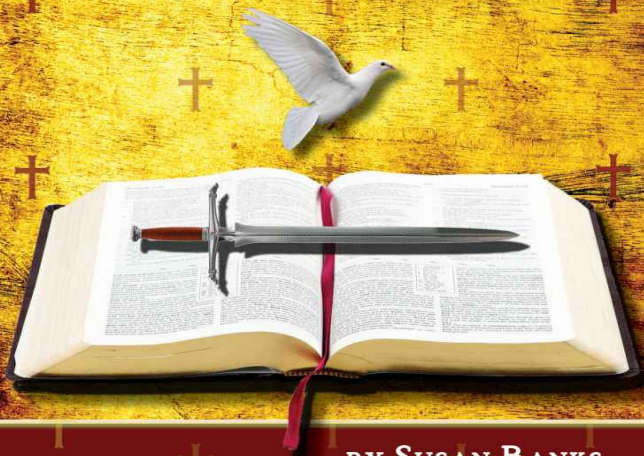


Discernment

God's Inner Guidance
for All Believers



BY SUSAN BANKS

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**DISCERNMENT -
GOD'S INNER GUIDANCE FOR ALL BELIEVERS BY
SUSAN BANKS**

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INTRODUCTION

The prophet Jeremiah was told to extract the worthy from the worthless in order to be a spokesman for God. In order to do so, he had to use the anointing to *discern* between good and evil:

If you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman. They for their part may turn to you, but as for you, you must not turn to them.

JEREMIAH 15:19

Discernment is more than a tool stored in our spiritual toolbox, to be brought out on rare occasions. It is as a commandment from the Lord Himself. We are told to know people by the fruit in their lives.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

MATTHEW 12:33

Ultimately, properly implemented discernment will bear

good fruit for you, your family, and the Kingdom of God. Poorly implemented discernment, or none at all, can cause our relationship with Jesus to be hampered, churches to divide, and in the worst case, believers to fall from grace.

We all, like Jeremiah, are being called to become anointed spokesmen for the Lord and His Kingdom. Our effectiveness in representing the Kingdom of God, however, is tied to our ability to *discern*.

WHAT IS DISCERNMENT?

It would be truly wonderful if every worship service, every sermon, every Christian book we encountered offered a thorough and complete healing for our souls. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Many times we have to sift through the message to glean the precious. How many times have we gone to church and come away feeling only partially enlivened, partially hopeful, slightly more fruitful and peaceful?

In the worst of all cases, you have attended a meeting and come away confused, feeling used or manipulated.

What you are experiencing is called *discernment*.

The enemy can use these experiences to convince us that we are judgmental — at least partially — towards a messenger or message, and thus lead us into condemnation. The truth of the matter may be the exact opposite: you may be exercising the spiritual gift of discernment described in

1 CORINTHIANS 12.

Discernment is a tool to be used within the Church to filter the messages we hear. Equally true, discernment is a tool we can use as we interact with the world outside the Church.

Most people's discernment, however, lies dormant. The problem is in our understanding of the process of discernment, which the Holy Spirit — as the Spirit of Truth — has enabled within us. It is like a light switch within each of us that we can choose to turn on or leave off. Webster's Dictionary defines

discernment as

“the ability to separate, distinguish between” and
“to recognize or identify as separate and distant”
and “to discriminate – to see or understand the
difference.”

In MATTHEW 16:3, Jesus stated that the Pharisees “could not discern the signs of the times.” The apostle Paul in HEBREWS 5:14 states that “solid food is for the mature,” and defines mature as those “who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

The Greek word used for “discernment” is *diakrisis*, and it has as its root *diakrino* meaning to “judge, distinguish, decide.”¹

Prior to studying discernment, it is important to realize that each one of us is on an individualized course of study set by God. In PHILIPPIANS 1:6 Paul states that “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” That is, each one of us is living a different life story. There can be similarities in experiences, and the revelation God gives us during these experiences form a greater part of our ministry to one another. Paul confirms this in

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of mercies and God of comfort,
who comforts us in all our affliction so that we
may be able to comfort those who are in any

affliction with the comfort with which are comforted by God.

The difference lies in the fact that no two people have the same personal history and emotional responses to events, both past and present, in their lives. We can comfort each other, but cannot expect others to react and feel exactly as we do. Therefore, what is sung, preached, or written may be God's ministry to one person, but not timely for another. The fact that one comes away from a message blessed and another not so blessed does not mean that the message or the messenger is either wrong or right. Each of us needs to *assess our own need* and receive what the Holy Spirit has for us accordingly.

Now given this knowledge, there are certainly areas of discernment that apply to everyone in the Body of Christ. For instance, there should be no doubt that a message concerning the toleration of sexual promiscuity within the Church is wrong. There should be no doubt that a pastor living in adultery should be released from his position. There should be no doubt that a message questioning the virgin birth of Christ, or the resurrection of the Dead, or the second coming of Christ is a wrong and harmful message.

True discernment, however, can be more subtle than these obvious contradictions to God's commandments. It is to this aim that this book was written.

1 The Lexicon to the Old and New Testaments, edited by Spiros Zodiatas. AMG Publishers; Chattanooga, TN. Copyright 1984 and 1990.

THE FOUR M'S OF DISCERNMENT
MOST CHRISTIANS DO NOT GRASP
THE SIMPLE AND RELATIVELY
SHORT LIST OF STEPS INVOLVED IN
DISCERNING A SITUATION OR
MESSAGE. THERE ARE FOUR BASIC
STEPS YOU CAN FOLLOW TO
DISCERN ANY MESSAGE OR
MESSENGER, AND TO THEREFORE
KNOW IN YOUR HEART WHETHER
GOD IS SPEAKING TO YOU OR NOT.
THESE FOUR STEPS ARE: • MEANS

•MOTIVATION •MORALITY, AND •MESSAGE

Means

The MEANS is the manner by which a message or religious requirement is being communicated to you. A biblical message or requirement is based on the Bible, but other messages and requirements have become established in churches, and these are outside the purview of Scripture.

Examples of illegitimate MEANS include all forms of cultic and occult activity found today in the church and in society. Rarely does an anointed fellowship or an anointed book drift into the occult, but we must always be aware. Jesus told us to be wise and to be aware of the situations in which we find ourselves:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

MATTHEW 10:16

In developing countries, for instance, we have seen some churches allow a mix of old occult practices and the new Christian faith to become blended, and the means of worship tainted. An example would be sacrificing chickens within the service or on the outside of the church building. A discerning Christian would recognize immediately the inherent danger in allowing occult or demonic practices to mix with the pure message of Jesus Christ.

For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14

QUESTIONABLE MEANS: CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

It is interesting to note that most Christian celebrations blend elements of pagan and Christian foundations, resulting in mixed means. The Puritan fathers of early America forbade the celebration of Christmas because of its pagan origins, because the celebration takes place at the winter solstice, the pagan celebration of the worship of the sun god. They reasoned that the birth of Christ would most likely have occurred in late fall, after the harvest and before the winter rains, which would have made travel difficult for Joseph and Mary.

Other customs such as the Christmas tree, feasting, *etc.* were already in practice in pagan tradition prior to the birth of Christ. JEREMIAH 10 is particularly enlightening on this point, as it describes the decorated tree brought indoors as a part of *pagan* celebrations.

For the customs of the peoples are delusion;
Because it is wood cut from the forest... They
decorate it with silver and with gold; They fasten
it with nails and with hammers so that it will not

totter.

JEREMIAH 10:3–4

Here we have a holiday with questionable means and which therefore requires discernment.

One could truthfully say that, regardless of the external trappings, the season of celebrating Christ's birth has spawned some of the world's most beautiful music testifying to Jesus' Lordship. And to the extent it is observed in churches, this season refocuses much of the world back upon Jesus' miraculous coming to earth. So Christianity has rewritten much of the celebration with Christ-centered themes.

There is, however, the need to discern between the secular customs originating from pagan practices and the spiritual meaning of Christmas. It never hurts to see the origins of our customs. Being informed and using wisdom is Godly, and one should avoid legalism on both sides of the issue. God can use all things for good, even celebrations with questionable means.

Another custom taken from pagan practice is the Lenten Season. In the ancient Babylonian religion, their god, Tammuz, was murdered and his mother went into the underworld for 40 days to find and bring him back to life. She was called "the queen of heaven" (see JEREMIAH 44:16–17). The 40-day period in which Tammuz was dead was a time of fasting and mourning. In EZEKIEL 8:14 we hear of the women weeping for Tammuz. The celebration that followed this period, when he was found and brought back from the underworld, included many symbols for

spring such as bunnies, eggs, *etc.* Again, we have a holiday with questionable means that needs to be discerned with the wisdom of God.

The only 40-day period connected with the resurrection of Christ was the 40 days *after* his resurrection, not before. This period was, for Jesus' followers, a time of celebration and fellowship with their risen Lord, not fasting and weeping. This is entirely different from the 40 day period *prior* to his crucifixion, and the Tammuz connection shows how pagan rituals have been interwoven with Christianity.

These facts are not meant to cause guilt or condemnation, as the Church has put new meanings to them. Christianity has redefined these practices into Christian symbolism, and the purposes of Jesus Christ are served in many cases. It is not the celebration of the birth of Christ, or His death and resurrection that is in question, simply the means by which some of it has come to be practiced within Christianity. [2](#)

There are more recent examples of questionable means that need to be discerned. For instance, certain Eastern meditation techniques have been introduced into healing and deliverance ministries within churches as an attempt to bring "restoration" to an individual. The Holy Spirit does not need meditational techniques to reveal a source of a problem. He gives direct revelation when asked, through the gifts of discernment and knowledge (see 1 CORINTHIANS 12). He is, after all, the Spirit of Truth. Thus the gift of discernment comes solely from the Holy Spirit, not from a psychoanalysis technique.

QUESTIONABLE MEANS: SECRECY & OATHS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Secret ceremonies, secret Christian organizations, and secret Church retreats that claim to have the MEANS to the truth should instead cause great caution. Simply put, such organizations should be open to all believers. Jesus warned against secrecy within the Church in MATTHEW 5:14–15:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under the peck measure, but on the lamp stand; and it gives light [truth] to all who are in the house.

Any Church function requiring oaths or secrecy is not in line with Biblical teaching and needs to be treated with proper discernment, if not outright rejected. These elite clubs create church “cliques” and cause great divisiveness. Jesus goes so far as to call such oaths “evil.”

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ But I say to you, *make no oath at all*, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white

or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.

MATTHEW 5:33–37 [EMPHASIS MINE]

An example of secrecy or discrimination among church groups has recently risen in local churches. A “member-only” organization was formed that has its origins in the mainstream church, and has found its way into certain Protestant and Charismatic circles. The purpose of this club is to provide a means to bring people together for an intense time of Biblical study and Christian fellowship. The only problem is that it is by invitation only, leaving many in the church feeling “left out.” Jesus is strongly against secrecy, as this forms unhealthy soul ties within the body of Christ.

Within this organization, new attendees are taken through an initiation, where they cannot leave until the established time. In some cases clocks or watches are required to be removed, voiding all sense of time for the attendee. Recently, I heard a critique by a former intelligence officer of these procedures in which he concluded they were very close to brain-washing techniques used in military settings.

Please keep in mind, there is nothing wrong with a Biblical retreat; far from it. The problem lies in the means; for instance in the loss of freedom to come and go, or the request that the proceedings remain undisclosed, or in the deprivation of time. This can cause unhealthy soul ties to form, and be a source of division within a congregation.³ One is called to use discernment for the good of his soul and the Church as a whole.

