understand. It was probably perfectly clear to the congregations Peter was writing to. However, we are so removed it is hard to know what the references are. For example, the NIV says that these false teachers are not afraid to slander celestial beings. The NASB refers to them as angelic majesties. The NLT and ESV come the closest to the Greek identifying them as glorious ones. The Greek simply uses the word for glory, and makes it plural. Throughout the years people have identified these glorious ones as evil angels, church leaders, government people, or good angels.

Whatever the identification, Peter goes on to say that not even angels are so bold and arrogant in dealing with such matters. We have been so desensitized to the thought of angels; we tend to forget what kind of beings they are. Let’s think about good angels. When the angel Michael appeared to Daniel, Daniel was terrified. He couldn’t even look up. His energy was drained, he was trembling, and he couldn’t talk. Angels are huge and powerful beings. Sometimes I hear people talk about them like they are these cute little baby-like looking beings. Think about the fact they come directly from the presence of God in heaven. They must shine brilliantly with the glory of God. Angels are huge, overwhelming, and bigger than life. The good angels are frightening.

Think about the evil, demonic angels. In the book of Acts, 7 young men were trying to cast out demons using the names of Jesus and Paul. The demons said, “We know Jesus and we know Paul, ... but we don’t know you.” Immediately the demons jumped on the young men and gave them a good old-fashioned beat down. The young men barely got out with their lives. People go around talking about angels and demons and all sorts of things they don’t have a clue about.

Here is what I think was going on. Again, I’m just guessing because we don’t have

enough information. But the Gnostics believed the physical creation was evil. They believed that rogue angels rebelled against God and went off and created this earth and all the beings in it. These false teachers would have been teaching that stuff. We know that all things were created through Jesus while the angels were present. To say the author of creation was evil would be to directly call Jesus evil. That would be a flat out denial of the Biblical Jesus.

We must submit ourselves to God, to the Bible, to the historical church, and to our local churches and leaders. That sounds like I am talking to congregations, but I am actually talking about pastors here. Pastors must learn to develop submissive, humble spirits because the spiritual world is a dangerous place. I have been in deliverance sessions where demons started spitting, saying to me, “You’re nothing. You are pathetic. You are nothing.” My response is always the same, “You’re right. I’m nothing. But the battle is not between you and me. The battle is between you and Jesus, ... and Jesus is something.

I have made it a practice from the beginning of my time here at Devon to present my proposals, my desires, and my requests to the board. And then I have submitted and will continue to submit to the decision of the board. I don’t want to surround myself with people who always agree with me. I don’t need to have “Yes-men and women” around me. I need people who are godly, who are wise, and who will tell me their honest thoughts. Submission to authority is critical for authentic teachers.

Because as the last half of verse 12 points out, false teachers are despised by God. One of the major reoccurring themes throughout the Bible is that God will take a stand against the proud and arrogant. The sad thing about false teachers is that they have become so proud, so arrogant, and so self-focused; ... they don’t even know they are headed for destruction. Many false teachers have become so deluded by their success that they have lost total perspective.

Peter describes them as dumb animals headed for the slaughter. Throughout history, animals are hunted or raised to ultimately be slaughtered and become food.

But here is what I think Peter is after. Animals are simply driven by their basic instincts, needs, and urges. One of the differences between humans and animals is that

we have control over our basic instincts, needs, and urges. And further, God calls us to act on these natural desires in particular ways. For example, we, like the animals have a natural instinct to eat when we are hungry. There are several stories of animals eating themselves to death when an automatic feeder broke and kept dispensing food. Humans can postpone their need to eat. For example, we can wait for dinnertime to eat. We can accompany our prayers with fasting. We are commanded not to be gluttonous. In other words, we are to be controlled by moderation when dealing with our basic instinct to eat.

Another example is the demonstration of power in the animal kingdom. The strongest prey on the weaker. And it is our basic instinct for the stronger to use their advantage over the weaker. But God expects the stronger to serve and protect the weaker.

When animals find themselves in heat, they immediately look for a way to fulfill that sexual desire. We as humans have sexual desires. God calls us to exercise control over these desires and to fulfill them only in the context of heterosexual marriage.

The point is this. We all have natural instincts, needs, and desires. They are God-given so that we may survive. However, we understand that our sinful natures war with our redeemed natures. Our fleshy existence is at constant war with our spiritual existence. When we go ahead and act without restraint on these fleshly urges, we become just like the animals. When we act according to the Spirit and bring these urges under control, we become more Christ-like. These false teachers indulge all their fleshly desires. In other words, all pastors and leaders will be tempted to let the power they have been given go to their heads and drive them mad. They become like lions in the jungle.

