



Swimming with Sharks

Christians in Danger

By

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Chapter One

I grew up on Florida's Gulf Coast in the 1950s and 60s and don't remember ever seeing a shark. I used to swim to sand bars hundreds of yards from shore, then ride the waves back to the beach. When I was older I would rush to the beach before and after tropical storms and hurricanes to ride the big waves. I spent hours windsurfing, but never came across a shark. Sharks were not something that concerned me because I didn't see them.

Another reason might be that I didn't know anyone else who had seen a shark or been attacked by one. Even people who fished from a pier that was hundreds of feet out into the Gulf didn't catch sharks. However, that didn't mean sharks weren't in the water.

A friend of mine was a salvage diver and taught me scuba diving when I was a young adult. After practicing in a pool for several sessions, he took me out into the Gulf of Mexico. That's where I saw my first shark in the water. In fact, we saw several. They weren't the kind of sharks that swam up to the surface where you could see their fins. They swam several feet below the surface – searching for food. All of the years swimming in the Gulf as a child, teen, and young adult and I had been swimming with sharks the entire time.

Sharks In The Water

The same might be said of Christians. We may not see ‘sharks in the water,’ but they are all around us, searching for food to eat. Christians have been swimming in ‘shark-infested waters’ from the earliest days of the Church. We need to open our eyes and see the dangers around us before we are bitten – or even worse.

Warning!



The Bible contains great wisdom and insight for living for God. It also contains thousands of words of warning. Read it from cover to cover and you'll see what I mean. Keep your eyes and ears tuned to the words of prophets and apostles. God used them to both warn and encourage His people.

It all began with a truth and a lie –

The Truth – “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16-17

The Lie – “Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4-5

While those verses may be familiar to most Christians, unfortunately, many Christians don't realize that they are falling for the same lie today. They think they're 'like God.' They believe they can do the same things God can. They believe they know better than God about how to live their lives. They think God's Word is 'old fashioned' and only for ancient people who were superstitious and ignorant. They think that 'modern' Christians understand life better

than God does. That's a lie. Many people who 'identify' as Christians are swimming with sharks and don't even realize that they are being pulled deeper and deeper into the ocean where they will be drowned and destroyed.

Examples of Danger

I'm using the example of 'swimming with sharks' as a method of warning Christians about the spiritual dangers surrounding them. The Bible also gives Christians many similar examples of danger –

Jesus to His disciples – “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16

Paul to Christians in Ephesus – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand ... above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Ephesians 6:12-13, 16

Peter to the 'pilgrims of the Dispersion' – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

There are many other examples in the Bible, but my point is that being a Christian in this world is dangerous. The Lord has sent us out with a mandate to serve Him and do His will –

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15

“... and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8b

So, there you have it. We are witnesses, preachers, teachers, disciple-makers, warriors – in a dangerous world. However, that doesn’t mean we don’t have a far-greater future waiting for us –

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Revelation 2:10

“And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”

Revelation 21:6-7

Endurance

One of the KEYS to 'dealing with the devil' is endurance.

“And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” Matthew 10:22

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” 2 Timothy 2:3-4

“If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” 1 Corinthians 3:14

“To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.” 1 Corinthians 4:11-13

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2 Timothy 4:2-4

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:5

The Greek word translated ‘endure’ is ὑπομένω. It means ‘remaining under the load, bear up against, persevering, standing.’ That idea is what Paul wrote about in Ephesians 6:13 – “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” God wants us to ‘withstand’ (ἀνθίστημι – ‘resist, oppose, set against) and ‘stand’ (ἵστημι – make a stand, stand firm, be steadfast).



Christians, you are swimming with sharks. They are above you, below you, and on all sides of you. They are everywhere and they want to deceive and destroy you.

They want to steal your witness. They want to steal your joy. They want to steal your hope. They want you to follow them – not Jesus Christ.

Don't let them. Endure. Withstand. Having done all –
STAND.

Chapter Two

There's no escape from Christians 'swimming with sharks.' Jesus has sent us out into this spiritually and physically dangerous world "as sheep in the midst of wolves." As we saw in the first part of this new series, rather than escape – we 'endure.'

Why?

Question – why did Jesus send us 'as sheep in the midst of wolves?' Another question – why did Jesus tell His disciples – "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)? Why did Jesus tell His disciples – "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates

you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18-20)?

If you read what Jesus said in the Gospel accounts, you should come away with a lot of questions like those. Jesus made it quite clear to His disciples before He died on the Cross that He had come to ‘suffer’ –

“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” Luke 9:22

Jesus reminded His disciples of that truth after He rose from the dead –

“Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning

at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Luke 24:25-27

‘Suffering’ for Christ is built into the DNA of the Church. However, too many Christian leaders don’t want to suffer for Christ. They would rather take an ‘easier’ path to Heaven. However, they cannot support that desire with Scripture. Church leaders who don’t want to suffer, struggle, and fight the battles of spiritual warfare should not be followed because they are preaching a ‘false gospel.’

If that is true (which I believe it is), why would anyone want to be a Christian? I mean, who wants to suffer? Can’t we just go to church and sit in nice air-conditioned buildings and listen to happy music and a positive message about what a great week we can have as followers of Jesus? The answer is ‘no,’ but that’s what

many leaders of churches and denominations have fed to their flock for decades.

No wonder there's so little 'passion' in churches today. No wonder so many people in churches believe heretical doctrines. No wonder the 'church' is in such a spiritual mess. No wonder Christians often find themselves 'floundering' in life not understanding their calling from God. It has nothing to do with 'make me happy.' It has EVERYTHING to do with bringing GLORY to God. We will find great reward in suffering for Christ on earth –

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The Apostle Paul

Our Weapons of War

Jesus Christ did not ‘throw us to the wolves’ without giving us powerful ‘weapons of spiritual warfare.’ God’s ambition is not that every Christian is defeated by the enemy. Just the opposite! God wants to see us fight and win the battle using the weapons He provides for us through Jesus Christ His Son. That may sound strange to us in the 21st century, but it is God’s plan from eternity –

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the

love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:31-39

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all

perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

“ Ephesians 6:12-18

The Evil Day

Spiritual warfare is going on ALL THE TIME. That's why Paul told the Christians in Ephesus to be ready "to withstand in the evil day." When is that day? ἡμέρα τῇ πονηρᾷ in Greek translates as 'day the evil.' The word 'day' was used for the normal 24-hour day. The word 'evil' was understood to mean 'toilsome, bad, wicked, malicious, pain ridden.' The article 'the' is definite and refers to a 'specific' type of day. It's an 'evil' day.

