With some people — those who oppose the truth — we must "contend earnestly" (Jde 1:3). With others, those who seek the truth, we must "be ready always to give an answer" (1Pe 3:15). Let’s be wise enough to distinguish between the two.

WITHSTANDING THE WOLVES
(Mtt 7:15)

We cannot help but notice the similarity between Jesus’s warning here, and one given by the apostle Paul.

Imagine a strong church in a big city with several elders shepherding the flock. Among its ministers was the great apostle Paul, who stayed and worked with this congregation for three years.

Sounds like a pretty good church, and no doubt it was. It was the church in Ephesus. However, following his ministry there, Paul called together the elders. What he said to them echoes what Jesus himself had once said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Mtt 7:15).

Paul said, "I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-31).

Other Warnings

Three other giants of the early church issued similar warnings.

- **Peter (2Pe 2:1-3)**
- **John (1Jn 2:18-24)**
- **Jude (Jde 1:3-4)**

The Risen Christ’s Warning

The risen Christ likewise spoke from heaven to the Christians at Thyatira, whom he commended for their love and good deeds.

But they were failing to note the false, self-styled prophetess at work in their midst (Rev 2:18-20).

There are three main things to know in order to withstand the wolves.

1. **Know that the devil and his angels are at work to deceive and destroy** (Eph 6:10-13).
2. **Know the difference between genuine truth-based love and artificial powder-puff love** (Rom 12:9).
3. **Know (eido) and respect those who lead the church in truth** (1Th 5:12-14).

Deep Thought

These questions are for you to think about and discuss. Other parts of this lesson may help you with the answers.

1. What does it mean to "Enter through the narrow gate"?
2. Compare Mtt 7:13, Lke 13:24-25 and Mtt 7:7-8. What does this tell us about when one should enter by the narrow gate or narrow door?
3. Why do so "many" choose to go on the way to destruction and misery, and so "few" choose the way to everlasting life and joy? The answer lies in what Jesus means by "narrow". If you are puzzled, look up Acts 14:22.
5. What kind of knockers does God like?
6. In the sermon on the mount, what criteria are given by which God will judge us?