Here is the point. Pastors and leaders have been called to lead God's people. With that responsibility comes the power and authority to accomplish that goal. However, we must always beware that we walk on the edge. Power is seductive and destructive. If we want to be godly leaders, we must be frightened by this and exercise our authority very carefully, gently, and humbly. Since power is so dangerous, the more we can share it with others, the safer we become. Peter describes one of the obvious characteristics of false teachers like this. **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR ARROGANCE.** Pastors

and leaders interested in staying on the right path must be humble and look to be under authority as well as exercising authority. Good pastors and leaders must surround themselves with people who are not afraid to contradict them and hold them accountable. I am fortunate to be surrounded by leaders who love me enough to hold me accountable. The nice thing about the people who hold me accountable is that even though we often have the same goals, their approach to life and problem solving is much different than mine. We must be transparent and not hide. God cannot use phonies or hypocrites. If we were to go back and read the Gospels, looking for the only people Jesus absolutely can't stand, ... They are religious hypocrites. We must be brutally honest with who we are.

Secondly, Peter says that false teachers will be evaluated by immorality in verses 13-14. We can identify false teachers by the way they live. In other words **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY IMMORAL LIFESTYLES.** Generally we focus on sexual immorality but there are many acts of immorality.

In the first half of verse 13, we see a trail of destroyed lives left behind by false teachers. Again, this is another manifestation of an abuse of power. People tend to be attracted to people in power positions like teachers, politicians, doctors, pastors, etc. These kinds of professionals have tremendous influence over the people they lead. False teachers, immoral pastors, destroy the lives of many people. I have seen bible teachers with very charismatic personalities teach obviously false doctrine and because people are attracted to their power and personalities, believe and follow them. Please hear this. If you follow false teachers and false doctrines, you are guaranteed to hit patches in your life that will destroy you because the reality of God's truth will directly contradict these teachings. For example, you may believe in a teaching that says that if you are a faithful believer, your life will be characterized by health, wealth, and prosperity. God's truth says that is plain false. But if you choose to believe this sort of nonsense, when you get cancer, go bankrupt, or have problems in your relationships, you will start to believe it's because you are exceptionally sinful. You may be doing everything you possibly can. You may be tithing; you may be going to prayer meeting, bible study, worship service, and serving in the church. So when you face these types of setbacks in life, you will easily start to become depressed and perhaps even give up the faith. Extremely legalistic teachers have driven many people away from the faith

and from God.

Like we said for the last two weeks, these false teachers tell us things we like to here. Opposite the legalists or the health and wealth teachers, we have so-called Christian teachers teaching that homosexual behavior is not only accepted by God, it is ordained by God in creation. But it's not only homosexual sin; they teach and practice other sexually immoral acts. We have seen in the news several charges of priests and pastors abusing young boys. We read everyday of pastors having affairs. It's pretty common in church leadership teams to see men and women being seduced by leaders. Sexual immorality is rampant in the church. Again, let me just remind all of us as leaders that power is intoxicating. We are able to justify about any type of behavior and define it in a way that isn't sin. Learn to call a sin a sin.

Think about the damage we have done through leading people down the wrong path theologically. People are devastated. They lose hope for the future and eternity. Think of the damage we have done through child abuse, seducing people into sexual immorality. Those kinds of offenses not only leave temporary damage, they almost always leave permanent damage, and oftentimes-eternal damage. People who were abused often turn into abusers. People who have fallen prey to sexual predators, often become sexual predators themselves. Countless lives are damaged but in this same sentence, God promises through the Apostle Peter that immoral leaders will receive the judgment they have coming to them. Leaders must be careful. It's really better for us to be more than a little afraid of the power we have.

The problem is that as the second half of verse 13 points out, sexual immorality seems to be out of control in the church. It seems from this passage that false teachers were making advances towards men and women during the worship and communion services. I can't say this with absolute certainty, but I think it would be safe to say that there are those of you here this morning in church that are living sexually immoral lives. You may be a young person, having sex outside of marriage. You may be a married person having an affair. You may be a practicing homosexual. And here we are in church, like nothing in the world is wrong. I think that's kind of expected among congregation members. After all, we live in a sexually immoral society.