As a Christian involved in spiritual warfare – every day is evil. Every day is fraught with dangers. Some days are more difficult than others, but every day is a day that Christians need to be in the 'fight.' If we're not in the fight or not ready to fight, we can and will be defeated in our feeble attempts to lead the life God has called us to live. We may think we're safe, but remember – we're swimming with sharks. We're sheep in a world filled with wolves.

Roman soldiers had to be ready to go into battle at any time. They had routines to follow that would keep them 'ready' for battle. Soldiers did sleep, but they did so while other soldiers were awake and on 'watch.' Even sleeping soldiers kept their armor and weapons close so they could go into battle at a moment's notice. That's what it meant to be a soldier.

The same is true for the Christian 'soldier' –

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Christians must always be ready to do battle with the enemy. They must not 'entangle' themselves with the 'affairs of this life' for several reasons. One reason is that when a soldier is entangled with things of this world, they are not ready to fight. They can be defeated easily and are not in position to support their fellow soldiers who were counting on them. However, the biggest reason is that not 'pleasing' Jesus Christ who 'enlisted' us as a soldier in His Army. We see that clearly in words He spoke in the Gospels, as well as the words He had John send to some of the churches in the Book of Revelation. The Lord was disappointed and even angry with how some of the Christians had let down their guard and entangled themselves "with the affairs of this life."

There will be days when things seem to be going along pretty well. If someone asked us the days were ‘evil,’ we might respond by saying that things seem to be going pretty well. Other times we might respond that things are going very badly and that, yes, the days are ‘evil.’ I get that. There are times when we feel as if we’re under attack from the ‘enemy.’ There are other times when things seem to be going great. The key is to be aware and ready for anything.

I have a saying in self-defense training that – ‘We can be attacked anywhere, at anytime, by anyone.’ We need beware and aware at all times. Yes, we have a powerful enemy. Yes, Jesus has sent us into the world “as sheep in the midst of wolves.” And, yes, Jesus has already WON the victory!!

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Chapter Three

Jesus never wasted a moment during His days on earth. Every word He spoke had great purpose for His followers. I'm convinced that if Christians took the words Jesus spoke seriously and really understood them, they would live differently in this world. The Jesus we read in the Gospels and the Jesus presented in many churches and denominations are not the same.

Which Jesus?

That reminds me of something the Apostle Paul wrote the the Christians in Galatia –

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:6-9

Much of what is being preached as the ‘Gospel’ in churches in the ‘Western’ world is a ‘false gospel’ – a ‘perverted gospel of Christ.’ That means many people who think they are Christians because they belong to churches and denominations that identify as ‘Christian’ have been fooled. The preachers and teachers are ‘accursed,’ (ἀνάθεμα, anathema – ‘cursed, a pronounced curse, destruction from a curse’) because they proclaim a message that is contrary to what God says is true. They are ‘accursed’ because they deceive people into believing a lie.

Remember that the Apostle Paul had preached the ‘truth’ of the Gospel of Christ in Galatia. The people who responded positively to the Gospel had begun their lives as Christians following the Holy Spirit who taught Paul and inspired him in preaching, teaching, and writing. By following the message of ‘false teachers’ these Christians had turned their backs on God.

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?” Galatians 3:1-4

Notice that Paul wrote the Christians were NOT obeying ‘the truth.’ They had started their lives as Christ followers ‘by the hearing of faith.’ However, Paul wrote that they were ‘foolish’ because having ‘begun in the Spirit’ they bought into the lie that they could be made ‘perfect’ (ἐπιτελέω, epiteleó – ‘to complete, accomplish’) ‘by the flesh.’

The Galatian Christians were swimming with sharks who took advantage of them after the Apostle Paul left the area to preach the Gospel elsewhere. When Paul heard what had happened after he left Galatia, he wrote the scathing letter we know as 'Galatians.' It's obvious that he loved the Christians in Galatia and wanted what was best for them. He knew they needed some 'tough love' from their apostle, so he didn't hold back. Paul told them the truth 'in love.' That's what we need in today's churches and denominations – 'tough love.'

Parables

Jesus often spoke in ‘parables’ to the crowds of people who followed after Him. Parables (παραβολή, parabole – ‘a placing beside, comparison’) are ‘stories’ with a message of comparisons. He often told these stories about the ‘Kingdom of God’ (aka ‘Kingdom of Heaven’). Interestingly, people in the crowds didn’t understand what Jesus meant. That was for a purpose –

“And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they

understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Matthew 13:10-17

“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 13:34-35

Jesus would tell the crowds parables that they couldn't understand, then privately explain the parables to His closest disciples. A good example of this is found in the same chapter of Matthew. Jesus told the crowds parables about the Sower, the Wheat and Tares, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven. Once Jesus was alone with His disciples, He explained the meaning of the parables. Let's listen in to see what we can learn that might help us understand our situation today –

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Matthew 13:18-23

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matthew 13:36-43

The 'Parable of the Sower' gives us insight into how people hear and respond to the Gospel. The 'Parable of the Tares' explains how the 'sons of the kingdom' and the 'sons of the wicked one' live together in this world. Both of these parables should help Christians understand why they 'swim with sharks.'

Jesus spoke dozens of parables during His earthly ministry. Many were prophetic and connected to Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel. However, Christians can gain wisdom from the Lord's parables into how to wage spiritual warfare today.