QUESTIONABLE MEANS: CULTISH PRACTICES WITHIN THE CHURCH

In more extreme cases, certain Church leaders have formed a cultic relationship with their followers, built around themselves and their self-serving doctrine. Often, at the beginning, these ministries were anointed, and many were blessed through them. But over time, the leader drifted into a personality cult, and began to control his flock with fear or pressure, filling them with his own brand of Biblical interpretation. Such was the case with David Koresh and Jim Jones. Their churches withdrew from the outside world, and this led to disastrous results.

There is a close connection between the occult and a cult, as both seek to elevate someone or something higher than Jesus Himself. Scripture, which requires discernment in each case, encourages us to be *in the world*, but not *of the world*.

Jesus warned in JOHN 5:43:

...if another comes in his own name you will receive him.

There is a danger in believing that one denomination or one person is the only means to attain God's truth. When Jesus wrote to the churches in the book of Revelation (see REVELATION 2 & 3) He defined a church by its locality or city. To Jesus, His Church is organized along geographic lines, not denominational lines.

Likewise, Paul discouraged divisiveness based on leaders.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

One should never be taught that their church or denomination — or a saint — is the means to salvation or protection. Likewise, believers should feel free to have access to counsel through any qualified leader in their city. As PROVERBS 11:14 says, “... in abundance of counselors there is victory.”

Paul defined church leadership to Timothy in the Church of Ephesus as a leadership of plurality, that is, *elders* (see 1 TIMOTHY 5:17). And Paul stated in 1 TIMOTHY 2:5:

For there is One God, and One mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

THE MEANS OF CHRISTIAN OPERATION

In 1 TIMOTHY chapter 3 Paul instructs Timothy concerning the qualifications of leadership in the church. Of special interest is verse 7 which states:

He must also have a good reputation with outsiders.

My husband and I have had working relationships for many years with Christian Bookstores, churches, missionaries, and other organizations. We have been told by those in the debt collection business that these types of operations have credit ratings worse than other types of businesses with which they deal. What this simply says is that they do not pay their bills in a timely manner — if at all. We have been saddened to get notices from secular courts that groups having Christian names or identities have declared bankruptcy. This means that those from whom they have purchased items or borrowed money will not get paid. Oftentimes missionaries or other Christians overdraw their bank accounts on a consistent basis. This means by which they operate involves a lack of fiscal responsibility which not only is *taking without paying* but also damaging their reputation (and therefore the Christian witness) in the outside community. ROMANS 13:8 states

Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love another. (NIV)

Every Christian and every Christian organization has to employ ethical financial behavior in their means of communicating the gospel; even if it causes a scale back of commitments and a working plan to settle. We simply cannot maintain the witness of Christ if we cause injury to both other believers or those outside the Church by not paying for what we are using.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

Another issue of motives applies specifically to churches which embrace the Pentecostal experience. We could even add another “M”, calling it “Manifestation.” The Holy Spirit does mightily touch people in such a way that often they simply cannot contain the joy and enthusiasm which overcomes them. Oftentimes this causes people to become visibly excited in many different ways. The problem comes when somehow a church or fellowship sees outward displays of excitement as a means to stir up the Spirit. This is evidenced when excited behavior is *expected* at services. Behaviors such as shouting, animal noises, dancing, running, or even flag waving become a confusing distraction and a hindrance to the flow of the Holy Spirit in the meeting. Outsiders are quickly turned off and usually never return. This behavior changes from a response of the anointing of the Spirit to soulishness. In 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–33 Paul requested that all be done decently and in order. Verse 33 states:

For God is not a God of confusion [commotion]
but of peace.

Another area worth noting is the worship service, which should be a means to summon the anointing of the Holy Spirit. However when the music is too loud, the opposite effect takes place. I know of individuals who use ear plugs or leave the room until things quiet down. The new electric instruments with their amplifiers are often turned up so much that it is not only unnecessary, but incredibly distracting to the individual

worshipper. God is not deaf, nor are the majority of worshippers in a service.

Some of the mightiest miracles ever witnessed were in Kathryn Kuhlman services. She always began her meetings with a glorious worship service, but when the time came for her to speak, she required absolute quiet; constantly reminding people that the Holy Spirit was a “gentleman” and “as peaceful as a dove.” Each service we attend should reflect the Spirit’s choice and is usually different each time. Just as any outward bursts of anointed joy and excitement are erroneously restricted in traditional services, so should the excesses of this behavior be discerned in Pentecostal and Charismatic gatherings. Silence before the Lord allows Him to move mightily, just as excited responses to His genuine anointing should be welcome! The job of the leaders should be to exercise discernment between legalistic control and lack of control. It is best to avoid all excesses.

² One can refer to the book *The Two Babylons* by Rev. Alexander Hislop, published by Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, New Jersey: Second edition 1959. This is an extremely detailed study of the Chaldean (Babylonian) practices which have filtered into Christian tradition.

³ See *Breaking Unhealthy Soul Ties* (page 78), available through Impact Christian Books – online at www.impactchristianbooks.com.

Motives

There are various kinds of MOTIVES for the things we do in our daily Christian walk. When our motives are tied directly to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are then promoting Jesus Christ, not ourselves. We labor not for monetary gain, or career advancement in a denomination, or for praise from others, but for the good of the Kingdom. When MOTIVES are self-centered or soulish, however, man is glorified at the expense of Jesus Christ.

It is important in this area of motivation to remember the words of John the Baptist:

He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.

JOHN 3:30

Motive gets to the issue of what is in a man's heart. For our heart steers our actions like a rudder steers a ship. Jesus addressed the critical issue of motivation in the following passages:

In JOHN 5:41:

I do not receive glory from men.

In MATTHEW 23:10–11, Jesus further stated:

And do not be called leaders, for One is your

Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

In 1 THESSALONIANS 2:5–6 Paul said:

For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness – nor did we seek glory from men, either from you, or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

Clearly, the New Testament has a lot to say about motives! And it is up to us, as believers, to be able to discern what motives are being used and whether they are valid and pure and true. The motives opposite those of Jesus and Paul are self-centeredness (not Christ-centered), or self-serving (not Christ-serving), or manipulative (akin to control and witchcraft).

MOTIVES OF THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT

Investigating this issue in human terms can become difficult, because humans tend to fluctuate between actions of the soul (self-serving) and actions of the spirit (God-serving). This is a fact of life. It can be next to impossible to have pure

MOTIVES, especially when notoriety develops or funding needs arise. A preacher or priest can be moving under the leading of the Spirit in one moment, and then switch to a self-elevating discourse during the same sermon (or book). And yet, detecting the motivation affects the level of commitment we make both spiritually and financially to a leader.

Furthermore, how can one discern the motives of another Christian worker? It takes time to get to know those who labor among you. In other words, we need to be able to divide between soul (self) and spirit (Holy Spirit) in every Christian situation. As we become more familiarized with the Word of God, this discernment will sharpen. Hebrews 4:12 states:

For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

One has to be very careful when seeking or receiving advice from another person. That advice can seem well-meaning, but not appropriate for your need. Or, the one giving this advice may have ulterior motives, seeking your loyalty or acceptance rather than your good. Christian counsel **should agree with what the Spirit has already been showing you.** To rely solely on what another person “hears” for you is unhealthy. Letting another person who is motivated by a spirit of control give you advice is dangerous.

MOTIVES BEHIND WORSHIP WITHIN THE CHURCH

Obviously each person has his or her own taste in music. Some prefer the older hymns and more formal music, and others the livelier “contemporary” songs. Jesus advised that one can find treasure in both the old and the new. In MATTHEW 13:52 he stated:

Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.

In other words, because a congregation usually has mixed generations in attendance, balance is needed.

The question of MOTIVES comes in, however, when there is a persistence to “show off” musical skill during service. This habit can override the requirement to direct the worship humbly towards the Father and His Son. Members of a congregation can be easily distracted from focusing worship on God to focusing upon the ability of those performing the music.

The success of a worship team lies strictly within the motivation in the musicians’ hearts. They should be seeking to lead the people both joyfully and peacefully into the presence of God, as they should be doing themselves. God gives us gifts, but they are for His glory, not ours. I say this because I have led worship for over 40 years, and I still catch myself switching at times to my performance rather than focusing just

on the Lord.

The point in all this is that motives are a continual decision of the will, whether in teaching, preaching, or leading worship.

I recently had an experience where the worship celebration of Christmas was so beautifully performed, and all directed at the glorification of the birth of Christ. The worship leader toward the end of the concert did something that really blessed me. At the second-to-last song, he told the congregation that if they should want to applaud the concert, to do it then, so as to allow the final Christmas Carol sung to be the last thing remembered in the service. Therein lays the correct motivation!

MY DREAM CONCERNING DISCERNMENT

(PART I)

Years ago, I asked the Lord if He would write a letter to the churches of today, as He did in the book of Revelation. I wondered “what would He say?” His answer to me came more than 35 years ago in a three-part visionary dream that I had concerning *discernment*.

The first part of my dream related to a time when I found myself struggling with a dilemma of denominational legalism in my local church. I had been feeling more intensely each week that my church’s rules concerning its procedures, its static liturgies, and even the interpretation of scripture (ruling out any other interpretation but that of the leadership) were becoming cumbersome, heavy, and controlling.

Looking back, I see that I was frustrated in my need for the freedom of the Holy Spirit in this fellowship. As well, I had become fearful that to disagree at all with the leadership and its denominational creed would incur their displeasure. I had heard of some churches politely asking members to leave over similar differences. Paul states in 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17...

Now the Lord is Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

“Liberty,” according to Webster’s Dictionary, is defined as “freedom from having to follow a prescribed course.” How true that was!

In this prophetic dream, I had been invited to a “love feast” — a common term used for “communion.” As I entered the host’s home, a friendly woman lovingly greeted me and proudly showed me an extravagantly decorated three-tiered cake resembling a wedding cake. As I reached out to touch it, it accidentally toppled, crashing to the ground and falling apart. As I profusely apologized, I looked up and saw the woman’s face become demonically hateful! There was no love or friendship to be found after that point. I fled in terror from the house.

As I sought the Lord for the interpretation of this dream I came to see that He had provided me with a classic example of legalism throughout church history, specifically, the way the Lord’s Supper is both interpreted and celebrated by denominations throughout time. Nations went to war over this issue during the Reformation. Even today some churches deny sincere believers access to communion if they are not members of their denomination.

What is more important to note here is that the “love feast” in my dream was not about true Christian love, but rather outward methods of practice. The underlying MOTIVES were out of sync with the way the Lord would want His people to honor His death on the cross.

Paul has much to say about this issue in ROMANS 14. The entire chapter should be examined, however the key point is found in verse 17:

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the

Holy Spirit.

Does it really matter if you celebrate the Lord's Supper in a cathedral, or under strict supervision of elders, or in a home prayer meeting? It should not. If you want to be sincerely legalistic concerning communion then shouldn't you always celebrate it in homes as was the practice in the early Church?

The conclusion to all of this is that when a church allows outward confirmation to rules, practice, and liturgy to supersede the inward heart's devotion to Christ, then there is no real Christian love as it becomes motivated by conditional love. Again, motives matter, and it is what is in the heart that the Lord pays attention to and rewards.

