

Spotting a Counterfeit Move of God

Stories of extraordinary signs and wonders, miracles, healings and supernatural breakthroughs are normal in the Bible. Time and time again, angels brought heavenly communication and reinforcement to God's people.

Old Testament prophets called down fire, raised the dead and parted rivers to walk across the dry ground. New Testament believers were transported in the spirit, cast out devils and saw their shadows and cloths heal the sick. Jesus commissioned New Testament believers to walk in supernatural authority and demonstration (Mark 16:15-18).

Many revivalists are making bold calls for a return to the foundations of the book-of-Acts church marked by miracles. Many are tapping supernatural realms and are moving in great power. The Lord showed me a tidal wave of supernatural ministry rising that will sweep America as radical revivalists take their place.

Indeed, God is restoring a passion for the supernatural to His church, but with all the reports of raising the dead, miracles and supernatural encounters, we need to rightly discern the spirit operating. The enemy is subtle and works to gain entrance through false leadings, strange fire, evil utterances and deceiving spirits. While revival is rising, there is evil deception and powers working to bring forth false fire and false demonstration. Jesus warned His bride of lying signs and wonders that are sent to distract and deceive (Matt. 24:24).

We don't need to fear, but we do need to arm ourselves and walk with vigilance, or as 1 John 4:1 puts it, "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.” The word “test” in this verse means to discern and examine. God has given us a set of spiritual senses along with His Word by which we can rightly discern spiritual manifestations, prophetic utterances and leadings. So how can you “test the spirits” to see if they are of God? Here are five keys:

1) Recognize the inner unction. There is an abiding anointing inside of your spirit man that leads you into all truth (1 John 2:27). The greatest Teacher who ever existed lives in you. Trust your born-again spirit man. Listen to that still, small voice. Years ago, someone gave me a teaching CD of a then-popular minister. Within five minutes, my inner witness became so grieved I had to turn it off. Years later, that minister turned up fully deceived and walked away from God.

2) Pray in the Spirit. Praying in tongues is critical for accurate discernment. When you pray in the Spirit, you are praying out the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 14:2) and unlocking revelation. Spirit praying releases the mind of the Spirit in your life. It creates a solid barrier of protection from spiritual deception and sharpens your ability to hear the inner witness.

3) Avoid unclean mixtures. Light does not mix with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14). The body of Christ is commanded to avoid any unclean spiritual practices. We are never to mix in any type of spiritual expression that is not rooted in Jesus, His blood, His name and His Word.

4) Build strong spiritual relationships. God sets people in your life to help you navigate the path. Teaching and correcting His followers, along with helping them avoid error, was one of the main thrusts of the apostle Paul’s ministry. Gleaning from and listening to established leaders with long track records of kingdom fruitfulness can keep you free from the pits of deception.

5) Does it point to Jesus? Modern signs, wonders and unexplained phenomena have backing in the Word of God. We see peculiar events from the Old Testament through the New—but they always pointed back to God. Any unusual sign or wonder should point all the affection and attention upon Jesus. Prophetic words should ultimately lift up Jesus more than the messenger. That doesn't mean people will not be drawn to a particular person or ministry—but if the person has a right spirit, they point all eyes back to Christ. False prophets, false signs and false manifestations are sent to distract and take the focus away from the One to whom it belongs.

A Word About False Prophets

Hell empowers false prophets to deceive and defraud the elect. Their motive is impure and their oil contaminated. All too often, the church labels a minister who missed it with a particular prophetic word as a “false prophet.” But just because someone misses it doesn't make him a false prophet. Jesus describes a false prophet as someone empowered by demonic spirits who is manifesting lying signs. A false prophet intentionally sets out to deceive. The devil is not a creator. He twists and perverts truth and uses lying signs, false utterances and impure leadings to confuse and deceive God's people. His goal is to shipwreck the precious destiny God has for His people.

In the Old Testament, God offered a strong warning to depart from false practices. Leviticus 20:27 declares, “A man or woman who speaks to spirits as a medium or necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall stone them. Their blood guilt shall be upon them.” Thank God we live in an age of grace. Nevertheless, participating in strange fire opens a person up to demonic oppression and attack.

In the realm of the spirit, the voice gives life. The spoken word creates. The prophetic spirit moves in revelation and then declares what has been seen or heard. The prophesied word

has a creative seed that should be nurtured by prayer, faith and obedience so that seed can blossom and bring in a harvest of God's will.