Chapter Four

My father loved to fish. He fished with poles and nets. He had spent a dozen years in the U.S. Navy before and during World War II, so he knew a lot about what was in the waters of oceans and seas. I grew up on the Gulf Coast as a child and was always amazed at how he knew exactly where to drop or throw his pole line, or where to cast his net. We ate a lot of fish in my youth because he understood what was in the water.

My idea of having fun in the waters of bays and the Gulf was to swim and surf. I was what you might call a 'surface' person when it came to being in the water. It was after learning how to scuba dive and going deep below the surface that I learned about the dangers that lurked only feet below the surface.

Surface Christians

That's how I view many Christians and church leaders today. They are 'surface' Christians – sometimes known as 'nominal' or 'cultural' Christians. They look at the surface of Christianity and think it's about being happy and successful. Unless they learn how to 'spiritually' scuba dive, they may never see nor understand the dangers that lurk just below the surface. That includes knowing the true heart motives of church leaders.

Only God can judge because only God knows what's in a person's heart. In Luke 16, Jesus told the Pharisees – “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 44 that God “knows the secrets of the heart.” God told the Prophet Jeremiah – “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart,

I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). In Acts 15:8-9, the Apostle Peter wrote that God “knows the heart.” In Romans 8:27, the Apostle Paul wrote that God “searches the hearts” of His people. God told the Prophet Samuel that He – “does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Whether you read the Old Testament or the New Testament the outcome is the same. People see the surface, but God sees far below the surface. That’s one reason why we should trust God and depend on Him to guide us in how to ‘swim with sharks’ –

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

We trust God rather than our own heart. People today love to say – ‘just follow your heart’ – not realizing the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own heart. Why would anyone want to ‘follow’ after something that is filled with deception and wickedness? That seems like a type of ‘spiritual suicide.’

Sharks Near Our Hearts

Because God knows people's hearts and that they are 'deceitful' and 'desperately wicked,' the Lord has kindly told us what's in our hearts. These are some of the 'sharks' swimming nearby that want to 'have you.'



The largest and most dangerous 'shark' we have to deal with in this life is SIN. The first time 'sin' is mentioned in the Bible is Genesis 4:7. God used the word חַטָּאָה (chatta'ah) when He told Cain – "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the

door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” Sin, which is missing the mark God sets as His standard, has a desire (תְּשׁוּקָה, teshuqah – ‘a longing’), and that desire is for you. Cain didn’t listen to God’s advice and murdered his brother. The ‘sin shark’ got him and destroyed a family.

The Bible is our guide through dangerous waters. God shows us how other people have tried and failed to navigate the waters. He also shows those who struggle, but are able to make it safely to shore by following His spiritual guidance. Many people think of God’s Word as a list of rules that exist only to take the ‘fun’ out of this life. They are surface swimmers. They have no idea what dangers lurk just below the surface.

I promised to begin naming some of the sharks that are swimming with us, so let's begin in the Old Testament –

- worship of false gods (idols)
- using God's Name in vain (empty, lightly, foolishly)
- blasphemy
- not honoring your mother and father
- anger
- temper
- jealousy
- violence
- murder
- rape
- adultery
- prostitution
- bestiality

- stealing
- lying (bearing false witness)
- not loving your neighbor
- oppressing a neighbor
- coveting a neighbor
- pride
- arrogance
- slander
- perverting justice
- drunkenness
- kidnapping
- lack of mercy
- flattery
- discord
- hatred toward others
- gossiping

- disobeying God's Laws (including Levitical Laws - clean and unclean foods, physical cleanliness, etc)
- homosexuality
- sodomy
- divination
- soothsaying
- consorting with 'familiar spirits' and 'mediums'
- witchcraft
- child sacrifice
- bribery
- desire for vengeance
- contention
- cursing (God, parents, rulers, etc)
- greed
- sexual impurity
- laziness

- murmuring
- rebellion
- stubbornness
- not helping widows and orphans

This is not a complete list, but gives us some insight to the 'sharks' swimming nearby that want to harm us.



Here is a short list of ‘sharks’ from the New Testament that can do serious damage to a Christian –

- denying Christ
- hatred for God
- hatred for people
- desire for vengeance
- judging other people
- not doing good to others
- hatred toward others
- lying
- bearing false witness
- gossiping
- boasting
- brawling
- murder

- stealing
- complaining
- unforgiving heart
- envy
- quarrelling
- ready to fight
- lust
- sexual immorality
- homosexuality
- fornication
- foolish behavior
- foolish talk
- selfish ambitions
- heresy
- sorcery
- witchcraft

- speaking idle words
- hard-hearted
- impure thoughts and actions
- deceit
- drunkenness
- rioting
- lack of faith
- disobeying parents
- fathers provoking children to wrath
- extortion
- greed
- trusting in riches
- enjoying the company of sinners for the purpose of sinning with them
- hypocrisy
- idolatry

- not doing what you know is the right thing to do
- not helping widows and orphans
- pride
- boasting
- false humility
- loving self over others
- causing strife
- mocking others
- murmuring
- slander
- unthankfulness
- breaking promises
- contradicting wholesome teaching
- adding to the words of prophets and apostles

Again, this is not a complete list from the New Testament. You can read more about the ‘sharks’ in the water with you in these and other passages of Scripture –

- Romans 1:18-32
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Galatians 5:19-21
- Ephesians 5:3-5
- Titus 1:10-16
- Jude 1:3-23
- 2 Peter 2:1-22
- 1 John 2:1-29
- Revelation chapters 2 & 3
- Revelation 22:14-15

Chapter Five

Have you heard about ‘thought sharks?’ They swim just below the surface – ready to take a big bite out of your beliefs.

Thoughts shape ideas and beliefs, which then lead to behavior and actions. Look at someone’s behavior and actions and you can usually follow them back to specific ‘thoughts’ that led them there. Some of the ‘bad actions’ within the Christian church are driven by these ‘thought sharks.’

Thought Sharks



You may think you're a strong Christian and that nothing can impact the way you think about Jesus Christ, but I suggest you consider a few things before being too sure of that.