How do you apply this to your ability to discern? The Holy Spirit will show you if you are in a situation where the motivation behind conducting the affairs of the Church is control and legalism, thus suppressing your freedom in Christ. Ask yourself these simple questions:

- Do you feel your church or fellowship is assisting you in growing in the knowledge of Christ and His Spirit, or restricting and controlling you in this process?
- Do you feel that you are being equipped for your ministry, which God has preordained for you?

Once you develop a “sense of smell” for legalism and control, you will have moved forward towards the maturity God calls you to as expressed in

HEBREWS 5:14.

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

MY DREAM CONCERNING DISCERNMENT (PART II) I MENTIONED A DREAM CONCERNING THE WEDDING CAKE IN A LOVE FEAST. THERE WERE TWO OTHER PARTS TO THIS DREAM; ONE OF WHICH I WILL SHARE NOW. FOLLOWING THE DISASTER WITH THE WEDDING CAKE, I WAS TRANSPORTED TO A LIVELY WORSHIP SERVICE AND WAS CAUGHT UP IN THE RHYTHMIC MUSIC BEING PLAYED. PEOPLE WERE DANCING, JUMPING, CLAPPING; THEY WERE HAVING A WONDERFUL TIME. I TOO BECAME CAUGHT UP IN THE ENJOYMENT GOING ON.

Then my attention was directed to the back of the church. There Jesus was standing with tears rolling down His cheeks. As I sought the Lord later for the interpretation, it came to me that the church was using His name to have a good time, not to minister to or communicate with Him. The means (worship) was valid but the motive (soulish enjoyment) was not. This memory has never left me.

MORALS

One does not have to look very deeply into Paul's letters to get a list of behaviors that he highlights as immoral. In fact, the actual experience of being born again depends upon one's commitment to repentance from such behaviors. The problem arises when sin is allowed to continue to exist in a congregation. It is then that discernment has to come into play.

The truth is that believers generally have a genuine repentant conversion, but over time find that the "old man" is not quite dead. Paul addresses this issue in himself in ROMANS 7:19:

For the good that I wish I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

Later in this same chapter Paul concludes that "sin dwells in me." This whole chapter deals with inner conflict. He seems to be referring to an inner battle between sin and obedience — Paul specifically mentions the sin of coveting. The good news is found a few verses down in ROMANS 8:1 where he says that:

Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

However, in the writings of John, we find a common source of confusion on the subject of sin in a believer's life. In

1 JOHN 1:8–9, he states:

If we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And yet, in 1 JOHN 3:9–10, John writes:

No one who is born of God *practices* [*poieó*] sin, because He [Christ's] seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

These two passages present a common conflict of views on sin. Rather than being contradictory, however, these scriptures make a clear statement. Believers who *practice* righteousness are constantly seeking to reckon the old nature dead. Believers who *practice* sin, however, are choosing the old nature over the new creation in Christ.

The Greek word *poieó* can be used to suggest ongoing and indulgent behavior. To “practice sin” means a willful effort with no attempt to quit the behavior; just as one *practices* sports to become better athlete, or another *practices* a musical instrument to perfect the skill.

Indeed, all of us slip from time to time, so repentance is

ongoing in the Christian walk (as in 1 JOHN 1 above). This does not mean we have wrong motives. And we are cautioned to not be self-righteous; to acknowledge our weaknesses. However, as the saying goes, practice makes perfect (as in 1 JOHN 3 above), and consistent acceptance of sin is — for certainty — a sign of corrupt morals.

Paul desires us to do an honest assessment to test ourselves; to discern whether we are struggling to resist sin or rebelliously practicing it. This is the classic battle between our flesh and our spirit. In 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 he calls on believers to “test yourselves” — to examine ourselves to see whether Christ is in us working out His purposes.

In 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9–10 Paul also warns that those who are fornicators, idolaters (occult practitioners), adulterers, homosexuals, drunkards, swindlers and thieves shall not “inherit the kingdom of God.” Indeed, how can these MORALS coexist with righteous behavior in the same church?

THE NEED FOR DELIVERANCE IN THE CHURCH

One reason why sin exists in a church is that the leadership is unaware of unrepentant sinners, as works of darkness are hidden from plain view. To this point, the apostle Jude referred to those with corrupt MORALS as “hidden reefs in your love feasts” in Jude 12, where these men were “wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.”

In our own ministry experience, there were many times

when my husband, Bill, who was independent of established churches, was called upon to counsel troubled believers. Often he would have to call the pastor to alert him to the problem within their own church.

It is truly unfortunate that believers who sincerely want to live righteous lives find themselves trapped by ungodliness, prisoners like those in
PSALM 102:

... To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To set
free those who were doomed to death ...

PSALM 102:20

These are the ones who are desperately seeking deliverance from their demonic habits and compulsions. And yet, for the most part, churches of today (especially in the Western world) refuse to offer deliverance from the evil spirits which harass these poor souls, for a variety of reasons. [4](#) These are not the ones who willfully “practice” sin, but find themselves unable to break free from a cruel taskmaster (the enemy) no matter what they try. [5](#) A minister will need to use discernment when deciphering the condition of the heart of such a believer to know who genuinely wants to be set free and who does not.

SIN IN THE FELLOWSHIP

OF THE BELIEVERS

There is need for discernment when a believer sees sinful behavior in another member, or even worse, in the church leadership (we have seen cases of both). Jesus describes the need for confrontation in MATTHEW 18:15–17:

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and tax-gatherer.

In other words, if all else fails, that one must leave the congregation. Paul defines the qualities of a leader to Timothy:

It is a trustworthy statement; if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then must be above reproach... temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.

There is another description of the quality of a leader in
TITUS 1:6:

above reproach ... having children who believe,
not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

When sinful behavior is known and tolerated in the church, the entire congregation is pulled down, and their reputation in the community sorely tarnished. It is particularly tragic when the leadership knows of these situations and looks the other way in order to not lose members or face a confrontation.

SIN IN THE LIFE OF THE ANOINTED MINISTER

What is even more confusing is when a leader has an anointing for the miraculous, but he or she is living a sinful life. We have witnessed men who have genuine gifts of praying for the sick, and have seen people healed, but been aware of their ongoing sin. How can this be?

In ROMANS 11:29 we find a partial answer in that:

“The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.”

That does not mean that the one who has these gifts is approved by God! Oftentimes they began their ministry living a righteous life, but for various reasons have slipped into lawlessness.

This seemingly illogical combination of anointing and sin is partly understood when we realize men operating in this level of anointing are a larger target for the enemy due to the impact they are having on the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, sin is sin.

Jesus confirms this illogical mixture of the miraculous and sin:

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord,’ did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them: ‘Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.

MATTHEW 7:21–23

My husband knew of a well-known Christian minister who was involved in many genuine miracles of healing, but had a prostitute in his hotel room where he was staying on speaking engagements. Such issues must be confronted and addressed

when discerned!

Frankly, unless the issues of MORALS within a congregation and/or its leadership are not discerned and addressed, and deliverance not offered, the discerning believer should not stay in that fellowship. When the head is sick, the whole body is sick. We must understand that the outside community is looking on.

4 See *Obstacles to Deliverance* by Frank Hammond at www.impactchristianbooks.com.

5 See *The Songs of Deliverance* by Bill Banks, and *Pigs in the Parlor* by Frank Hammond, both available at www.impactchristianbooks.com.

MESSAGE

So far, we have considered the MEANS, MOTIVE and MORALS behind the words we receive. Now it is time to consider the quality and veracity of the MESSAGE itself in our final remaining guide to discernment within the Church. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher in

JOHN 14:26:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Paul told Timothy to...

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Reliance on the Holy Spirit

Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to the church as gifts to us (EPHESIANS 4:11). There is a valid and necessary teaching and preaching ministry to the body of Christ; however these ministries cannot be exclusive of your own personal study of Scripture as inspired by the

Holy Spirit. In other words, believers cannot live forever on the faith or knowledge of others; they must accept the responsibility of maturing in their own faith and in their personal relationship with the Holy Spirit as teacher, comforter and guide. This is necessary, in part, because the entire subject of discernment rests on the ability to interact with the Holy Spirit as a mature believer.

When deciphering a MESSAGE, there are four outcomes that one can conclude:

A. It is not appropriate for me at this time.

- (1) It is too far ahead of where I am in my understanding of scripture.
- (2) It is too far behind of where I am in my study of scripture.

B. It is good advice, but does not fit my need.

C. It is exactly what I need to hear, and confirms what God has been telling me.

D. It is a false word, not in line with Scripture, and therefore incorrect and worthless to me and will produce bad fruit.

All too often people leave a service feeling inferior or less than worthy to the Lord because the message did not make sense to them or apply to their specific situation. Knowing that “A” and “B” outlined above are viable possibilities should relieve this inner turmoil and dispel any condemnation from these experiences.

Whether in a book or a sermon, each message has to be evaluated to whether it is in agreement with the Word of God. The message may not always meet your need at the time, but if it does not contradict Scripture then it may still be a valid word from the Lord nonetheless.

The early church faced an influx of false teachings. In 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12, Paul refers to messages that were coming forth which proclaimed that there would be no resurrection of the dead. In ROMANS 6:1, Paul warns that to emphasize grace does not mean that we are to continue in sin to experience more grace. In 2 JOHN 8–10, John warns the Church to avoid those who “go too far” by not abiding in the teaching of Christ, and to ignore them; not even receiving them “into your house” or even “give [them] a greeting.” Discernment was needed by those believers to focus on true messages, and to shun those false teachings as worthless and of no effect.

IMBALANCE IN THE MESSAGE

Sometimes the MESSAGE being received errs by continually ignoring certain parts of Scripture or overemphasizing others. The teaching may be out of balance; either continually stressing too much free grace, or too much eternal judgment. For example, I can recall as a child being terrified when attending a small country church where every week the sermon was on judgment and Hell. However,

- It is frustrating when one knows that sinful practices are ongoing in the congregation, but not confronted from the pulpit.
- It is unfortunate that more is not taught about the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit.
- It is sad when God's provision for healing and deliverance is constantly ignored.

All these are examples of an out-of-balance message where someone has decided to ignore one part or another of the wonderful nature of Jesus Christ. For instance, HEBREWS 4:8–16 gives us a discourse on rest. This chapter ends introducing Jesus as the High Priest Melchizedek; which leads us into a deeper relationship with Christ producing a high level of trust in His provision for all areas of our lives. These areas include not only salvation, but restoration in all its forms; *physical, emotional, and financial*.

AVOIDING “GENEALOGIES”

We also are warned to avoid philosophical, theological, and intellectual discourses as a substitute for the simple truth of the Word of God. Paul warns in COLOSSIANS 2:8:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

And in 1 TIMOTHY 1:3–4 Paul tells Timothy to instruct certain men not to:

...teach strange doctrines nor pay attention to myths and endless genealogies [6](#) which give rise to mere speculation...

God’s people hunger for deeper teaching. The writer of HEBREWS (6:1–2) tells us to move past the basic truths of our faith and to mature:

Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of instructions about

washings [baptism] and laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

These truths need to be taught to all who enter into the Church and to all new believers, but the writer of Hebrews feels that there is more to be learned and experienced as we delve deeper into the person and work of Jesus, our High Priest and King; the commander of the Hosts in heaven!

DISCERNING THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

The prophet Jeremiah faced many false teachers and prophets in his day, as the nation of Israel was living in rebellion and facing destruction from Babylon. He stated:

And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace.