However, it would be an abomination to have church leaders involved in sexual

immorality with congregation members. Can you imagine if I was having an affair with someone in the congregation, and up here preaching? What would I be thinking? Certainly not the sermon. If members of the worship team were sexually immoral up here leading worship, how horrible would that be? How horrible would it be to have Sunday School teachers or youth leaders thinking about seducing their students?

I'm addressing the leaders of the church, myself included. I think the problems start when we stay away from people who we know will tell us the truth. We start to have problems when we pretend to be people we are really not.

Leaders need to be brutally honest with one another because we have the potential to ruin lives. One of the things I try to do, is present who I really am, even though people may be uncomfortable with that. My thought is, if someone can hide a little sin, they can easily hide an affair. I don't pretend everything is fine with me when it's not. My wife certainly will not pretend. If we're having problems at home, I can guarantee, it is never private.

Look, I talk to pastors all the time. They say, "I won't have an affair because I love my wife." And then sometime later, I find out the guy is having an affair.

I'm no better than anyone else. However, I think I'm more honest about my motives. I do love my wife. But the reason I would never get involved in an affair is because I worked too hard to get through school. I had to work harder than most of my classmates, because I'm not even close to being as smart as they are. I had put a long hours of blood sweat and tears to get into the profession I'm in. And I can't think of anything I'd rather do. I have a profession I like. I work in a church that I like. I would never risk losing my job and losing my profession for some sort of sexual fling.

I think if I were to ever get caught in some sexual sin, it would probably be pornography. I think that like most people in our culture, I'm very visual. There would be no commitment and it would be pretty secret and private. I could easily justify that I wasn't hurting anybody. By the way, those are all lies. I'm glad that I don't have any access to pornography nor do I know how or where to get it. Further, I don't think I'd be good at it because I can't keep my mouth shut. I'd certainly tell someone. My daughter always says, "Dad, you'd never be able to have an affair,

because you'd run home and tell mom about it.”

In the end, I'd have to say, I'm no better than any other church leader. Living in such an immoral culture, we are always tempted to abuse power for personal and sexual gain. The only way to counter the temptation is to be humble, be transparent, and be accountable.

Because verse 14 indicates that immoral leaders are predatory. Look at the beginning of verse 14. It says their eyes are full of adultery. That's correct, but it misses the intent. Literally it reads, “They have eyes full of an adulteress.” In other words, they look at every woman thinking about the possibility that the woman would be willing to commit adultery by having sex with them. You see, the emphasis is on the seduction. They are predators. Look who they target. They target the unstable. They go after vulnerable people; people who are young, who are spiritually immature, people who are gullible, weak, or lonely. False teachers look for the weak to lead astray. This cycle works both ways. The weak look up to the teachers. That feeds the teachers' egos. When the false teachers pay attention to the weak, the weak feel affirmed.

Look at the last phrase in verse 14. In God's eyes, people in authority who abuse that authority in any way are accursed by God. Experts in evil will spend eternity in hell. Don't be fooled by false teachers. Look at how they live. It should become clear who they are. **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR IMMORAL LIFESTYLES.**

In verses 15-16 Peter uses the Old Testament character Balaam to show how false teachers are evaluated by greed. In other words, **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR GREED FOR FAME AND MONEY.**

I would invite you to go back to the book of Numbers to read about this famous false prophet. Once you read through the story, look up all the references pertaining to Balaam throughout the Bible. It's a very interesting study. In verse 15 we're reminded that false teachers are in love with money and fame. Be careful of people who like celebrity status. Sometimes I wonder how people are fooled by some television preachers and miracle workers. When you see how flamboyant they are, it should be a give-a-way. They like to be the center of attention and they love to whip

crowds up into a frenzy. Now I know it takes money to run ministries. But watch carefully what they do with the money. Many are living lives like the rich and famous. Honest preachers will always be totally up front about where their money comes from and will be accountable how they spend it. For the most part, if you want to check on the credibility of the finances of a particular ministry, you can contact The Evangelical Council For Financial Accountability.

Balaam was a prophet who really did have the gift of prophecy. But he wanted to be rich and famous. Moses and the Israelites were on the move, headed towards the Promised Land. They had just annihilated the Amorites in battle. Balak, the King of Moab was worried because the Israelites were headed towards his country. And so, he sent for Balaam the prophet to curse Israel so they would not be able to prevail against his country. God told Balaam not to go, but Balaam was interested in the fame and fortune. However, every time Balaam went to curse Israel, God made blessings come out of his mouth. There are many flamboyant teachers out there who may have been given an authentic gift by God but were corrupted by the desire for fame and fortune as well.