A thought shark wants to control the way you think, believe, and behave. They may do it by taking little 'bites' out of your thoughts over a period of time – or shocking your thought process through a much larger 'bite.' The

goal of a thought shark is to ‘destroy’ the way you think. That’s what Satan did to Eve in the Garden of Eden – and we’re all dealing with the fallout from that BIG BITE to this day.

To understand how a ‘thought shark’ can interfere with or even destroy the life of a Christian we need to understand how thoughts work. The Bible often refers to the ‘thoughts of the heart.’ So, what does that mean? Here are a few examples we can consider –

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Genesis 6:5

“O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You.” 1 Chronicles 29:18

“They devise iniquities: “We have perfected a shrewd scheme.” Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep.” Psalm 64:6

It’s interesting to note that God also has ‘thoughts’ from His heart –

“The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.” Jeremiah 23:20

Notice in the first example that God saw that ‘every intent’ of the thoughts of people’s hearts was ‘only evil continually.’ That led God to send a great Flood that destroyed most living things – except for Noah, his family, and many land animals, birds, and insects. God started the second ‘biosphere’ (earth) with them.

The Hebrew words for people's 'thoughts of the heart' are – machashabah leb. They mean the 'intent, plans, purposes' of the 'inner man, the will, the mind.' The Hebrew word for God's 'thoughts' in Jeremiah 23:20 is a little different – mezimmah – meaning 'purpose, discretion, device.'

It's probably good to mention at this point that God's 'thoughts' are different than people's 'thoughts' –

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

God's 'thoughts and ways' and human 'thoughts and ways' are really in two different categories. That's because God and humans are different 'beings.' God is the 'Supreme Being, the Necessary Being.' Human beings are not supreme and not 'necessary.' They are 'contingent' on God's existence and His will. Look at the context of Isaiah 55 and you'll understand why God said what He did to the prophet. 'Life,' God told Isaiah, is dependent upon Him – as are His mercy and forgiveness.

The 'thought sharks' swimming around you at this moment cannot affect God's thoughts. God is far above all other beings – natural and supernatural. So, the sharks attack those beings 'made in God's image.' That's us. They can't reach God, but they can reach us. And reach they do through a multitude of devices. The Book of Job gives us some insight into how the 'senior shark' approached God concerning Job. It's a lesson for all of us. James, the half brother of Jesus, summed up Job in this brief statement –

“You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” James 5:11

People may question why God allowed Job to be treated harshly by the ‘senior shark,’ but we see that God’s intention had a purpose. It demonstrated God’s compassion and mercy and Job’s perseverance. If you read the context of James 5, you’ll see it’s about God’s people ‘enduring’ tough times.

Jesus Christ addressed the issue of ‘thoughts of the heart’ when He walked the earth almost two-thousand years ago. What He said then is insightful now –

“But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” Matthew 9:4

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matthew 15:19

Recognizing ‘Thought Sharks’



We know that ‘thought sharks’ are swimming below us and around us all the time, but is there anything a concerned Christian can do about it? Yes, there is –

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints

and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

We need to depend on God’s Word because that’s what ‘discerns’ the thoughts and intents of our heart. It’s not unlike what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus about putting on the ‘whole armor’ of God and being ready to do battle with the ‘thought sharks’ every day –

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:17

We must depend on God’s Thoughts as the Holy Spirit expressed in His Word ‘rather than’ our own thoughts. As a martial arts instructor I’ve practiced and taught the use of physical swords for decades. They are excellent for both defense and offense ‘if’ you know how to use them. That’s why I highly recommend that every Christian learn how to wield God’s Word by ‘rightly dividing’ it. That

means ‘handle it correctly.’ Unfortunately, the majority of Christian leaders (e.g. pastors, denominational leaders, seminary professors, etc) have either lost the ability to wield the Sword of the Spirit or they are purposely not teaching Christians how to use it. [I deal with that in more depth in a series titled [A Layman’s Guide to False Preachers and Teachers.](#)]

One way to recognize a ‘thought shark’ is to listen carefully to how they speak. Remember the first thing Satan said to Eve in the Garden?

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said ... ”

Genesis 3:1

When a Christian leader begins or inserts into a conversation or sermon a question about whether God said something that any Christian should know He said – think ‘thought shark.’ Thought sharks question God’s Word. That’s often where the deception begins.

The deception continues when the ‘thought shark’ says God did not say what He said, and then questions God’s motive for saying what He said. Case in point –

“Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4-5

‘Thought sharks’ are cunning – very cunning. They will bite down hard, but often begin with a few nibbles. You’re swimming along and you feel a couple of nibbles on your legs or arms. What is that? Didn’t hurt, so no big deal. Right? Wrong. As soon as you put up with some nibbles

the ‘thought shark’ begins to bite and take huge chunks out of your spiritual life. What does that leave you with? Disaster!

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

Genesis 3:6-7

Everything changed in that moment. Their unique and special relationship with God was torn apart. What followed was God’s anger and curses on humanity. The ‘thought shark’ won – at least for the time being.

Chapter Six

Thought sharks have been with us for thousands of years. There's nothing we can do about the damage they caused in the past, but we can learn from them. History teaches us so much about the human condition. It's interesting as we study history to see that people continue to repeat the mistakes of previous generations. One reason is we continue to swim with the same sharks.

Lessons Learned?

It would be nice if people would 'learn their lessons' so the generations that follow wouldn't have to suffer the same physical, mental, and spiritual damage. However, that hasn't happened yet. It's one of the lessons of history that shows us we haven't learned our lessons.

The Bible gives us the most ancient view of humanity – going back to the ‘beginning’ (Genesis). After humans disobeyed God and He removed them from ‘Paradise’ to live in a ‘fallen world,’ we see the evidence of ‘sharks in the water.’ The first human born on earth was bitten hard by jealousy and anger. That led to the first murder – Cain killed Abel, his brother. The generations that came from Cain also demonstrate other aspects of bad thinking that led to bad behavior (Genesis 4:16-24).