JEREMIAH 6:14

There was no effective deliverance or prophetic voice for the people. Sometimes the message that God wants delivered will be hard to receive, but in knowing that the giver is well acquainted with hearing the Holy Spirit, we have to discern the merit of that word from the Lord. Know that God ultimately has our best in mind.

DISCERNING THE TIMES

Along these lines, and as the end of time draws near, we need to be diligent and not lured into thinking it will not happen in our lifetime. Just such a prophetic message may come to you. Jesus and Paul both warned us to be constantly alert for this. We are told:

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-5

We are warned in REVELATION 22:19 in the last words Jesus gave John:

... and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

DISCERNING THE MESSAGES ON THE INTERNET

The Internet has quickly become the means of mass

communication, and as such multiple messages are sent and received by the Body of Christ on a daily basis. As a more obvious example of the need for discernment, we need to be careful when reading and passing along messages posted on the Internet (“chain emails”). Christians need to acquaint themselves with certain websites that debunk these Internet emails, which often pull at our heartstrings, or rattle us with fear, but in the end are lies.

One example of a website that explains and counters the lies being spread online bears mentioning. It is **www.Snopes.com**, a website dedicated to checking the facts on the stories being passed around concerning current events. It is quite effective at dispelling “urban myths.”

THE MESSAGE IN SUMMARY

To summarize, it is the responsibility of each believer to become Biblically educated. Part of this education comes from teachers and pastors, but the Kingdom of God is structured such that *personal* study and acquaintance with the message of Scripture is necessary for the survival of our faith. Knowing Scripture allows us to discern whether a message is in line with the Word of God or not.

⁶ Genealogies denotes not only ancestry research, but also arguments about Biblical traditions and events of the past, debating between their historical veracity and symbolic meaning.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

OF THE 4 M's

It is rare and very much a blessing when all four “M’s” line up with the Word of God. Value those times and those ministries. In many cases, however, what we are dealing with is a situation where one of the 4 “M’s” is out of alignment, and hence the need for *discernment*.

Above all else, it is the MESSAGE that matters most. You simply do not receive teaching from (or “fed” by) someone whose message is wrong. This is akin to drinking water tainted with arsenic and trying to strain out the poison through your teeth.

However, in life, you will find yourself listening to a message that may be imperfect in minor ways, but correct in that it glorifies Jesus. As a wise man once told me, you have to “chew on the meat, and spit out the bones” in most teachings, because they are coming from imperfect men and women. But when you find the message is glorifying man or someone other than Jesus Christ, or if it teaches a mix, for instance, of eastern mysticism and Christianity, then the words are tainted and I tell myself it is time to leave.

As we have discussed, other issues come into play besides just the MESSAGE, and these issues can also be either helpful or harmful to the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. These include the MEANS, the MOTIVES and the MORALS of the one

giving us the message.

However, assuming the message is valid and truthful, being in line with Scripture and what the Holy Spirit has been showing you, then the question of motivation comes into play. Is the messenger using the message as a source of pride — self-exaltation — instead of the exaltation of Jesus Christ? Is the messenger trying to get money from you? or perhaps use you in some other way? Sometimes we have to receive the message, but refuse the *strings attached to the message*, because the Lord can and does use imperfect vessels to communicate to us. To remind us again of the words of Jesus,

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

MATTHEW 10:16

Or perhaps the MESSAGE is valid, but the MORALS of the messenger are wrong and not in line with God's commands. Remember the man I mentioned with the healing ministry, who had a prostitute in his hotel room. Clearly this is adultery and a sin to God. And yet we witnessed valid, miraculous healings in the meeting. I credit this to the faith in the hearts of those who were in the meeting seeking healing, and God's mercy on them, rather than the immoral and imperfect vessel on stage ministering.

This is a very painful concept to learn about the Kingdom. Miracles happen, and people receive genuine touches from the

Lord, even though the leader or messenger may be walking in sin and their morals are corrupted. So how do we survive with our morality intact? What is the Scriptural antidote to the pull these fallen men have on our lives? We find the antidote in Proverbs:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

PROVERBS 4:23

This is a powerful concept to the believer: guarding your heart is not only a wise thing to do, it is a Scriptural requirement. It is a matter of survival. Jesus Himself did not let His guard down among men, and He is our example in all things.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.

JOHN 2:24

So take this to heart: even though you may be in the presence of a man or woman of great Scriptural learning, of a genuine anointing to heal the sick and cast out demons, you should NOT entrust yourself to him (or her), but rather to Jesus Christ. All good men and women of God would want you to do precisely that — focus on Jesus instead of them. Everything they do should be for the glory of their Heavenly Father.

Entrusting your heart to a man or to a single denominational group, as Jesus suggested above and Paul suggests in ROMANS and in 1 CORINTHIANS, is a recipe for heartbreak. This is because every man is still working out the battle in his life between flesh and Spirit.

Who else in the Kingdom of God should be more worthy of disciples and praise from man than John the Baptist? And yet John's heart was right in the sight of God because he stated:

A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven... He [Jesus] must increase, but I [John] must decrease.

JOHN 3:27, 30

If you are in a situation where you are receiving teachings from a man or woman, but there is hidden sin within them, you most likely would not know. However, the discernment of the Holy Spirit is still able to give you a "heads up." Or perhaps a *word of knowledge* (1 COR. 12:8) may spring up in your heart to give you caution. The writer of Proverbs faced the same dilemma of motive and morals and yet was able to find discernment:

A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of understanding draws it out.

PROVERBS 20:5

Ultimately, the sin will be discovered because Jesus promises:

... for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

MATTHEW 10:26

The main truth that I have taken from the four “M’s” is that Christians must all constantly seek the Lord to reveal to us the MEANS, MOTIVES, MORALS and MESSAGE of those whose teaching we sit under.

When I find that 2 or 3 “M’s” are failing, I know that I am meant to leave, to get out from under that person, and quickly.

In other words, what was a beneficial, growing experience in the Lord initially, has now become a dangerous situation. Above all else I must guard my heart and protect the treasure of my salvation that the Lord has given me. When these “M’s” begin to fail, our survival in the faith is our priority.

Now that we have established the four “M’s” of discernment, let’s take a look at how these discernment tools can be used to analyze the times when discernment was critical to biblical men of old.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATING DISCERNMENT

BALAAM'S PROPHECY

As the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness they encountered various settlements, dispossessing their inhabitants as they traveled (see NUMBERS 21:21–35). This moving company of Israelites overran their territories and quickly unnerved the Canaanite populations.

One such tribe was the Moabites, whose king was Balak (NUM. 22:1–3). Balak sent for Balaam, who was a man supernaturally empowered as a prophet. The elders asked him to go to the Israelite encampment and place a curse on the Hebrews. The Lord, however, came to Balaam and ordered him not to go.

Do not go with them [the Moabite nobles]; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.

NUMBERS 22:12

Nevertheless, the nobles of Moab prevailed and Balaam set out with them and thus angered God. Perhaps you remember the next part of the story, where the Lord caused

Balaam's donkey to delay his progress, and then the Lord spoke to Balaam, giving him a blessing to pronounce instead of a curse. The blessing is in NUMBERS 24. Balaam, however, devised a different plan. We learn that Balaam was eventually killed on the command of the Lord. The reason lies in what was called "the matter of Peor," Baal-peor being the god of the pagans and the name of the mountain where this transgression occurred. Let me explain.

Since Balaam knew the prophecy he was paid by the Moabites to deliver was wrong, he instead created a stumbling block of immorality by advising the Moabites to send their women into the Israelite encampment. Thus fornication happened and idolatry was reintroduced (NUM. 25:1-3). This caused God's anger to flare up against His people and judgment to fall upon them with a plague killing 24,000 people (NUMBERS 31:16).

In 2 PETER 2:15 we are told that Balaam received wages for his effort, being motivated by greed. Here is an excellent example of a correct MESSAGE, an incorrect MOTIVATION (greed on the part of the messenger), corrupted MORALS (fornication), all with a disastrous result. The Israelites, who could not resist the appeal of the Moabite women, were lacking in Godly, moral discernment. Balaam was a man with a message from God who misused the people's trust. The lack of discernment amongst the Israelites led to thousands of deaths.

Apparently, the New Testament Church faced a similar issue. JUDE 4 tells us:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed,

those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, JUDE 11 continues:

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of *Balaam*, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. [EMPHASIS MINE]

JEREMIAH'S BATTLE WITH FALSE PROPHETS

The prophet Jeremiah was sent to the southern kingdom of Judah to warn them of the approaching judgment of God, due to their great sins. The list includes various kinds of unfair government activity, human sacrifice, fornication and adultery. When the people refused to change, Jeremiah then prophesied to them repeatedly that the Babylonians were coming, and that God had ordained for the people to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king) and to go into captivity. It appears that God felt it would take seventy years of living in Babylon to grow tired of its idolatrous ways and to hunger for a return to righteous living back in Israel.

The problem Jeremiah faced was the total reluctance of

the king to obey the warnings of God. The king was spurred on by several *false prophets* who said that all would be well with Judah.

This continued even after the initial invasion and captivity. The king of Babylon originally left Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, and a smaller number of people to keep the country running. At this time a prophet named Hananiah prophesied that the restoration of the captives would happen in two years. This led the remaining Israelites to rebel against the Babylonians with disastrous results, and Hananiah died mere months after his prophecy (JER. 28:15–17).

Time after time, Jeremiah's words were fulfilled, and yet the false prophets continued to have the greater influence over the king and the people.

The question arises as to what motives lay behind the other prophets to pronounce such false messages. The Lord described these men as ones who “have not stood in His council” (JER. 23:22). The Lord condemns them as having declared “false dreams” (i.e., they were liars). Furthermore, we learn that these false prophets had committed adultery with their neighbors' wives (JER. 29:23)! To complete the list of sins, they relished the adulation they received because they were saying what the people wanted to hear.

The only antidote to this wall of impending doom would have been proper discernment by the people as to who was speaking truthfully and who was not. Here we have a case where the MEANS was correct, as God had appointed prophets amongst the people. However, the MESSAGE (false prophecy), MOTIVATION (adulation and pride), and MORALS (adultery) were totally against the will and purposes of God.

The result was that there was a total lack of discernment by the people and their leaders, who ran to the popular and easy message of the false prophets but ignored the difficult and humbling message of the true prophet. Added to that, the immoral behavior of the prophets should have sealed the rejection of their message in the minds of the masses. Also, surely the people would have seen the questionable motivations of Hananiah and others, who were exhibiting pride in their public performances. When the true voice of God was refused, Judah, as prophesied, fell terribly at the hands of the Babylonians.

We find a New Testament application of this experience in Paul's warning to Timothy:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but to have their ears tickled , they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires.

2 Timothy 4:3

How telling! When we hear a prophetic MESSAGE, we need to look not only at the source (MEANS, MOTIVE, MORALS), but also at our own desire to receive it. Above all else, guard your heart, and personally seek the Holy Spirit's will.

PAUL IN PHILIPPI

In ACTS 16:16–24, Paul and Silas encountered a prophetic message concerning their mission. A slave girl who had been following them for several days was repeatedly crying out:

These are servants of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.

Although the message was the truth, and the means was a word of revelation, ACTS 16:16 tells us that she had a spirit of divination (fortune-telling). Her revelation came from an occult source, not the Holy Spirit. Paul discerned correctly that the *source* of the message was Satanic, and being “greatly annoyed” he cast the evil spirit out of her (v. 18). The result was that her masters lost their profit from her divination work and Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned.

