

## **Sovereign Grace Church**

### ***“Toxic People” outline***

November 4, 2018

#### **Matthew 7: 15-20**

*It is fashionable today to speak of “toxic” leaders...whether those leaders be parents; pastors or Presidents...or people in general. Something that is toxic is poisonous. The most dangerous type of toxic leader is one who pretends to be caring....but is in reality a self-serving con-artist. According to Jesus, we should beware of a certain type of person, whether he is a leader or not, who seeks to gain entry into His Kingdom for the purpose of controlling that Kingdom for his own self-consuming interests. Such a person is a spiritual con-artist! And although he cannot fool Christ....he can often fool Christ-followers. So Jesus reminds us to beware of such people.*

*However, it is important for us to remember that a person is considered toxic not because they tell us things which are difficult or with which we do not agree, but because they hide their self-serving interests under a false veneer of caring concern. They are pretending to bear godly fruit for their own gain. It is also important to remember in all of this that the natural disposition of a disciple of Christ is to be trusting (I Cor. 13). But Jesus reminds us here that trusting is not the same as not thinking!*

1. **“Beware”** df= being cautious and aware of potential danger; spiritual discernment  
I Jn 4:1; II Tim. 3:16; I Pet. 5:8; Dt 6: 12; I Cor. 9: 27
  
2. **Beware of Toxic Prophets v. 15**  
Acts 8 (Simon the Sorcerer); Zeph 3: 3-4; Ezk 34: 2
  
3. **Beware of Toxic Fruit vv. 16-18**  
Jer. 23: 9-15

**4. Beware of Toxic Self-judgments vv. 19-20  
Jude 12-13**

**5. Beware of Toxic Responses  
I Jn 2: 9**

**Closing Lesson: Real vs. Toxic Fruit II Cor. 3: 17-18**

**Questions for Reflection and Conversation**

- 1. Have you ever lived under the influence of a “toxic” leader? How did you discern their toxicity? Have you ever confused a “toxic” leader with an ineffective or difficult one? How can we discern the difference? Can you think of current leaders or people you might consider toxic?**
- 2. Do you find yourself continually ruminating over the purported “fruit” in your life in order to discern its legitimacy or illegitimacy? Why can such an exercise be doomed from the start? Why is focusing on the transformation of your inner character more effective in producing godly fruit than focusing on the fruit itself?**
- 3. Are you a person who is naturally disposed to be suspicious of smooth talking people? How can you prevent such a disposition from becoming a faith-robbing cesspool of cynicism?! Or are you a person who naturally trusts people who come bearing words of kindness and purported illumination? How can you prevent such a disposition from becoming a thought-numbing and unimaginative brain freeze?!**
- 4. How have you handled your involvement with toxic people in the past? Were your efforts effective in rescuing others who were dependent upon him? What was the effect on the toxic perpetrator? How do you love a toxic leader? How do you love a con-artist? If you are not doing good to him by allowing him to “get away with it,” what do you do?! Do you seek to out-con him?! Why might this not be a good idea....despite the entertainment value?**