As Balaam's story continues we can also see what the first half of verse 15 points out, that false teachers and leaders often are blinded by their own importance. As Balaam was on the way to meet with King Balak, God sent an angel to punish him. This is really strange because Balaam has this supernatural gift of prophecy. The angel positioned himself in a narrowing of the road. When Balaam passed by, the angel was going to kill him. But strangely, his donkey saw the angel and brushed up against the side of the wall to avoid the angel's sword. 3 times the Donkey took evasive action. Since Balaam couldn't perceive the angel, he started to beat the donkey. All of a sudden, the donkey looks at Balaam and says, "What have I done to you to make you beat me like this?" Balaam's answer is, "You made me look foolish." Then God opened Balaam's supernatural eyes and he saw the angel. The prophet was rebuked by a dumb jackass. The dumb jackass rebuked the dumb jackass. Here is the point. It is easy for pastors and leaders to think they are more important than they really are. I hear things like, "John, if you were to leave our church, we would fall apart." I'm sure this comes from well meaning people. But the fact is, if that were the case, if that's true, then I have wasted 17 years of my life here. I'm trying to serve God here.

If the reason people come here is because of me, then we have not done God's work. We have done John's work. I believe that God has done this work. Devon Church existed before I got here, and it will continue to exist when I leave. The pressure is on you. You need to ask if you are willing to serve God and support the one who comes after me. You have all been incredibly supportive of me and you have all cooperated with me over the years. God has done a good thing among us. I would ask that when it comes time for me to go, you will show the next pastor the same love, dedication, and support that you have shown me. We want to do God's work. False teachers think they are the reason the ministry goes and is successful. Any teacher who starts to think they are important is dumber than Balaam's ass.

I know when people say things like this, they mean it as a compliment. But I'm not going to buy into that because the last half of verse 16 paints a graphic picture of the results of greed for fame and fortune. Peter says that the donkey restrained the prophet's madness. But those of you who know the rest of the story know that the prophet's madness was only restrained temporarily. Ultimately, Balaam hooked up with King Balak, tried to curse Israel, but ended up blessing them. In other Bible passages, it seems that Balaam informed him that the only way to stop Israel was to get them to reject God. So he advised the King to have the Moabite women go down to the camp, have sex with the men and lead them to worship false gods. Balak took Balaam's advice. The Moabite women went into the Israelite camp and seduced the men. They ended up worshiping idols as well. God brought a plague on Israel that left 24,000 men dead. Balaam got his fame and fortune. He did it at the expense of 24,000 Israeli lives.

But that's not the end. Israel did not forget this. In their battle with the Midianites, Israel found Balaam among them. They captured Balaam, and executed him. In the very last book of the Bible, Balaam is mentioned one last time. God will not forget the false teachers, how many people's lives they destroyed, and what they were willing to do for fame and fortune. **FALSE TEACHERS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR GREED FOR FAME AND MONEY.**

I'm sure there are many pastors and leaders out there who started out with all the right intentions and motives. I'm sure God gifted them and sent them out to do ministry. But somewhere along the line, the power corrupted them and led them to be arrogant,

immoral, and hungry for fame and fortune. It's easy to fall prey to this kind of stuff. Pastors and leaders have to live transparent, honest, and humble lives because **GOD EVALUATES PASTORS ACCORDING TO THEIR HUMILITY, PURITY, AND SUBMISSION.**

I can tell you that I struggle with plenty of sinful attitudes and behaviors. Just because I don't struggle with the issues mentioned today doesn't mean I don't struggle. However, what I continually try and do is live honestly and openly before the leaders, all of you, and my fellow pastors. I really don't have anything to hide. What you see is what you get.

I try everyday to live out authentic Christianity. Ray Stedman wrote a book all about Authentic Christianity. I studied through this book with several of you. I like how he describes fake Christianity. He points out that he once saw a sign that read, "Old fishermen never die – they only smell that way." Stedman goes on to say, "That surely describes false Christianity. It never dies; it only smells that way."

Leaders, we must be careful to leave behind our watch, the sweet fragrance of lives changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are not careful, it will be easy to leave behind dead lives that smell worse than the stench of Sodom and Gomorrah . We have an awesome and dangerous task.