This is an interesting case. We find here a MESSAGE of truth, but the MEANS and MOTIVATION were ungodly. Furthermore, the MORALS of the men using the girl for profit were corrupt. This episode reinforces the necessity of discerning the message in light of the messenger.

Let me share with you an experience I had more than 35 years ago. My husband Bill had been diagnosed with an extremely aggressive form of cancer with no chance of survival. We began seeking out valid healing ministries, and found ourselves at a healing conference in Georgia. While there I received a phone call from a close relative. She told me that she and her husband were in New Orleans, and that they had each

gone to a separate fortune teller inquiring about Bill. She excitedly told me that both fortune tellers had predicted that Bill would be miraculously healed.

How I wanted to receive this news! The problem was that I could not accept the source, just as Paul could not in Philippi. After seeking the Lord, I was led to painfully rebuke and reject those prophecies, but then happily to reclaim the promise of Bill's healing according to the promises in the Word of God. Miraculously Bill was totally healed. [7](#)

Remember, Satan can speak words of truth in order to draw you into the occult, and to cause dependence upon him and his messengers. There is power in both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, but far greater is He [Jesus] within us, then he [Satan] who is in the world (1 JOHN 4:4).

ELIJAH'S CAVE

A powerful example of discernment comes from an experience of the prophet Elijah. We are reminded — and encouraged — in JAMES 5:17 that

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

We learn in 1 KINGS 18 that, despite his dramatic victory over the prophets of Baal, the prophet Elijah fell into deep

depression. In 1 KINGS 19:4 he went so far as to pray, “O Blessed Lord, take my life for I am not better than my fathers.”

The death sentence Jezebel had placed on him, plus the exhaustion of the spiritual battle he had just fought, left him totally worn out and discouraged.

Angels came and ministered to him. This gave Elijah strength to run for 40 days to the mountain in Horeb. The problem was that the Lord had intended him to go the opposite direction(!) — to Damascus to anoint his successor, Elisha. Instead, still in a state of discouragement, he fled and hid in a cave on the mount.

The Lord then came and spoke to Elijah, asking, “What are you doing here?” He responded:

I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

1 Kings 19:10

The Lord instructed Elijah in the next verse to leave the cave and stand on the mountain.

So He said, “Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord was passing by!

What happens next required great discernment and patience on the part of Elijah, and required him to closely define who his God really was. We are told that four events followed on the top of that mountain: a great and strong wind rending the mountains and breaking rocks into pieces, an earthquake, and then a fire.

Elijah did not respond to any of these events, he *discerned* that they were not of God. It was only after he heard “a sound of a gentle blowing,” described in the King James Version as a “still small voice,” that he went forward to hear the Lord speak.

This teaches us a powerful lesson concerning discernment. God does not send messages to his servants in the form of threatening occurrences. He instead speaks in a quiet inner voice, like an inner knowing. Often, His message comes after the enemy has thrown his fearsome words and events at us (the wind, the earthquake and the fire). The key is to ride out the storm and wait for that peaceful voice. Remember, God brings peace, not fear.

Elijah encountered a valid MESSAGE (“stand on the mountain”), by proper MEANS (a word from the Lord), but he had to guard against the MOTIVATION of the enemy to lead him astray, to what could have been his death.

In a similar way, God generally does not pressure you into quick, spur-of-the-moment decisions. This is another pearl of discernment I have learned over the years. The pressure of a quick decision is more than likely a tactic to force you into a wrong decision, much like the salesman who tells you the item you are interested in is “the last one left and likely to sell quickly.”

If a message or messenger comes to you demanding immediate response, pressuring you to act before you have had a chance to think and pray, then you may need to “wait on the Lord.” Satan wants us to jump into situations without the proper counsel of advisors, the most important advisor being the Holy Spirit.

But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

PROVERBS 11:14

[7](#) For the complete story of Bill’s miracle healing from cancer, after he was given 48 hours to live, read *Alive Again*, available at www.impactchristianbooks.com.

DISCERNING LEAVEN IN THE CHURCH

Leaven is yeast. When mixed into dough with sugar it creates a process of decomposition, resulting in air being given off. It is this release of air that causes the dough to rise.

While this may seem like a beneficial process, as it adds flavor and lightness to the bread, the part of the process to note is that it causes decomposition and decay. Webster's Dictionary associates leavening with "fermentation" causing "unrest and agitation." What seems good and tasty on the surface actually is a process of deterioration within.

Jesus made an interesting statement in Matthew 13:33 (which is explained in detail in Appendix A):

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.

Leaven, in this parable, has most frequently (and

incorrectly) been interpreted as something good. There are three reasons why this interpretation is incorrect. First, as stated above, leaven is by definition a chemical process of decomposition or corruption. Second, there is, according to the ancient Jewish customs, a great deal of meaning linked to *unleavened* bread, and its connection to *sinlessness*. Third, Scripture is consistent.

As to the third point, Jesus and Paul, in several passages, both equated leaven with corruption. Consider MATTHEW 16:6 where Jesus stated:

Watch out and be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Consider Paul's words to the Corinthians in which he says:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the *unleavened* bread of sincerity and truth.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:8 (KJV - EMPHASIS MINE)

From these and other passages, leaven is being equated to sin, while lack of leaven, the opposite, is equated with sinlessness, the lack of corruption.

JESUS PRESENTS THREE TYPES OF LEAVEN

With this understanding, we can now examine the words of Jesus in greater detail. He presents three kinds of leaven to His followers for which we are to be aware. These are the *leaven of the Pharisees*, the *leaven of the Sadducees* and the *leaven of Herod*. Let's take a look at His words, and then more closely examine the three.

In MATTHEW 16:6 Jesus stated:

“Watch out and be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

In MARK 8:15 Jesus warned:

“Watch out! Beware of the leaven of ... Herod.”

By examining these three categories of leaven, we will gain insights into the current state of the Church.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were the sect of scribes who carefully recorded and copied the law into sacred manuscripts. They believed in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the existence of angels and spirits, and the division of the good and wicked in the afterlife. According to their theology, the eternal destiny of an individual could only be determined by his conformity to the Mosaic Law. In addition, their theology taught that God's grace came only to the doers of the law. Religion therefore became an outward legalistic work, and the disposition of the heart was ignored.

At first glance these men seemed to possess great religious character, but strict adherence to the Jewish law led them to become hardened to grace and mercy, causing Jesus to denounce them for their self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Ultimately, they took a prominent role in plotting the death of Christ (see MARK 3:6).

Note the scathing rebuke Jesus gives them in MATTHEW 23. It would be beneficial for you to read the entire chapter for a better understanding of the corruption of their theology and behavior.

The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them... they do all their deeds to be noticed by men... They love the place of honor at

banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues...

MATTHEW 23:2-6

Accordingly, the leaven of the Pharisees as mentioned by Jesus, was primarily *legalism*. Paul addresses this same Pharisaical issue in GALATIANS when legalism began to creep into the church. Here Paul equates legalism with witchcraft!

You foolish Galatians, who has *bewitched* you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified [for your sins]? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh [flesh being the outward ordinances of the Mosaic Law]?

GALATIANS 3:1-3 [EMPHASIS MINE]

In verse 5 of the same chapter Paul asks:

Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Accordingly, the leaven of the Pharisees had began to work its way into the Church.

Recall the dream I mentioned at the beginning of the book. The Lord showed me that the wedding cake in my dream was beautiful by the efforts of man, in his flesh, but it was not a work of the Holy Spirit. As such, when the cake hit the floor, the demon that manifested in the woman's face was legalism and rage.

Applying the wisdom the Lord revealed through this dream, take a moment and think about your religious practices. Strict adherence to practices concerning communion, or worship, or even the day you attend church or when you fellowship with believers tends to lead to legalism, the leaven of the Pharisees.

When a church allows outward confirmation to rules, practice, and liturgy to supersede the inward heart's devotion to Christ, then there is no real Christian love. Instead, agape love is replaced with conditional love, as demonstrated by the ferocity of the woman in my aforementioned dream.

How do you apply this to your ability to discern? Think about the four “M’s.” With the leaven of the Pharisees, the MEANS is correct, the MORALS as well, perhaps the MESSAGE is in line with Scripture, but the MOTIVATION is the problem. Legalism breeds an environment of control by man, not control by the Holy Spirit, and love is sorely lacking.

As with all things in life, the Holy Spirit will show you if you are in a situation where legalism is suppressing your freedom in Christ. Do you feel your church or fellowship is assisting you in growing in the knowledge of Christ and His Spirit, or restricting and controlling you in this process? Do you feel that you are being equipped for your ministry, which God has preordained for you, or held back by man?

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...

EPHESIANS 4:11-12

Note the purpose of church leadership explained above: it is to equip and build up the Body.

Once you develop a “sense of smell” for legalism, the leaven of the Pharisees, you will have moved forward towards

the maturity to which God has called you.

THE LEAVEN OF THE SADDUCEES

The Sadducees were educated men, often wealthy and of high position in the community. The Sadducees did not believe in penalties and rewards in the next world, and maintained that the soul dies with the body. They did not believe in the existence of angels and spirits (see ACTS 23:8), and argued for the freedom of will; teaching that all our actions are in our own power so that we alone cause what is good and what is evil. Most commonly known today was their beliefs that denied the resurrection of the body.

Most importantly, however, was the fact that they refused any doctrine not provable by reason. This of course then eliminated all the supernatural powers, which both Jesus and the apostles affirmed; and eliminated any chance for the working of miracles. This also eliminated any belief that Satan was a real being, or that his works existed in the world.

The issue concerning their theology on the resurrection from the dead is made clear in reading MATTHEW 22:23–28 where they presented what they thought was an unsolvable issue to Jesus. They raised a question about a wife who had a legitimate succession of husbands, all of whom had successively passed away. In verse 28 they ask, “In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be?” Jesus’ answer, contained in

verses 29–32, states that all souls are still alive after death. He reminds them that God Himself stated to Moses: “I Am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (v. 32). Note that Jesus

says “I am” and not “I was.”

The leaven of the Sadducees was one of a strictly intellectual, man-centered religion. Paul cautions against this leaven in the last days, as he knew the Church would survive on the basis of the supernatural works of the Lord:

...There will be terrible times in the last days. People will... [have] a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5 (NIV)

Unfortunately this leaven of the Sadducees has, like the leaven of the Pharisees, found its way into many churches, causing social activism to be their main focus while denying the work of the Holy Spirit along with His mighty exploits. It is not that good works are not important, but by denying the activity of the spiritual realm, the Church is denied its full and proper effectiveness as outlined for us by Jesus. Paul makes clear in EPHESIANS 6:12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

In HEBREWS 1:14 angels are described as “ministering spirits, sent to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.” In 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12–14 Paul speaks to the matter of the afterlife.

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised... your faith also is in vain.

To deny or ignore the supernatural is to remove an extremely large part of the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. Some denominations want to delegate this part of the ministry of Jesus and the apostles to just that historical time period (Cessationism), or they assign the recorded miracles in the Bible to the psychology of the day. Often it is taught that the working of miracles passed away with the last apostle. It is in these churches that the baptism of the Holy Spirit (ACTS 2) is neither taught nor accepted.

However, when Paul listed the ministries gifted to the church, he listed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (EPH. 4:11) as co-existing. If apostles have passed away now, then to be consistent, the other ministries should also have passed away, including pastors and teachers, which we know is not the case!