Adam and Eve had another son, Seth, and it looked like humanity might be back on track –

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord. Genesis 4:25-26

However, it wasn't long before the generations of Seth also demonstrated bad thinking that led to bad behavior. By the time we get to Genesis 6 the human race is a total mess –

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.” Genesis 6:5, 11-12

But Noah found ‘grace’ in the eyes of the Lord –

“And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Genesis 6:13

As we read through the rest of Genesis and learn about God's call to Abram and the birth of Israel, we're reminded that people have been swimming with thought sharks for millennia. The same is true as we read through the Old Testament and into the New Testament. It's quite obvious that the human race needed a Savior – and what we a Savior we have in Jesus Christ!

However, followers of Jesus Christ are still swimming with sharks. The day is coming when God will remove His people from this planet and wisk us away to Heaven, but until then we have a lot of work to do to keep swimming – keep fighting.

The 'Thought' Battle

Jesus knew the importance of the battle for 'thoughts.' In answer to a question about which commandment of God's Law was greatest, the Lord answered this way –

“... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30



Heart, soul, mind, and strength – that’s the battleground for every believer. Remember that because every ‘thought shark’ in the water will try to destroy your ability to love and serve God in all of those areas.

I shared about the ‘thoughts of your heart’ in the last part of this series. That covers at least two areas that Jesus addressed in His answer (‘Heart,’ ‘mind’). Here are a few reminders from Jesus about the dangers facing His disciples –

“ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” Matthew 9:4

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matthew 15:19

The Apostle Peter had some strong words for Simon the Sorcerer who wanted to ‘buy’ the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice where the desire originated –

“You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” Acts 8:21-23

The Apostle Paul presented humanity’s ‘futile thought’ problem from God’s perspective –

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His

invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” Romans 1:18-23

Paul was most likely referring to the human condition from the beginning, so it wasn't new then and certainly isn't new now. What Christians often misunderstand is that the Bible, though written thousands of years ago, is accurate for the past, present, and future.

Old Thoughts and New

The human race believes it is 'progressing' – getting better – with time and technology. How wrong they are. The 'old' thoughts from centuries and even millennia ago are what still what people are thinking today. The 'old thoughts' are still the 'new thoughts.'

The reason I mention that is because of the ideas presented by 'thought sharks' and those they bite are that humans have somehow overcome the bad ideas of the past and entered into a new phase of thinking. In reality, the only thing that has changed are the titles for bad thinking. Here are some examples –

- Old atheism is now called 'new' atheism
- Old paganism is now called 'new' paganism (Neo-paganism)

- Old thinking is now called ‘new’ thinking (New Thought)
- Old lies are now called ‘My Truth-Your Truth’

None of these are ‘new.’ Unfortunately, Christians have fallen into the trap of thinking the world has changed for the better. The same goes for church and denominational leaders, seminary professors, ‘worship songwriters,’ ‘Christian authors,’ and others God’s people look to for spiritual guidance.

Here are some resources that may help explain the problem and solution –

[Apologetics for False Preachers & Teachers](#)

[Apologetics for Unity Movements](#)

[Apologetics for Worldviews](#)

Chapter Seven

You've probably heard of 'New Ageism' and 'Neo-Paganism,' but have you heard of 'New Thought?' Some people think they're all in the same spiritual 'pot,' but they do have some important differences.

Each one is a different type of 'thought shark' swimming in the same waters that Christians find themselves splashing around in every day. Unfortunately, many Christian leaders have allowed (or even invited) these dangerous philosophies into churches, denominations, and seminaries. You might want to read the last part of this series to get some helpful background on that.

New Thought

‘New Thought’ is new only in the sense that this particular spiritual movement is ‘recent.’ That’s similar to ‘New Age’ and ‘Neo-paganism.’ They are both connected to very ancient thinking and behavior, but recent developments have made both of them seem more modern and palatable to the modern way of thinking and behaving.

I remember coming across ‘New Thought’ as a young Christian when I read materials written by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emma Curtis Hopkins, Phineas P. Quimby, Emanuel Swedenborg, Julius Dreser, and others from the 19th century AD. I also came across a movement known as ‘Theosophy.’ Some of the names that came up in my research on Theosophy included a Russian mystic and spiritualist named Helena Blavatsky. She pulled together her ‘spiritual thoughts’ from ancient ‘Gnosticism’ and ‘Neoplatonism,’ along with a variety of Eastern religions (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism). Blavatsky founded the

‘Theosophical Society’ in the 19th century, along with William Judge and Henry Olcott. The ‘Society’ split after her death, but it still exists today under different names across the world. Do your own research and you’ll see that it’s part of ‘occult’ (e.g. magic, witchcraft, paganistic, mysterious, hidden, secretive) thinking.

I was learning Koine Greek in the early 1970’s, so I recognized that ‘Theosophy’ (θεοσοφία, theosophia) was made up of two Greek words: theos (god, gods, divine) and sophia (wisdom). The ‘thought’ idea was that ‘Theosophists’ had ‘divine wisdom,’ ‘wisdom of the gods, philosophy of the gods.’ They supposedly had a connection to the ‘ancient masters’ who gave them secret wisdom about the universe. This, of course, was just what the ancient ‘Gnostics’ claimed.

I knew enough about Church history as a young Christian to know that the early Church had to deal with the teachings of ‘Gnostics’ (from γνῶσις, gnósis – ‘knowledge, wisdom’). The belief of ‘Gnostics’ was that they had ‘secret’ spiritual knowledge that they would share only with their followers. Early Church leaders (e.g. 2nd, 3rd, 4th centuries AD) taught that ‘Gnostics’ were heretics (false teachers) – which they were.

