

Never Tolerate Witchcraft Disguised as Prophecy

A friend of mine recently told me that a good friend of hers started withdrawing from her, even though they were close and had done ministry together. When she finally asked this friend why she had pulled away, the woman admitted that a “prophet” in her church had given her a dire warning that was supposedly from God. The prophet advised the woman to stay away from her friend because “she is trying to steal your spiritual mantle.”

What? I can’t even count all the reasons this isn’t a true prophecy. For one thing, no one can “steal” your spiritual gifts or callings. Number two, this “prophet” had no personal knowledge of the person she was accusing; she was, instead, using suspicion and fear to manipulate and control. But because she wasn’t confronted about her alleged “word from God,” she will continue to sow discord among God’s people while appearing to be super spiritual.

I love the gift of prophecy, and the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:1 that we should desire to use it. I love to see people strengthened and encouraged by a personal word from God. But spiritual gifts, much like guns, can be misused—and when prophecy is misfired it always hurts people. That’s why we need more teaching and training on the healthy use of prophecy.

Witchcraft isn’t a practice people typically associate with Christianity. Yet the word “witchcraft” or “sorcery” appears in a list of sins in Galatians 5 that the apostle Paul identifies as “deeds of the flesh” (v. 19, NASB). While we normally associate witchcraft with demonic spiritual forces, Paul says it is a work of the flesh, a natural by-product of the corrupt human nature.

Witchcraft can be defined as any effort on the part of an individual to employ ungodly spiritual means to dominate, control or manipulate others. It can occur through the news media, in corporate board meetings, in the halls of Congress or even among families. Witchcraft invades a church when people use deception or false spirituality to accomplish their own goals—whether to remove a pastor, push a personal or group agenda or to elevate a person in the eyes of people.

If you want to protect yourself and your church from spiritual manipulation and control, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. True prophets are humble and teachable. People who walk in the Holy Spirit don't elevate themselves or claim "special access" to God. They also have healthy relationships. Meanwhile, those who operate in the spirit of witchcraft often pull away from others in an effort to appear superior. They are often lone rangers. And if you challenge their "revelations," they will reject all correction and claim they are being persecuted.

2. True prophets encourage and edify the church. The apostle Paul said true prophecy is given for the purpose of "edification, exhortation, and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3, NASB). The New Living Translation says: "But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them." This is not what happens when witchcraft is involved. False prophecy brings confusion, speculation, mysticism and condemnation, and it often draws attention to the prophet.

3. True prophets are grounded in God's Word. A person operating in the genuine gift of prophecy will always refer to the Bible, and nothing they prophesy will ever contradict Scripture. Beware of charismatic prophets who only quote other famous prophets, or make constant reference to visions, angelic encounters or other mystical experiences that seem to legitimize messages that aren't solid biblically. God gives you discernment for a reason—learn to use it! Any prophet who

gives off a weird or cultish vibe should be scrutinized.

In the early church, the philosophy of Gnosticism was a serious threat. Gnostics believed that salvation could be obtained by tapping into a secret source of divine knowledge reserved for an elite few. This concept is often promoted in our churches today. Some leaders boast of receiving “new” revelations that other Christians have not recognized.

If witchcraft is not checked, whole churches will sometimes adopt attitudes of superiority because they embraced “new” doctrines regarding baptism, spiritual warfare, prayer methods or views of the end times. They assume their remarkable knowledge sets them on a higher plane than ordinary Christians—and the end result is pride, division and spiritual collapse.

4. True prophets pursue the fruit of the Spirit. We should all want the power of God. But power without character is dangerous. God calls us to seek both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit so the church can be protected from ungodly spiritual agendas. When we walk in humility and love, only Jesus receives the glory—and no prophet is placed on a pedestal. Let’s put away spiritual immaturity and learn to walk in the fullness of the Spirit’s anointing.

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