

Dances with Wolves

Scripture: John 10:12–13; Jude 3–4

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Any literal shepherd tasked with feeding and leading a flock of lambs would be thought deranged if he regarded wolves as potential pets to be domesticated and amalgamated into the fold. Suppose he actively sought and tried to befriend young wolves, presuming he could teach them to mingle with his sheep—*insisting* against all wise counsel that his experiment might succeed, and if it does, that the wolves will acquire the sheep's gentleness and the sheep will learn beneficial things from the wolves. Such a shepherd would be worse than useless; he himself would pose an extreme danger to the flock.

Nearly as bad would be a shepherd whose vision is myopic. He has never seen a wolf clearly with his own eyes. He therefore believes the threat of wolves is grossly exaggerated. Even though his sheep keep disappearing or getting torn to shreds by *something*, he refuses to believe that wolves are the ones harming his flock. He declares he is tired of hearing shrill wolf warnings from others. Finally concluding that people's "negativity" toward wolves poses a greater danger to his flock than the wolves themselves, he takes out his reed and plays a gentle tune to lull the lambs to sleep.

Then, of course, there is the "hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep" (John 10:12). He "sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep" (John 10:12–13, NKJV).

Self-seeking hirelings, myopic shepherds, and wannabe wolf tamers are all too prevalent in the church today. So are wolves in sheep's clothing. Frankly, some of the postmodern lamb's-wool costumes aren't even the least bit convincing. But some pastors seem to have no hesitancy about unleashing these eager, disguised wolves among their flocks. Many are like the near sighted shepherd in my parable—convinced that warnings about the threat of wolves are potentially more dangerous than actual wolves.

That attitude exposes a cavalier disregard for the repeated warnings of Christ (Matthew 7:15-20) and His apostles (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Peter 2:1-3:7; 1 John 2:18-19; 4:1-3). By ignoring Jude's exhortation to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), many negligent shepherds have opened wide the door of the church to the dangerous influence of false teachers.

In fact Jude's entire letter is devoted to warning his readers about the presence of apostate false teachers and the severe spiritual danger they represent. He wanted his readers to stand strong against the spiritual deceptions that threatened to wreak havoc in their fellowship. And he also wanted all who propagated such errors in the church to be exposed and expelled.

Like any true shepherd, Jude had a deep love for his readers—meaning that he was dedicated to their spiritual well-being. His appeal stressed the need to defend the truth continually and vigorously.

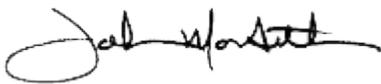
“The faith” Jude urges his readers to defend is not some nebulous body of religious doctrines. Rather, it constitutes the Christian faith, the faith of the gospel, God’s objective truth—basically everything that relates to “our common salvation” (Jude 3). It is what Luke wrote about in Acts 2:42, noting that the early believers “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). In the same way, Paul admonished Timothy to protect the faith.

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:13-14)

In life and in ministry, God’s truth is paramount (cf. Psalm 25:10; 119:160; John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 13:8; 2 Timothy 2:15). To manipulate and distort that truth, or to mix it with error, is to invite God’s eternal wrath. That’s why Paul told the Galatians, “If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” (Galatians 1:9). And the apostle John told his readers:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. (2 John 9-11)

Far from engaging or accommodating false teachers, the clear duty of every church leader is to guard the truth from the deadly, corrupting influence of heretics, liars, and charlatans. A godly shepherd faithfully protects the sheep; he doesn’t dance with the wolves.



(Adapted from [The Jesus You Can’t Ignore](#) and [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter & Jude](#).)

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