Fast forward to the 19th century and Phineas Kimby, Blavatsky and others picked up where the ancient Gnostics left off. ‘Theosophy’ was nothing more than Neo-Gnosticism. It was obvious to me, even as a young Christian. So, why is not obvious to Christian leaders today? Why are seminary professors teaching ‘New Thought/Gnosticism’ concepts to pastors-in-training? Why are pastors teaching ‘New Thought/Gnosticism’ concepts to their congregations? Why are denominational leaders promoting ‘New Thought/Gnosticism’ concepts to their followers? Something is terribly wrong and I blame it

on the ‘thought sharks,’ as well as Christian ‘shepherds’ who are supposed to feed and protect God’s people.

Follow the People – Follow the Thoughts

Any journalist worth his or her ‘salt’ knows that one of the first rules of journalism is to ‘follow the people.’ However, it doesn’t take a trained and experienced journalist to find out that the leaders of ‘New Thought’ in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries came from a rotten bunch of ‘bad thinkers.’ The fact that many church leaders and Christians have fallen for this pathetic way of looking at God and His Word is absolutely ridiculous.

Everything I’ve learned about New Thought can be summed up in one phrase – “Search the Scriptures.’ Start with Genesis 3 and you’ll see that Satan’s question and lie to Eve is the basis of New Thought beliefs and behaviors. Here is the ‘Declaration of Principles’ of **The International New Thought Alliance** –

Declaration of Principles

1. We affirm God as Mind, Infinite Being, Spirit, Ultimate Reality.
2. We affirm that God, the Good, is supreme, universal, and everlasting.
3. We affirm the unity of God and humanity, in that the divine nature dwells within and expresses through each of us, by means of our acceptance of it, as health, supply, wisdom, love, life, truth, power, beauty, and peace.
4. We affirm the power of prayer and the capacity of each person to have mystical experience with God, and to enjoy the grace of God.
5. We affirm the freedom of all persons as to beliefs, and we honor the diversity of humanity by being open and affirming of all persons, affirming the dignity of human beings as founded on the presence

of God within them, and, therefore, the principle of democracy.

6. We affirm that we are spiritual beings, dwelling in a spiritual universe that is governed by spiritual law; and that in alignment with spiritual law, we can heal, prosper, and harmonize.
7. We affirm that our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living.
8. We affirm the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven here and now.
9. We affirm expression of the highest spiritual principles in loving one another unconditionally, promoting the highest good for all, teaching and healing one another, ministering to one another, and living together in peace, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and other enlightened teachers.

10. We affirm our evolving awareness of the nature of reality and our willingness to refine our beliefs accordingly.

That's what many leaders in today's churches, denominations, and seminaries have bought into people's idea of what it means to be a 'Christian' – absolute spiritual garbage. The 'thought sharks' are having a field day with so-called 'Christian' congregations. Reading through the list of 'New Thought' principles helps explain why so many people who identify as Christians and Christian leaders have become so 'heretical' in their belief about Jesus Christ. Tens of millions of so-called Christians deny the deity of Christ and even the resurrection of Christ. There's a reason for that and 'New Thought' thinking is at the center of it.

Christ Consciousness

I want to focus on the 3rd ‘principle’ for a few moments because it goes to the heart of what’s wrong with New Thought, New Age, and many of the other heretical teachings in our churches. It’s called ‘Christ Consciousness’ -

“We affirm the unity of God and humanity, in that the divine nature dwells within and expresses through each of us, by means of our acceptance of it, as health, supply, wisdom, love, life, truth, power, beauty, and peace.”

Notice the words ‘unity of God and humanity’ and ‘that the divine nature dwells within and expresses through each of us.’ Because of my involvement in Hinduism as a teenager, I recognized this heresy right away and here it is in the teachings of many churches, denominations, and seminaries.

The teaching is that all people have the 'divine nature' within them and can attain to being 'Christ' through a spiritual 'journey' of following the right path. Jesus, they say, followed that path and attained 'Christ Consciousness.' If people follow the teachings of Jesus, they too can become 'Christ.' They call it a 'journey to spiritual enlightenment.'

Quoting one 'Christ Consciousness' group -

Christ Consciousness plays a crucial role in our spiritual journey by helping us to awaken to the divine essence within ourselves and all of creation.

Solancha

The point they're making is that Jesus Christ is not the eternal Son of God. He is a man who lived a life that led Him to 'Christ' consciousness. He did it and so can you.

That's extremely dangerous theology and is a type of 'universalism.' All humans have the 'divine nature' and can become 'Christ.' It's just a matter of thinking the right thoughts and doing the right things.

Anyone who reads the New Testament correctly ('rightly dividing the word of truth') knows that the idea of 'Christ Consciousness' is one of the larger sharks swimming in the waters of this life. It is clearly false and the fact that people in churches are falling for the teaching is one of the sadder facts of what's happening within 'Christianity' today.

21st Century Dangers

Many 19th century ‘sharks’ brought in a variety of new ways of thinking that were simply old ways of thinking dressed up in different ‘rags.’ That means we have to follow the ‘trails’ of these sharks to discover what’s dangerous to us in the 21st century.



Have you gone to a beach and seen ‘warning flags’ near the water? Some flags warn about rip currents, some about weather-related dangers (e.g. lightning, high winds), others warn about sharks in the water. The flags are often color-coded. Flags for ‘sharks in the water’ are often red in color or even ‘red over red’ flags. You may also see a

‘warning sign’ about no swimming because ‘sharks sighted.’

Church leaders are supposed to be the ‘lifeguards’ who keep Christians safe from danger, but that often does not happen. Church and denominational leaders often walk right into dangerous waters and invite people to follow them. They apparently don’t know how to ‘read the signs.’ False preachers and teachers tell people to walk into dangerous waters – while they stand safely on shore knowing hungry sharks are waiting under the surface, just off-shore.

Christians who care about what God wants for them will pay close attention to warning ‘flags and signs.’ That means watching and listening closely to what church and denominational leaders say and do. As the Apostle Peter wrote – “there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even

denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). The Apostle Paul wrote – “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)” (Galatians 2:4). Paul also wrote – “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). Bottom line: keep your eyes and ears open.