When Jesus warned about the leaven of the Sadducees he was also warning us to avoid any association with those who deny the power of the Holy Spirit. To “sin against the Spirit” was the one sin for which there was no repentance.

THE LEAVEN OF HEROD

In MARK 8:15 Jesus states;

“Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
and the leaven of Herod.”

This sect called the “Herodians” included those Jews who supported the ruling political power of the day. By reasonable extension, they saw the Kingdom of God as a worldly one with armies and political power. Church history does offer examples of this; the Pope had his own army when the church had political power and influence in most of Western Europe. The focus of the Crusades was an attempt to establish the Kingdom of God on earth by human force. The problem has always been that earthly power corrupts, and too often the result of a mix of earthly power and religion is the slaughter of innocent people. One only has to study European history to see the corruption that Church power brought into the lives of the masses through the selling of indulgences, the forced confessions of the Inquisition, the Crusades and more.

Jesus knew the temptation the leaven of the Herodians would create in the lives of believers, actions that are advised against in Scripture. There is a temptation to ally with a

government for safety, however we are told not to seek safety through worldly means. Clearly, God's people become preoccupied when unrighteousness prevails in the leadership of their country, and especially so when it effects the doctrines of the Church. However, balance must be struck, and the Great Commission must constantly move forward and not be allowed to become bogged down in temporal, political affairs of the day. One only has to study the times of Oliver Cromwell in England to see the futility of human warfare and human might used to create a "Godly government." [8](#)

ZECHARIAH 4:6, for instance, prophesies to us at all times that it is not by human might or human power, but only by the power and the might of the Holy Spirit that the great exploits of the Kingdom of God will take place, and the Kingdom will thus advance.

Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts.

ZECHARIAH 4:6

There is persecution of the Church in many countries around the world. In China, the government has taken over the organized church, calling it the "Three Self Church." This has caused grief to many believers, and forced much of the church to go underground. The church in China, however, has not taken up arms to overturn the ruling authorities. Paul tells us in ROMANS 13:1-2:

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

The key word here is “subjection.” To be in subjection actually means “to live in orderly fashion under another.” Daniel was an obedient, law-abiding servant in Babylon, but he did not obey the command given him in DANIEL 6:7...

Anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O King, for thirty days shall be cast into the lion's den.

Note that God intervened and saved Daniel's life. The same holds true of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in DANIEL 3 when they faced the fiery furnace rather than bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. Their deliverance was indeed an incredible miracle.

Jesus did not object to paying taxes to Caesar, rather He used the idea to spur His followers to work for the Kingdom. In MATTHEW 22:21 He stated,

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

There is plenty of Biblical evidence that the Church in Paul's day endured difficult times because it would not acknowledge Caesar as God. Christians during the Reformation also suffered greatly because they chose to read and practice what the scriptures taught (and in their own language) rather than obey the secular and religious authorities of the day. German Christians suffered under Hitler because they would not acknowledge him as the deity he claimed to be, and could not ignore his cruelty toward their fellow man.

A discerning eye will see that biblical history shows us examples of both deliverance and martyrdom. HEBREWS 11:35–40 reinforces this fact. In all cases in the New Testament, it was God's choice whether a man was to be martyred or delivered, emphasizing the role of surrendering our lives completely to Jesus, even unto death (see REVELATION 12:11).

There was a sect in Jesus' day called the Zealots. They advocated the physical overthrow of the Roman-backed Herodian government. In fact, Barabbas was a Zealot, and the people chose to save him rather than Jesus because of their mistaken idea that the Kingdom of God would come by revolt and force — again demonstrating the reliance on temporal power and the leaven of the Herodians.

But they cried out all together saying, 'Away with this man [Jesus] and release for us Barabbas!' (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an *insurrection* made in the city, and for murder.)

LUKE 23:18–19 [EMPHASIS MINE]

The point of all of this is that we need to discern when to obey civil authority, and when to peacefully resist. Whenever we are commanded or tempted to abandon our faith by ruling authorities we must refuse, and receive the consequences — rather than take up arms — the leaven of the Herodians. Notice Jesus' words to His followers in the Garden at His arrest: "... all who take the sword will perish by the sword."

To believe that safety involves moving closer to a government is erroneous; this is not a lasting form of safety at all. I believe that the Church in the Western world will face the same dilemma that Christians in China, Islamic nations, and other countries have been facing for years. It is only a matter of time. Furthermore, the book of REVELATION (13:1–10) talks of the final Antichrist coming to be worshiped as a person called "the Beast." It states that there will be captivity and even death to those who oppose this end-time system, and concludes with the statement:

Herein lies the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

In REVELATION 18:14 Jesus through John tells his people about the future of the Herodian church called "Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots" (REV. 17:5). There will be an alliance of this church with the Antichrist ("the beast") and this will end disastrously for this false Church (REV. 17:16–18). Jesus advises:

"Come out of her, my people that you may not participate in her sins and not receive of her

plagues.”

This is a hard truth, but believers must carefully think through this ahead of the event. Some teach that we will not face this kind of hardship, but I see no problem in being prepared, and then greatly relieved if we do not have to face this! It is far worse to not be prepared mentally and spiritually, and have it occur, potentially leading us to abandon our faith when Jesus comes. Remember the words of John in REVELATION 12:11.

And they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

If weapons are to be employed, they will be spiritual as Paul states in

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4...

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh [natural or of this world], but divinely powerful for the destruction of forces.

We must remember that our kingdom is truly not of this world, and our actual citizenship is in heaven, as Paul states:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we

also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

[8](#) See Appendix B

THREE SPIRITS AT WORK

Throughout time and place, there have been three spirits at work in the world, and since Pentecost, also in the Church. These three are the *Holy Spirit*, *Man's spirit* and *Evil spirits*. It is important to understand these distinct forces at work behind the scenes, as knowledge of them will aid in your ability to discern.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been ever-present throughout human history as the magnificent third party of the Trinity. He was fully present in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, especially following Christ's baptism at the Jordan. He was the force sent to propel the Church forward on Pentecost. He remains today the ever-present driving force in the Kingdom of God on earth, and the voice of God within every believer. His indwelling reveals Jesus to us in all His wisdom and work.

It is His voice, the voice of the Holy Spirit, that enables us to have Godly discernment. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit through which we gain access to the gifts of the Spirit described in 1 CORINTHIANS 12:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord... For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the *distinguishing of spirits*, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

It is no coincidence that one of the gifts provided by the Holy Spirit is a supernatural form of discernment (KJV), in the

above passage referred to as the “distinguishing of spirits” (NASB). This is because He is the Spirit of Truth, and as such, declares what is true whenever and wherever He resides.

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The second spirit at work in the world and within the Church is the human spirit. In the beginning God, the Triune Being, said:

“Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”

GENESIS 1:26

In 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23 Paul prays:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[EMPHASIS MINE]

Made in God's likeness, we are also a trinity. The body is the physical part of man — given for survival in this present world. The soul is intangible — and unique to each person, reflecting his personality and character. It encompasses the will, intellect, and emotions. The spirit of man — while also intangible, is that part of God placed in each person at the start of life. The best way to describe it is to call it the “conscience,” the inner knowing of right and wrong.

Paul, however, indicates that the spirit of man remains fairly dormant until joined to the Holy Spirit at our conversion. In 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 Paul states that:

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Man cannot understand things of God in a true light until his conversion because they are “spiritually appraised” — understood in man’s spirit.

In order to discern what drives a man, we need to peer into his heart and learn of his will — his morality and motivation. And yet, in

1 CORINTHIANS 2:11 Paul states:

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of man which is in him?

Simply stated, we can’t. What is needed to discern, then, is a supernatural anointing such that we can accurately, even precisely, discern a man’s MORALS and MOTIVATIONS. This then helps us better understand and accept or reject his MESSAGE.

When a leader or a messenger backs away from the inner voice of his renewed spirit, a problem arises. Rather than being led by the spirit, his soul takes over, and consequently he begins to teach or advise from his own humanity — that is, his personal opinion (his soul). This is why it is critical to develop the “muscle” of *discernment* so that you can judge what is of the spirit and what is of the soul.

For example, if we are being used as a messenger from the Lord, there can be a temptation to psychoanalyze, rather than to wait for the Spirit to speak to our inner man in a proper and timely manner. Or, we might be tempted to judge another’s situation according to our own experiences; which may or may not apply to them.

If, however, we are on the receiving end of a message from the Lord, then we have to ask the questions:

- “Am I listening to the Holy Spirit from within that person, or is it their soul speaking?”
- “Am I being psychoanalyzed?”
- “Are my experiences being compared to the experiences of the one talking to me; and if so, is this valid for me?”
- “Is this person trying to impress or manipulate me?”

Often the answer to these questions lies in the fruit

produced. Only good fruit can come from the Holy Spirit, and only bad fruit can come from the enemy. With the human soul, however, it is often a mix of good advice and errant advice, good and bad fruit. We should use, as our measuring stick, whether inner peace — or condemnation and fear — is the fruit born from the experience, and thus discern the message.

EVIL SPIRITS

The third spirit at work in the world and within the Church is evil. In 1 CORINTHIANS 12 we are given a list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In verse 10 the “distinguishing of spirits” is highlighted, also referred to as “discernment” in other translations. What kinds of spirits are we being enabled by the Holy Spirit to distinguish or discern?

Jesus dealt many times with evil spirits. The New Testament Church did also. In fact, the Church in the first centuries also cast demons out of many individuals. [9](#)

Satan and his demons are still in operation in the world today. Certainly Jesus did not spend as much as 30% of his earthly ministry dealing with demons unless there was significance to their evil work! However, the issue of deliverance from evil spirits in believers is always a source of disagreement among God’s people.

Whether you choose to believe a demon can be within or upon a believer, the fact remains that there are hurting people in the church, those saints unable to conquer their compulsions or ongoing fears no matter what they try or do. As Frank Hammond once pointed out, insects eat fruit, and demons are like insects trying to eat the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, self-control...

When speaking with the Canaanite woman whose daughter was “grievously vexed with a demon” Scripture makes the following statement:

But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” And He [Jesus] answered and said, “It is not good to take the *children’s bread* and throw it to the dogs.

MATTHEW 15:25–26 [EMPHASIS MINE]

According to Jesus, deliverance is the “children’s bread,” and it belongs only to the children of the Kingdom of God. In the verses that followed, the Canaanite women qualified for the deliverance of her daughter through her faith, which was sufficient for Jesus to then act.

“O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once.

There have been numerous books written on this, and a list is provided in the back of this book. If you can accept this, there are evil spirits at work also in Churches, causing division, manipulation, and dissension. There are “doctrines of demons”

that not only contradict the teaching of Scripture, but cause fear and division amongst church members. The Church was continually warned concerning this.

1 JOHN 4:2–3 states,

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and *every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God*; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming and now is already in the world.

If a spirit is not from God, then who is it from? It is from Satan, the enemy of Jesus and the Church. Paul provides warning in 1 TIMOTHY 4:1–3 concerning the later days:

But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and *doctrines of demons* by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own consciences as with a branding iron: men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared by those who believe and know the truth. [EMPHASIS MINE]

The proper use of discernment requires that we, as believers, understand that messages (doctrines) can come also from demons. Demons can speak through (or greatly influence the words of) men, they can interrupt services, and they can torment believers. Why else would Jesus give to His Church a specific gift to deal with this problem, the “distinguishing of spirits,” unless this was a real threat to the survival of the Church?

