

WOLVES

Weylan Deaver

In the late summer of 2005, Jim Dubcak and I were privileged to camp for a week in the Canadian Rockies of British Columbia, where we slept in a canvas tent beneath the Northern Lights. As preachers of the Gospel, both of us had taken aim many a time at spiritual wolves, but, in the mountains, we each had a license to hunt a real wolf (and a bear, but that's another story).

Wolf hunting is not easy. As a game animal, the wolf is one of the most difficult trophies in North America. We only heard one the whole time we were there. Getting out of the truck, our guide began to call to the wolf, which was about a hundred yards away, on the other side of a tree line. The wolf howled several times in reply, and hung around for a couple of minutes. By that time, a breeze at our back evidently carried our unwelcome scent to his keen nose, and he ghosted away. As close as we were to the wolf—and though we heard him loudly—we never saw him, which is exactly how he wanted it. Still, just hearing one in the wild was an experience. Later, we took three barrels of leftover animal parts from the butcher's shop in Chetwynd and emptied them in the wilderness, hoping the fragrant mound would attract some wolves. Though we returned several times to inspect the pile, no wolf was visible.

As large and potentially dangerous as they are, wolves do not like to be seen. Wolves are wary and well equipped to pull down animals much bigger than they—especially when working in packs. The damage a wolf (or wolves) can inflict must be the reason the Lord compared *Canis lupus* to the enemies of the church. Once, in giving his disciples a preaching assignment, Jesus said, “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matt. 10:16, ESV). He also warned his followers of “false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). A wolf does not win his dinner by sauntering around a herd of deer while howling to advertise his presence. If that were his tactic, the herd would quickly run away. But, he may bring down the unsuspecting by ever-so-quietly sneaking up on his oblivious target and then dashing in for the kill. Likewise, spiritual wolves in the church do not wear T-shirts stating their true intentions. They may not look very fierce or smell threatening. More than likely, as the Lord indicated, they have put together a costume that, to some degree, looks like a sheep. Their disguising ability makes them all the more dangerous. Before leaving the Ephesian elders, Paul warned that “after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

Wolves do not embrace a “live and let live” approach. The devil is tirelessly trying to make a meal of God's flock, hunting the weak, the ignorant, the unprepared, the one who dropped his guard, the one who got separated from the rest. He sneaks in close wearing a sheepskin, but it does not fit him well—there is always the telltale sign that something is amiss. The next time you see a sheep with a mouthful of fangs, or with a sharp set of claws where a hoof should be, raise an eyebrow and go wolf hunting.