Celebrity Sharks



Many of the ‘sharks’ that are dangerous to churches and denominations are ‘celebrities.’ They may be famous preachers, teachers, authors, singers, songwriters, Bible study curriculum writers, publishers, etc. They may also be celebrity movie or television stars or political figures. Sharks come in many shapes and sizes.

Chapter Eight

The ‘principles of New Thought’ that we shared in the last chapter help us understand how Christians have veered so far off course. I’ve reported through the years about the growing number of self-identifying ‘evangelical Christians’ who do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. Some believe Jesus was just a man, like any other man, who God chose to be spiritually ‘elevated’ because of His obedience to God’s Laws. Some believe Jesus is God’s ‘first created being’ – created for the purpose of creating the universe, then sacrificing Himself for it. Some believe Jesus did die on a Roman cross, but that He did not rise from the dead.

This fits well with the 9th ‘principle’ of New Thought – “We affirm expression of the highest spiritual principles in loving one another unconditionally, promoting the highest good for all, teaching and healing one another, ministering to one another, and living together in peace, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and other enlightened teachers.” New Thought adherents, along with many people who claim to be Christians, believe that Jesus was one of many ‘enlightened teachers.’

The 10th ‘principle’ of New Thought is – “We affirm our evolving awareness of the nature of reality and our willingness to refine our beliefs accordingly.” Many church and denominational leaders would agree that Christianity can ‘evolve,’ thus needing ‘to refine our beliefs accordingly.’

Celebrities and Influencers

God calls His people ‘sheep.’ That’s a good description. Sheep are easily scattered and need a good shepherd to lead them toward food and safety. It reminds me of what Jesus asked the Apostle Peter after the Lord had been crucified and raised from the dead –

“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him,

“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.” John 21:15-17

In the process of ‘restoring’ Peter, Jesus gave all believers an amazing insight into what a spiritual shepherd should do for God’s sheep: feed, tend, feed. I highly recommend all Christian pastors and teachers humbly memorize those verses and repeat them multiple times every day. If leaders of churches, denominations, and seminaries did that, what a different experience Christians would have now and would have had for many centuries.

Unfortunately, many church leaders have been more interested in thinking about themselves and their own spiritual ‘careers.’ Because of a desire to ‘get ahead’ in the Christian world (e.g. bigger church, better position in the denomination, seen on television, writing books, speaking at conferences, etc), church leaders often abandon the Lord’s simple guide to Peter – ‘feed, tend,

feed' – in order to fulfill their selfish desires. The sheep are lost for the want of loving shepherds.

Wrong Thinking?

People who buy into ‘New Thought’ thinking believe that illness, lack of prosperity in this world, etc., stem from ‘bad thinking.’ Here’s the seventh ‘principle’ of New Thought –

“We affirm that our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living.” INTA

That idea permeates much of what Christians see, hear, and read on a regular basis. They are told that their problems are caused by ‘wrong thinking.’ If Christians would just ‘think right,’ they could be healed and prosperous (e.g. health and wealth). Though God’s Word does not support that as truth, Christians are swayed more by celebrities and influencers. How did that happen?



It happened because church leaders stopped listening to God. They listened to the world instead. That's one of the dangers Christians face as they 'swim with sharks.' God has made it clear from the beginning that He knows best and humans should 'hear' Him and 'obey' Him –

“Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

As God said in Isaiah 51 –

“Listen to Me, My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation: For law will proceed from Me, And I will make My justice rest As a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, And My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait upon Me, And on My arm they will trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth

beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.” Isaiah 51:4-6

Notice that God does not promise health, wealth, and happiness during this ‘world system.’ His promise of prosperity is in the future ‘after’ His arms ‘will judge the people’ – after ‘the heavens’ vanish away like smoke and the earth grows ‘old like a garment.’ Prophets understand that, but many of today’s most prominent preachers and teachers don’t. They believe they can have it all here and now. That falls right into place with ‘New Thought’ principles. Here’s the 8th ‘principle’ of New Thought –

“We affirm the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven here and now.” INTA

Here's the 6th 'principle' –

“We affirm that we are spiritual beings, dwelling in a spiritual universe that is governed by spiritual law; and that in alignment with spiritual law, we can heal, prosper, and harmonize.” INTA

If any of this sounds familiar, it should because that's exactly what many Christians believe today based on what they've been taught. Ever heard of the New Apostolic Reformation Movement? Word of Faith Movement? The Prosperity Gospel? Same beliefs as 'New Thought.' Why so similar? Because they've all been bitten by the same 'new thought sharks.'

These false teachers promote a false gospel where people who agree with them (and send them money) can ‘speak into existence’ whatever they want. That’s no different than the New Age and New Thought idea of the ‘law of attraction.’ You ‘attract’ to yourself whatever you want by ‘creating’ your selfish desires through your spoken words. How can anyone do that? Because they are ‘like God’ and have similar creative powers to God Himself. Nonsense, of course, but believed by hundreds of millions of people across the world today.

I’ve already written several free eBooks about the **New Apostolic Reformation**, so let’s look at the Word of Faith Movement.

Word of Faith Movement

The Word of Faith Movement also had its beginnings in the 19th century. Many historians point to a man named E.W. Kenyon as being the founder. He was a Methodist minister who moved into Pentecostalism during his journey through ‘New Thought’ – which is just another name for ancient Gnosticism. Just like the Gnostics of old, Kenyon believed he held the keys to health, wealth, and prosperity through ‘secret’ knowledge from God.

Kenyon influenced many people, including the man that many people call the ‘grandfather’ of the Word of Faith Movement – Kenneth Hagin Sr. Hagin, in turn, influenced Oral Roberts who was all about raising money. Roberts promised people that if they ‘planted’ a financial seed with him and his ministry, God would meet their physical and financial needs (‘believe it, receive it). Oral Roberts influenced Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, who many believe received the mantle of the Word of Faith

Movement. Copeland is in his late 80's and has turned to his children to continue running a family empire worth an estimated \$300 million.