To discern the operation of a demon is not difficult. You can tell by the fruit that is born, as described by James:

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, *demonic*. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

JAMES 3:14–16 [EMPHASIS MINE]

Demonic activity causes denominations to fall out of balance with the entirety of Jesus’ and the apostles’ teachings and experiences. If ever there was a call for discernment in the Church, this passage is it. How can the Church effectively move in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit unless it can discern good from the evil? Never before has there been a time in history when the need is as great for the Church to be able to distinguish between the precious and the worthless.

THE THREE SPIRITS – IN SUMMARY

When trying to discern the Lord's voice, we need to be aware that there are actually three sources of doctrine, knowledge and wisdom in the MESSAGES that we hear. The *Holy Spirit* may be trying to speak to you, to encourage you, to direct your paths, or to warn you.

Man's spirit, whether through good or bad intentions, may be speaking to you, and you need to be aware of this. Finally, *Demonic spirits* may be speaking to you through man or through “the voices” people hear. This is why we are told to “test the spirits” by John:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but *test the spirits* to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

1 JOHN 4:1 [EMPHASIS MINE]

[9](#) Please take note of Appendix D, pages reprinted in the back of this book from an excerpt from A Letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton (1749A.D.) and published from The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley Vol. 2 entitled *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. This page is taken from the *Study Guide to Pigs in the Parlor* published by Impact Christian Books. It contains quotations from the Early Church Fathers regarding the workings of the Holy Spirit in their day.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FELLOWSHIP

Discernment matters, but it must not lead us into hardness of heart such that we forsake the fellowship with other believers. In 1 CORINTHIANS 1:12 we are cautioned against saying that we are “of Christ only” to the exclusion of the rest of the Church. In HEBREWS 10:25 we are told not to forsake our assembling together.

“let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some.”

We have to be careful not to become so particular that we cannot find any place to fellowship, or any church to attend. To reiterate the original premise stated in Jeremiah, we need to learn to separate the precious from the worthless in every situation, in every church, in every meeting. As stated in the beginning of this book,

If you extract the precious from the worthless,

you will become My spokesman.

JEREMIAH 15:19

The responsibility lies with each believer to seek the Holy Spirit's help in sharpening our tools of discernment. 1 JOHN 1:7 makes it clear that cleansing from sin is linked with fellowship.

...but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The requirement is that we stay in the light. Light means not only wisdom but fellowshiping with other believers and thus being awake spiritually to the things of the Lord.

THE DECEIVING OF THE ELECT

Jesus warned that the deception of believers is entirely possible. In MARK 13:22 He said: For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (NIV) In REVELATION 13:13 we are told of the False Prophet appearing in the last days who: performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

In VERSE 15 we are told:

And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Remember, Jesus was writing this to the Church. If the Church was going to disappear and thus not have to face this deception, then why write these warnings at all? Jesus is warning His Church that *discernment* will be critical to our survival in the last days.

There are three temptations facing the Church:

1. To ignore *all* supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles, assigning to them natural explanations (the leaven of the Sadducees),
2. To assign *all* genuine supernatural signs and wonders as works of the devil (the leaven of the Pharisees – see MATTHEW 12:22–24),
3. To assign *all* supernatural signs as works of God (including the workings and doctrine of demons).

None of these choices fit the truth as explained in the New Testament. God's people are going to need supernatural, miraculous provision, I believe, to be effective in the days ahead. But at the same time, we cannot let the fireworks of false prophets influence or sway us. Believers will need to be armed with knowledge in order to *discern* the “mystery of

lawlessness,” already at work in the world around us. [10](#)

One of the last words to Jesus’ followers, before He ascended to heaven, was spoken by two angels in ACTS 1:11: ... Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.

This should eliminate any doubt when another claims to be the Messiah. Scripture tells us how Jesus will return, and warns us to know the signs of the times.

[10](#) See *The Third Tower of Babel*, by Stephen Banks, available at www.impactchristianbooks.com

MY DREAM CONCERNING DISCERNMENT

(PART III)

I mentioned in previous sections that, many years ago, I had a three-part dream concerning the Church. The first two parts have already been presented, interpreted and explained. I want to conclude with the third and final part of the dream.

In this third session, I saw several gentlemen with whom I was familiar. During the time I had this dream, my husband and I had been holding weekly prayer meetings, and I recognized various people in my dream from those meetings. In fact, in this third part of the dream, a meeting was ongoing. One man in particular caught my attention, as if I was being directed by the Lord to focus on him. This man was fast asleep.

This upset me, because I had known this man as a regular in our fellowship, and as a devout believer — one who seemingly knew much about Scripture. So why was he asleep? And what was the meaning I was meant to draw from this member of the audience?

I sought the Lord for the meaning of this for a number of years. Finally, I have come to see that the Lord was showing me an example of a believer asleep to the *level of discernment* that we will need desperately in the last days. This was an end-of-time prophecy.

It is interesting to note that in the parable of the ten virgins, in MATTHEW 25, all ten fell asleep.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable

to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, *they all got drowsy and began to sleep.*

However, the maidens who were able to meet the bridegroom were the ones with enough oil in their lamps.

But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.”

I believe that the oil is the Holy Spirit and His deeper teachings needed for the times to come, especially His *gift of discernment*.

I pray that this book will help in some way for you to accomplish this.

Appendix A

A Revelation Concerning Jesus' Parable of the Three Pecks of Meal

He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in *three pecks of meal* until it was all leavened."

MATTHEW 13:33 [EMPHASIS MINE]

Years ago I sought the Lord regarding this parable and statement of Jesus. I am of the belief that Jesus' sayings were fully applicable to the people in His day as well as to believers today and throughout history. As I was seeking wisdom on the meaning of this short verse, the Lord showed me a revelation encompassing the historical implications of the "three pecks of meal." Meal is flour. The words which follow explain the depth of meaning hidden in this parable.

One can assign any church denomination or fellowship into one of three historical categories:

I. Catholic

II. Protestant

III. Pentecostal/Charismatic

These three doctrinal types have developed historically in the above order and now co-exist today. If you explore Christian history more deeply, you will find that there were always pockets of the three co-existing, although some were more secluded whenever one or the other of the first two seemed more politically powerful.

I. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic church was formed over the first centuries from the base of the apostolic fathers who followed in the footsteps of the original 12 apostles. Not only did the Church at that time face persecution, but there was an influx of strange doctrines and writings due to the fact that the canon of Scripture had not been formally established. There was a need to define belief with a common creed, as well as consolidate and preserve the canon of Scripture deemed valid.

Many documents and beliefs that opposed or perverted the original teachings of Christ and the Apostles were eliminated. Gratefully, the Church preserved the valuable manuscripts, and was responsible for the meticulous copying of such by dedicated monks. However, as time passed, the Church took on the claim of infallibility and assumed power

over personal salvation and government monarchies. The Church became centralized in Rome, thus eliminating the role of the individual community fellowships that had existed in the beginning. The leaders took absolute authority over the interpretation of Scripture. Church leaders began claiming the authority to determine one's eternal destiny, and assumed the role of sole mediator between man and God. Believers were not allowed to read or interpret Scripture for themselves. In addition to the *leaven of legalism* and *the leaven of Herod*, the *leaven of wickedness* began to manifest itself in the behaviors of the ordained. The Catholic Church thus represents the **first peck of meal**.

As a result, certain learned priests from the 1400's to the 1600's recognized the abusive leaven in the church. Such priests as Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, John Hus, John Knox, John Calvin, and others became protesters and began a movement of reform whereby Scripture was to be translated into the vernacular (the common language of each nation) instead of Latin, so that the Bible could be read by everyone. The religious leaders, rather than encouraging this, became so strongly opposed to reform, so unwilling to abandon their absolute political and spiritual power that the followers of reform were hunted and executed over and over, just as in Jesus' day. Copies of the translated scriptures were seized and burned, and those holding them turned over to the church of the inquisition. Instead of listening to these educated and loyal Catholic priests who were attempting to take the leaven out of the church, the Catholic Church leaders waged war against them, resulting in thousands of deaths.

After the Protestant Reformation had taken hold, the

Catholic Church itself instituted a “counter-reformation” and eliminated many of the abuses and superstitious doctrines. It was, however, too late; for Protestantism had already become established as a second approach to Christian doctrine.

II. THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

Protestant churches began with the Reformation. The founders believed that spiritual authority came from the scriptures themselves, rather from bishops. This was aided by the invention of the printing press, which allowed multiple copies of Scripture to be produced. They denied Papal infallibility, purgatory, and celibacy of the priests as well as other established Catholic doctrines. With the rise of seminaries, the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts could be studied by learned priests; hence the disparity between practice and Scripture became very apparent. Even more, the original manuscripts found in various areas of the world were, for the most part, in agreement with each other, thus establishing the veracity of the Bible.

This newfound freedom from the discovery that the “just shall live by faith” (ROMANS 1:17) rather than by Church law and tradition caused upheavals all over Europe, and led eventually to the founding of America.

Each reformer had his own form of Protestantism. Although there was common agreement in regards to the work and person of Jesus Christ, and the freedom to have a Bible in each home to be read by any seeker, the differences eventually

led to the influx of the *leaven of doctrinal legalism* as it had in the Catholic Church. For instance, John Calvin held fast to a doctrine of predestination based on his understanding of ROMANS 8:29–30.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined He also called: and these whom He called He also justified: and these whom He justified He also glorified.

“Predestination” comes from the Greek word *procrisco* (“decided on beforehand”). It concerned God’s determination for the salvation of man, whereby without cancelling human freedom and his own responsibility, God by His own will ordains in eternity the salvation of the elect. Others interpreted the scripture in ROMANS with an emphasis on “those whom God foreknew” (those whom God knew would choose Him in the end) He then predestined for their calling.

John Knox also established the rule of elders, granting them exclusive authority over where and when communion would be celebrated.

Martin Luther, on the other hand, maintained the need for more of a strict liturgical worship. Other Protestant denominations developed down through the next centuries, each having its own restrictions. Baptists taught that unless one was baptized in a Baptist Church, their previous baptisms were invalid. Infant baptism came into dispute. Instead of

uniting all who had received the born again experience, some Protestant denominations began drifting into the *leaven of their own Pharisaic rule*. The greatest split occurred between the more liberal denominations, those who moved away from the beliefs in the virgin birth of Christ, the importance of the blood of Christ, and the Second Coming of Christ, into humanism, and the Evangelical Protestants who held fast to these aspects of Scripture. In both camps, however, pastors were still chosen from outside the congregation from approved seminaries rather than being trained and called from within. We also have seen *the leaven of malice and wickedness* infiltrate many Protestant churches.

Thus the Protestant Church represents the **second peck of meal**.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Protestant church began hungering for a greater experience with the Holy Spirit, starting what was called the "Holiness Movement." Many believers had become uncomfortable in their churches; feeling restricted by their doctrinal rule and began seeking more of the experience described in the early church in the Book of Acts. For the most part, the existing Protestant churches resisted these seekers. Church leadership limited the occurrence of miracles and other gifts of the Holy Spirit to the original time period of the early Church, when they believe all such supernatural work ceased. In this belief, the Protestant Church leaned very closely to the *leaven of the Sadducees* who resisted the "supernaturals."

Nevertheless believers began wanting to see miracles happen once again. As a result, a new form of denominationalism was formed at the beginning of the 20th

century.