The gift of prophecy builds up the church (1 Cor. 14:4). True prophecy brings much-needed encouragement, insight and strength. Prophetic utterances unlock spiritual dimensions. It is no wonder that the enemy would like to pervert this powerful gift and release false prophetic words that bring fear, confusion and wrong directions. How can we accurately judge a prophetic word? Here are some simple tips to recognize and judge personal prophecy:

1) Examine the vessel: The first question is: "Who prophesied the word and how was it delivered?" This is important because, many times, a wrong word is evidenced by the way it is delivered. I have seen many "parking lot prophets" who roam from place to place, engaging in a renegade prophetic ministry that operates outside any blessing from the local church leaders. They create conflict by speaking to the ambitions of people instead of pure prophetic declaration.

Paul admonishes us to "know those who labor among you" (1 Thess. 5:12). You should have some knowledge of a person's character before allowing him to speak into your life. People who claim to be prophets but disrespect order and tear down more than they build up are indeed deceived. The problem is this: Sometimes a deceived person still has an accurate gift that will draw people to him.

How can this be? There are two answers. First, the gifts and callings of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29). Simply put, God doesn't remove a gift because a person falls into error. It is quite possible for someone to speak out a prophecy with accuracy but manifest poor fruit. It's important to understand that the highest level of prophetic operation is not just revealing the desires of a human heart, but releasing the heart of the Father and revealing the end of the matter.

At times, personal prophecy may offer a corrective dimension in order to align the person with God's heart and plan for him.

The second reason a deceived person may still have an accurate gift is that they are tapping into a false spirit, such as a familiar spirit or a spirit of divination. Put another way, such people are communicating in the spirit realm illegally with demon spirits. They can give accurate information but cannot release the Father's heart because deception has clouded their souls. On more than one occasion, I have seen a spirit of divination operating through someone, mimicking the prophetic. The end result is destruction. This is why knowing the fruit and doing things in order are important.

2) Judge all prophecies by the written Word of God: 2 Peter 1:19 tells us, "And we have a more reliable word of prophecy, which you would do well to follow, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

No prophetic word should disagree with the written Word of God. In fact, the church should actively examine prophetic utterances to make sure they are in line with God's Word and boldly toss out any that are not. For example, if someone prophesies that a married person should leave their spouse and marry someone else, this word is blatant deception and witchcraft at work. If a renegade releases a prophecy that causes a church member to rebel against leadership, it's a deceptive word and a false spirit in operation. Never accept a prophetic word that does not line up with God's Word.

3) Does the word bring confirmation? Ask yourself if the word confirms what you have already been led to do. Although some prophecy is directive in nature and may come as a new revelation, it will still confirm what's in your heart. For example, if God tells you to build a business and promises your company will be a fruitful place of ministry, you should

question any prophecy that directs you to sell your business and start a church.

Generally, it's not wise to act on or make major life decisions on the basis of a directive prophecy alone. If the prophetic word does not confirm what's in your heart, it could still be God's will for your future but it may not be a "now word." Timing is critical. In that case, you put it on the shelf. Other times, you need to break the power of the false word spoken over your life or it can torment your emotions and lead you away from God's will. Let me repeat, never make a major decision based on a single prophetic word without any leading of the Spirit in your own life.

4) Get wise counsel: Proverbs 24:6 says, "For by wise counsel you will wage your war, and in multitude of counselors there is safety." If you are unsure if the prophecy is true—or if it's a directional word that you're questioning—honor your spiritual relationships and seek input. Ask these trusted individuals to weigh the word.

If you are married and your spouse is serving the Lord, seek his or her input. Also, seek the input of your spiritual leadership. Go to your pastor or apostolic leadership and ask for insight. Too often, I have seen a prophecy steer someone in the wrong direction, and a lack of communication with godly leaders empowered the deception. The people who know you best and are committed to God's will for your life can often see things you may not see yourself.

God is restoring a passion for the supernatural to His church. We're supposed to be hungry for the full flow of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. We need to lift up our voices and cry for revival and awakening in the land. There is a tidal wave of healing anointing and supernatural ministry coming forth in this hour, and we need the wisdom and discernment to steward it well and avoid deception. Thankfully, we are fully equipped to hear from heaven and live free from false spirits because

the Holy Spirit abides in us.

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