One of the primary ways that the Word of Faith Movement has grown so rapidly is 'mass communications.' People like Oral Roberts, the Copelands, Benny Hinn, and other Word of Faith preachers have used television to great advantage to reach people across the world with their message of 'health, wealth, and happiness.' Their television programs were boosted by religious networks like TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network) that promoted them across the planet. Others have joined in since, including T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Joyce Meyer, Robert Tilton, Paula White, Marilyn Hickey, Rodney Howard-Browne, Jan and Paul Crouch, Bishop Eddie Long, and many others. All of them have personal fortunes worth millions of dollars that have come from people who donate to their ministries and purchase their 'merchandise' (e.g. books, video tapes, etc).

Christians I've known for years have fallen for the lies of Word of Faith preachers and teachers. Unfortunately, most were not open to what I shared with them about it being a false gospel. They continued to believe and practice these 'New Thought' teachings. Most of the people in the Word of Faith Movement I've known never experienced healing, prosperity, or happiness. It is sad that so many people have been misled, and even personally damaged, by Word of Faith preachers and teachers.

Chapter Nine

If you've read this series so far and are in basic agreement with my thesis that Christians are in spiritual danger from swimming with 'spiritual sharks,' then let's proceed to the final step. How do we navigate the waters that make up 'this present world' and how do we prepare our children to do it.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2:11-15

The answer for our generation – for every generation – is found in God’s Word. I’ll return to Paul’s advice to Titus a little later in this final part of our series.

The Next Generation

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

It should be obvious that Satan wants to devour us and the next generation and the next generation and the next and the next and next. The devil is our ‘adversary.’ The Greek word ἀντίδικος (*antidikos*) means ‘opponent, adversary, accuser.’ People living in the 1st century AD understood the word to be used for someone who was accusing someone else by bringing formal charges against them. The devil is described as “the accuser of

our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night” in Revelation 12:10. I love the last part of that verse – “has been cast down.” However, let’s not get ahead of ourselves. For the moment, the devil is our accuser.

Fortunately for us, Christ intercedes with the Father on our behalf –

“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Romans 8:34

Why does Christ make ‘intercession for us?’ Because of what the devil is doing in the world today. The devil walks about ‘like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.’ Peter painted an interesting picture here for Christians. The devil is ‘like’ a roaring lion who ‘walks about’ (περιπατέω, peripateó – walks around in a circle) ‘seeking’ (searching) for anyone he can ‘devour’ (καταπίνω,

katapinó). The Greek word means ‘to drink down, swallow, destroy, consume.’ That’s the same thing a shark would do. Lions and sharks – they devour, they destroy, they consume.

You’re living your life often unaware that the devil is prowling around searching for someone to devour. The same is true for your children, your parents, your extended family, your friends, people at your church, people at work, people in the neighborhood, people at the store, etc. The devil is invisible to us, so how do we know if he’s nearby? We don’t. That’s why Jesus and His apostles told us to always be ready to deal with the devil’s deceptions. Even though the devil is one angel, he has a host of angels and demons who are constantly watching, searching, and giving him information about people in this world –

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 6:12

Peter’s advice is that we be ‘sober’ and ‘vigilant.’ To be sober (νήφω, *néphó*) means not to be ‘drunk’ with wine, not be ‘intoxicated’ – to be ‘calm and circumspect,’ ‘free from illusion.’ To be ‘vigilant’ (γρηγορέω, *grégoreó*) means to be ‘awake, watchful, on guard.’ We have to be ready to deal with the devil at any moment. That’s part of what the Apostle Paul meant in Ephesians 6:13 – “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

The 'evil day' can be any day, any time. We have to be ready. That means being watchful and not allowing ourselves to be lulled into a type of spiritual intoxication that everything is fine and nothing will go wrong. That's one of the greatest dangers of the New Thought Movement. It gives us false promises that we are in charge and everything will be fine. We'll be 'health, wealthy, and happy' – prosperous – rather than 'swallowed and destroyed.' That's a lie.

The Resistance

So, given the supernatural forces trying to destroy us – what can we do? We resist –

“Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

In the context of being humble before God, James wrote – “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). How do we resist the devil? We ‘submit to God, steadfast in the faith.’ When we do that the devil ‘will flee from you.’ The word ‘flee’ in the Greek is φεύγω (pheugó). It means ‘to shun, to escape, to flee.’ Why would that be the devil’s response to a Christian who ‘resisted’ him, ‘steadfast in the faith?’

The word ‘resist’ is ἀνθίστημι (*anthistémi*) and means ‘oppose, set against, withstand, take a strong stand against.’ That’s what Paul wrote to the Ephesians – “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Christians are the ‘resistance’ on earth against the power of the devil and his supernatural forces. That may not sound like a fair fight, but it is IF we remember this –

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:31-39

That leads us back to Paul’s letter to Titus that I mentioned at the beginning of this article –

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for

us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2:11-15

We can succeed as members of the ‘great resistance’ as we remember what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross and from the tomb. We can succeed in our resistance to the forces of evil as we –

- deny ungodliness and worldly lusts
- live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age
- look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
- knowing that we are redeemed from every lawless deed
- purified for Christ as His own special people
- zealous for good works



The devil and his ‘sharks’ are going to throw everything they can at us (wiles, tricks, deceptions), so we need to be prepared and ready to resist. We need to wear the full armor of God and be ready to wield the sword of the Spirit, pray, and withstand every attack.

The devil and his angelic forces have been waging war against God's people for thousands of years, so he's very good at what he does. However, he will 'flee' as we resist, as we oppose, depending on the supernatural power of the Almighty God.

Are you ready to fight?

Video and Written Resources

[The Subtle Deception of New Thought](#)

[How a Christian Can Have New Age Beliefs and Not Even Know it](#)

[Top Five New Age Teachings in the Church](#)

[Is your church teaching New Age Ideas?](#)

[Word of Faith Heresy: Phineas Quimby, New Thought, and Christian Science](#)

[New Age VS New Thought](#)

[Oprah is NOT a New Ager: A Deep Dive.](#)

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