

The following, while of varying degrees of importance, are among many factors that are **NOT** to be part of determining whether or not a sermon, an order of service or a class is Christian:

- how the pastor looks
- how the pastor talks
- whether the sermon is read or memorized
- whether or not you like the pastor
- whether or not you like the sermon or delivery style
- how you feel about the pastor
- the number of people attending the class or service
- whether or not the congregation is declining in numbers
- the age of the pastor, etc.

from C.F.W. Walther's *Law and Gospel* . . .

Accordingly, when preparing to preach, the preacher must draw up a strategical plan in order to win his hearers for the kingdom of God. Otherwise the hearers may say of his sermon, "Oh, that was nice!" but that will be all. They will leave the church with an empty heart.

3rd Evening Lecture

The value of a sermon depends not only on this, that every statement in it be taken from the Word of God and be in agreement with the same, but also on this, whether Law and Gospel have been rightly divided.

4th Evening Lecture

The Gospel is this and nothing else: that in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of sins, in Him alone and nowhere else in the world, but also truly in Him. A sermon that did not say that, a sermon in which this real Gospel was not mentioned would not be a Christian sermon.

Hermann Sasse, "*The Lonely Way II*," 1943

Beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15).

A Sheep's Guideline for Judging the Shepherd's Doctrine

for use in various contexts, such as Bible Classes, Sermons, Orders of Worship, etc.

While one might readily take on the task of critically analyzing a shepherd's doctrine, one might also hesitate in rendering a judgment on it. The Scriptural basis for making such a judgment comes from the words of Jesus, preached as a part of His Sermon on the Mount. Specifically, our Lord warned:

Beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15).

The hearers of that sermon were commanded to beware of those who do not properly preach and apply God's Word. In one of his *Church Postil* sermons, Martin Luther stated:

Therefore, be ye aroused by this passage of Scripture to hew to pieces and thrust through everything that is not in harmony with the Gospel, for it belongs to the sheep to judge, and not to the preachers. You have the authority and power to judge everything that is preached; that and nothing less. . . . We could not beware if we had not the power to judge, but were obliged to accept everything they said and preached.

On this same text, C.F.W. Walther declared in his sermon titled, "The Judgment of the Sheep Over Their Shepherds":

. . . when Christ calls upon his hearers to beware of false prophets and know the true from the false prophets by their fruits, he seats all hearers on the throne of judgment, gives the balances of truth into their hands, and commands them to judge their teacher confidently. . . . In divine things no one is excluded from the duty of judging because all of Christ's sheep are judges: The learned and unlearned, man and wife, hired man and hired girl, young and old. Each has his own soul, his own life, his own salvation at stake.

Checklist to Evaluate the Shepherd's Doctrine

Occasion: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____ Place: _____

	yes	no
# 1. According to the definition, was the Law proclaimed		
• at all in the liturgy or class or sermon?	_____	_____
• to show you your sin?	_____	_____
• as the basis for the hearer's hope for heaven?	_____	_____
• as able to be the basis for the hearer's salvation?	_____	_____
# 2. Was the Gospel proclaimed; specifically, that . . .		
• the Son of God came to be our Redeemer?	_____	_____
• Jesus is the God-man, our Mediator?	_____	_____
• Jesus fulfilled the Law of God perfectly in our stead? (the active obedience of Christ)	_____	_____
• Jesus suffered the cost & paid the penalty for all sins? (the passive obedience of Christ)	_____	_____
• Jesus conquered the devil & atoned for the sins of all?	_____	_____
• Jesus died our death on the cross?	_____	_____
• Jesus rose again from the dead, defeating death?	_____	_____
• Jesus ascended into heaven?	_____	_____
# 3. Were the means of God's grace proclaimed; that . . .		
• Baptism grants forgiveness of sin, life and salvation?	_____	_____
• Absolution is announced to the hearer?	_____	_____
• the Word of the forgiveness of all sins is declared?	_____	_____
• the Lord's Supper strengthens faith and grants the blessings of Christ?	_____	_____

4. To whom or what was the hearer referred for hope:

- to the genealogy or life of the hearer?
- to the love, good works or merit of the hearer?
- to the incarnation, life, love, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Christ?

5. Was the overall message one of . . .

- manageable Law and/or conditional Gospel in order to be saved?
- emotional appeal or motivational living for the hope of heaven?
- salvation by the grace of God through faith in the person and work of Jesus the Christ as revealed in the Word of God?

yes no

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Note 1:

If you had no checkmarks in the #2 “yes” column, then either you did not hear correctly or this wasn’t a Christian order of service, class or sermon.

Note 2:

If you have a majority of “yes” checkmarks in #2 and # 3, then it is likely that you heard a Christian order of service, class or sermon that had applications to you personally, particularly that, because of Christ crucified and risen, you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

What is your verdict concerning this class, order of service or sermon?



Your Name: _____