III. THE PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCH

Pentecostalism and the subsequent Charismatic Movement largely began with a small gathering in a house in Topeka, Kansas. Believers prayed and fasted in this place for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They began to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit as described in 1 CORINTHIANS 12, including speaking in tongues. This spread to a small building on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, where a major revival ensued.

Originally these believers wanted this new experience with the Holy Spirit incorporated into their own denominations, but found themselves rejected and ridiculed. Therefore, new congregations were formed, reflecting a newfound freedom from the restrictive rule of their previous churches. Many changes occurred. The formal robes came off the pastors, the pulpits were lowered practically to the level of the congregation, and the worship services and sermons became far more spontaneous and lively. Prophetic utterances were allowed to come from the congregation during services. The laying on of hands as described in JAMES 5 began to be practiced. Documented miracles of healings began coming in from around the world.

Many Pentecostal churches, in an attempt to maintain the doctrines of holiness, however, became legalistic in manner of dress and hair length for women — the *leaven of the Pharisees*. Because of its reputation as an “outcast” church,

the Pentecostals understandably withdrew into their own new denomination.

However, in the 1970's, an Episcopalian priest named Dennis Bennett had a Pentecostal experience and after being relocated to a remote church in Seattle found himself in the beginnings of another Pentecostal revival called the Charismatic Renewal. This time it spread to Christians in all denominations including the Catholic Church. As before, most Charismatics, as these new believers were called, were made to feel unwelcome in many traditional denominational churches, and as a result formed various new fellowships; some national, and some local in affiliation.

As with the two previous pecks of meal, the Enemy found ways to bring *leaven* into this new movement. First, because individual believers were finding newfound freedoms, the services had potential for getting “out of order” as was described in 1 CORINTHIANS 14. In response, the leadership instituted a doctrine of “Shepherding” which put more controls over the activities of the members.

Second, because of widespread television availability, large amounts of money began coming into certain famous ministries, causing the usual corruptions including greed and immorality. With fame and money came the *leaven of wickedness* in some of the preachers, and disillusionment with it. The “Prosperity” doctrine, which preached that God wanted His people to be rich, ended up corrupting many congregations. As such, the Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations became **the third peck of meal**.

Nevertheless this newfound freedom did influence both Protestant and Catholic churches, and many initiated

“contemporary” worship services to keep these new believers in their congregations.

I have found that the one issue confronting **all three pecks of meal**, however, was the role of *deliverance* in the Church. The casting out of demons was a vital part of the ministry of Jesus, and it is still necessary today. It is important to note that resisting spiritual warfare was part of the *leaven of the Sadducees*, and is still firmly engrained in the majority of our churches today, who refuse to become involved in the casting out of demons.

CONCLUSION

It is important to realize that there is no perfect church, no perfect sermon, and no perfect denomination. By understanding what leaven is and how it operates, each believer can assess his or her own fellowship, and understand underlying problems. Through discernment, you can be equipped to receive the precious and reject the worthless.

It is really a matter of percentages. If leaven is present in a greater percent than your spirit can tolerate, then you should seek a church or fellowship which fits your comfort zone of freedom to grow spiritually.

The Holy Spirit can bless you in any church service if you seek the “pearl” each time. However, over the years, I have come to prefer more, rather than fewer, pearls of spiritual anointing if I am investing my time and funds in meetings. Paul defined the role of church leadership in EPHESIANS 4:12–13, as

previously mentioned. Paul goes on to say:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Appendix B

Oliver Cromwell & The Leaven of the Herodians

Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) was an English military leader and politician. He was also a deeply committed Christian of the Puritan beliefs.

The Puritans believed that all that followed Biblical teachings were saved. This was in contrast to both the Catholic and Anglican doctrines of the day that put Biblical interpretation and salvation in the hands of the bishops.

Cromwell opposed King Charles of England who tried to enforce those doctrines on a reformed English church. As well, Cromwell opposed the Protestants who were even more radical in their opposition to the crown.

Cromwell believed that each individual congregation should be free to choose their own pastors and elders. When the king continued to oppose Cromwell and his followers by restricting their religious freedom, Cromwell and 58 others who, after a bloody revolution had gained parliamentary power, signed a death warrant against King Charles resulting in the king's execution. This was an extremely difficult decision for Cromwell.

We find in this short case study an example of the use of worldly force against perceived heresy. Following the king's execution, Cromwell became Lord Protector of England in place of a king from 1653 until he died 5 years later. The futility of this revolt is found in the fact that following the Puritan reign of

Cromwell, the English brought back another king who, yet again, was sorely lacking in Christian morality. While the powers of the king were subdued and never again overruled the vote of parliament, history shows that a perfect kingdom and church never developed even after the changes brought by Cromwell.

Appendix C

Discerning Sexual Leaven in the Church

In 1 CORINTHIANS 5:8 Paul states:

Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul was addressing one of the problems within the Corinthian church, which was facing a believer living in the old way of sin. This believer was living in an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. The Greek words Paul used translated "malice" and "wickedness" tie into each other – leaven contaminates both the sinner and the fellowship of believers. Paul states that this "immorality does not exist even among the Gentiles." Not only is this behavior saddling the Church with sin, but it is offering a terrible witness to unbelievers in the community. Paul refers to this sexually immoral behavior as "leaven," drawing upon the corruptive influence of leaven mentioned earlier.

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-7

This problem in the Corinthian Church was sexual in nature, and while the specifics may be different, sexual morality is lacking in many churches because the morals of the society at large are encroaching on the Kingdom of God. Weeds and tares are being planted among the wheat.

What is needed in the Church today is discernment, especially in the area of the sexuality of its leaders and members. When we discern this kind of leaven in the church, we need to resist and respond. For more information, see Frank Hammond's *Repercussions from Sexual Sins*.¹

¹ *Repercussions from Sexual Sins*, by Frank Hammond, available through Impact Christian Books at www.impactchristianbooks.com

Appendix D

Quotes from Early Church Fathers Compiled from a Letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton (1749 A.D.) Published from: “The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley” vol 2. “Gifts of the Holy Spirit”

John Wesley The following quotes were cited in the above letters by John Wesley. These quotes were from the earliest church fathers that followed the apostles; from the mid-100’s to the 4th century. They confirm that miraculous works, the casting out of demons, healing the sick, and the gifts of the Spirit were all in operation well after the close of the Book of Acts. In fact, they were commonplace!

For instance, according to WESLEY, during this period: “The raising of the dead was not for conversion of heathens but for the good of the church.”

Following are a number of confirmations from early Church fathers that the Church in the 1st – 4th Centuries was actively casting out demons, healing the sick, and in general continuing the miraculous ministry of Jesus Christ according to John 14:12: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*”

1. Justin Martyr

(MID 103–165 A.D., CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST AND SAINT)

“There are prophetic gifts among us even until now. You may see with this both men and women having gifts from the Spirit of God.” He particularly insisted upon casting out devils as the gift that everyone might see with his own eyes.

2. Iraneus

(CIRCA 202 A.D., BISHOP OF LUGDUNUM IN GAUL)

“That all who were truly disciples of Jesus wrought miracles in His name: Some cast out devils, others had visions or knowledge of future events, others healed the sick.” He went further to state that the “raising of the dead was often accomplished by great fasting and joint supplication of the church. Many speak in tongues.”

3. Theophilus

(LATE 2ND CENTURY A.D., BISHOP OF ANTIOCH)

“Casting out devils is commonplace.”

4. Tertullian

(END OF 2ND CENTURY A.D., EARLY CHRISTIAN AUTHOR & PRIEST) He challenged the heathen magistrates to “call before their tribunals any person possessed with a devil.” He went further to state that if a

Christian could not get the evil spirit to show himself then the Christian was not a legitimate one.

5. Minutius Felix

(3RD CENTURY A.D., CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST)

In a letter addressed to the heathen: “The greatest part of you know what confessions the demons make concerning themselves when we expel them out of the bodies of men.”

6. Origen

(3RD CENTURY A.D., AFRICAN CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR & THEOLOGIAN) He wrote that he saw “all the Spiritual gifts and healings manifested by common Christians.”

7. Cyprian

(3RD CENTURY A.D., BISHOP OF CARTHAGE)

“Even children are filled with the Holy Spirit [with speaking in tongues]” and he specifically mentions casting out devils and illnesses healed.

8. Arnobius

(CIRCA 303 A.D., CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST)

“Christ’s name puts evil spirits to flight.”

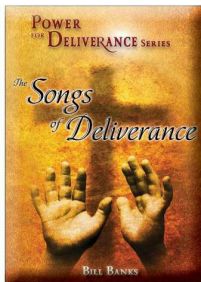
9. Lactantius

(4TH CENTURY A.D., CHRISTIAN AUTHOR AND ADVISOR TO CONSTANTINE I)

“Evil spirits being adjured by Christians, retire out of the bodies of men, confess themselves to be demons and tell their names: even the same which are adored in the temples [i.e. pagan idols].”

In later years, one of the reasons for the decline in activity of the Holy Spirit among the established Church, according to ST. JEROME, was that “The church lost as much of her virtue [power] as it gained in wealth and secular power.” An excellent example of the *leaven of the Herodians*.

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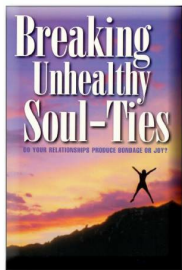
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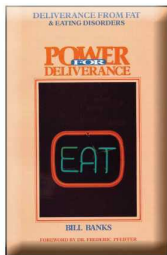
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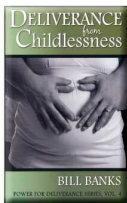
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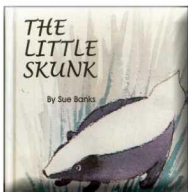
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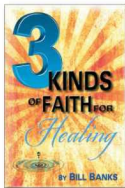
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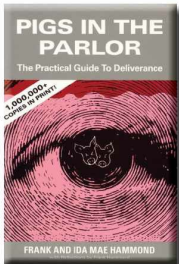
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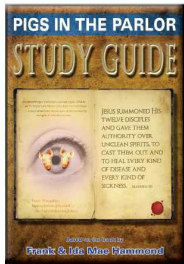


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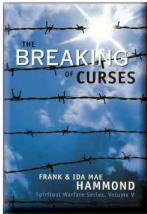
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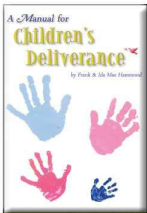
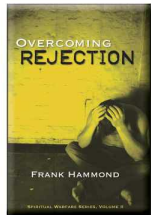
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Frank Hammond Booklets



CONFRONTING FAMILIAR SPIRITS

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There are good and bad soul ties. Bad soul ties include those formed from fornication, evil companions, perverted family ties, with the dead, and demonic ties through the church.

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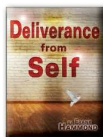
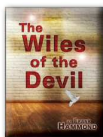
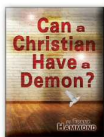
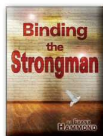
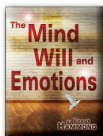
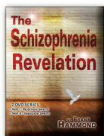
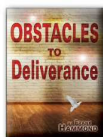
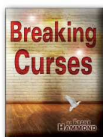
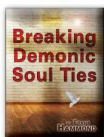
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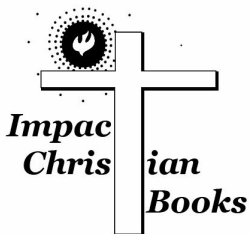
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