

Did any of you experience God speaking to you in a unique way this past week?

Have there been times when you heard someone say, “God told me...” or “God led me...” and then it became evident God hadn’t directed them in such a way?

How do we evaluate whether a message/prompting is from God, from our own imaginations, or from an evil spirit?

Keep in mind that Satan also wants to send messages and direct our paths according to his purposes. See the following scriptures:

2 Corinthians 11:13-14 (NIV)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

1 John 4:1 (NIV)

Dear friends, 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. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

1 Timothy 4:1 (NIV)

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

With this in mind, we need to be very discerning to not listen to just any voice or message we hear. If Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, it will require spiritual wisdom for us to distinguish between what comes from him, and what comes from God.

What are some ways you can think of to help us discern if a message is from God or not?



Evaluating a Message:

- 1) Is it consistent with scripture?
- 2) Does it represent God's purposes?
- 3) Is it just a passing idea or an unrelenting burden?
- 4) Is there a unity of the Spirit with other godly people?
- 5) Does it stretch your faith?

Let's explore these tests to understand them more deeply.

1) Is the message consistent with scripture?

Why would it be a problem for God to say something now that is different from what he spoke previously?

God does not _____.

Read 1 Kings 13:1-26

What lessons can we learn from this story?

Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

*Your **word** is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

When all is said and done, our final authority is always the Word of God.

2) Does the message represent God's purposes?

What are God's two purposes for us?

- a) To bring us into deeper _____ with him and his family.
- b) To empower us to _____ his rule and love to the rest of the world.

Every message from God is to help us fulfill the two greatest commands of loving God and loving our neighbour.



Matthew 16:13-17 (NIV)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Matthew 16:21-23 (NIV)

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

In the first example Jesus says that Peter's statement is divinely inspired.

In the second statement he is saying it is satanically inspired.

In what way do these two statements of Peter contrast?

Peter's First Statement:

Peter's Second Statement:

How was Jesus able to discern which message was from God, and which was not?

What are some examples of a message that would not represent the purposes of God?

Satan will never call us to do something that strengthens your relationship with Jesus or builds up the body of Christ.

Jesus will never call you to do something that does not represent his purposes or love as he modelled in scripture.

3) Is the message just a passing idea or an unrelenting burden?

If you're an "ideas" person, you've probably had many ideas that you were passionate about one week, and forgot all about the next week. Can you share some examples?

Have you ever had what you thought was a strong conviction from God about something, but then had that feeling fade within a short time? What do you make of these experiences?

Daniel 2:1 (NIV)

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.

Daniel 7:15 (NIV)

I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.

How were Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel affected by the messages they received?

Jeremiah's Dilemma

Jeremiah 20:8-9 (NIV)

Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long. ⁹ But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Can any of you relate to Jeremiah? Can you share some experiences where God placed a heavy burden on your heart that simply would not go away until you responded?

How have you felt at times when you ignored these compelling thoughts?

4) Is there a unity of the Spirit with other godly people?

Why is unity within the body of Christ an important test of a message from God?

Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV)

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

What does this passage imply is the priority – the unity of believers or prayers being answered? Why?

What are the implications for the person who has a “go-it-alone” mentality?

This can be phrased different ways:

I'm going to do it regardless of what other godly people say.

What others say is ok, but I'm still going to do something different.

The rest of God's family may be headed that way, but I'm headed this way.

I don't care what others say, I know what I want to do.

What should you do if other believers are seeking God's direction as well, but are not in agreement with you?

1) _____

2) _____

Philippians 1:27 (NIV)

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then...I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

What are some implications for us with regard to this passage?

5) Does the message stretch your faith?

Why would God's message to us often involve taking some step of faith?

If God gives you a message or call to action, it is because YOU need that in your life in order to grow in your walk with him. Otherwise, he would have given that message or prompting to someone else.

Jonah 1:1-3 (NIV)

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." ³ But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

Why did God call Jonah to take the message to Nineveh, knowing what his response would be?

What kept you from obeying at times when you felt the Holy Spirit prompting you?

How was your relationship with God affected at times when you did not obey his leading?

What was the result in your relationship with God, or the family of God, when you did obey a prompting from the Spirit?

Have there been times when you received a prompting and you knew it was not from God? How did you know? What did you do?

There are many deceiving voices and we need to carefully discern which voices are from God, and which are not. Take comfort in the fact that Jesus says his true sheep will recognize his voice.

John 10:3-5 (NIV)

The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."